



GLOBAL VOICES

Global Voices Educator Resources: Special Edition

Introduction

This week's Global Voices column is a special feature, dedicated to Oprah Winfrey. To go with the column, this week we have prepared a special edition of discussion questions based on themes inspired by her life's work. We will return to the usual format for next week's column.

The discussion questions below will provide an exploration of the following themes: gratitude, philanthropy and everyday activism.

Discussion Questions

1. In her story, Oprah describes feelings of gratitude and happiness when she received a doll for Christmas from the nuns. Ask students to describe the difference between gratitude and happiness. Then, have students think about what they feel grateful for in their lives. Lead a discussion around students' ideas, writing items up on the blackboard. Then, work with students to identify trends.
2. Oprah describes her experience with the nuns as being a 'turning point' in her life. Explain to students that many people experience a pivotal moment in their life that changes circumstances for better or for worse. Ask students to think about a turning point in their life that has greatly impacted them (i.e. Have they moved? Did they lose a loved one? Etc.). Prompt student discussion by asking the following questions:
 - a. What changes did this event bring to your life?
 - b. What have you learned from this event?
 - c. Why is this event a turning point in your life?
3. As Oprah built her empire, she made sure that she used her success to benefit others. To what extent does philanthropy enter your mind when you think about future career ambitions? What are some of the ways you can use your skills to make a difference?
4. Oprah has also used her show to get people talking about issues that are close to her heart. Can celebrities bring about change differently than politicians or activists? How? What do you think about this influence and power?
5. Ask students what they think of when they hear the phrase "pay-it-forward." Lead a discussion about what this idea means. An example can be Oprah's decision to give Christmas gifts to orphan children in South Africa, to repay the kindness that she experienced when she was younger, by paying it forward to someone else in need.
6. Who is someone you would like to thank for their kindness? Write them a letter thanking them for the impact they've had on your life. Then, if you feel comfortable, mail it to them with a note explaining how you plan to pay it forward.
7. As a class decide on a good deed that someone in your school has done for students. Brainstorm ways to pay the kindness forward by performing a good deed for another class or group in your school. Choose one, or a selection of good deeds, and take action to "pay-it-forward."