



# PERSPECTIVES FOR A DIVERSE AMERICA

A K-12 LITERACY-BASED ANTI-BIAS CURRICULUM // USER GUIDE



TEACHING  
TOLERANCE

A PROJECT OF THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER

# More Than a Lesson Plan: Your Guide to *Perspectives for a Diverse America*



We believe that students learn best when they're empowered. Students need a curriculum that reflects and *respects* their identities and the identities of others. Just as important, they need a curriculum that allows them to engage with social justice issues and develop their confidence as change agents. At the same time, they need to develop essential reading, writing, speaking and listening skills.

That's why we introduced *Perspectives for a Diverse America*, a K–12, literacy-based, anti-bias curriculum. It's all online and it's all FREE.

*Perspectives* allows students to grapple with issues relevant to their own lives and those of their peers while engaging with rigorous readings and enhancing their social emotional skills.

## Designed With Your Learners in Mind

Following the principles of Understanding by Design, *Perspectives* allows you to use backward planning to design engaging lessons or units. You begin by establishing student learning outcomes, picking essential questions and selecting relevant texts to build literacy skills and social justice engagement. Then, you can choose assessments

and strategies to bring those outcomes to life in—and outside—your classroom.

*Social Justice Standards: The Teaching Tolerance Anti-bias Framework* is your road map for anti-bias education at every grade level. The foundation of the *Perspectives* curriculum, the standards are organized into four domains: Identity, Diversity, Justice and Action. Together, these domains, which include corresponding grade-level outcomes and school-based scenarios, represent a varied, deep dive into anti-bias, multicultural and social justice education.

## Where Rigor Meets Relevance to Students' Lives

At the heart of *Perspectives* is the Central Text Anthology, a carefully curated collection of over 350 diverse texts that exemplify the Social Justice Standards. Choose from one of four text types: literature, multimedia, informational and visual. Our diverse anthology allows you to provide students with “mirrors” of their own lives and experiences and “windows” into those of others. The readings also reflect the diverse voices in our communities through the lenses of ability, community, immigration, race and ethnicity, class, place, gender, LGBT and religion. Each text has been analyzed for reading level and text complexity, with important academic vocabulary words highlighted. With *Perspectives*, you can provide your students with the social justice content they deserve—despite the limitations of your textbook.

## Deeper Learning With Tasks and Strategies

Build customized learning plans around selected texts by choosing from nearly 130 student tasks and teaching strategies. More than a set of lesson plans, our strategies and tasks give you the freedom to combine and customize to meet the needs of your students.

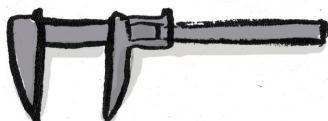
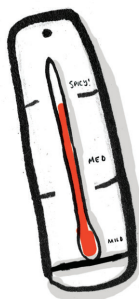




Reflection, argumentative writing, analysis and “Do Something” tasks—our signature action-based projects—build students’ critical literacy and speaking and listening skills, as well as their civic engagement. Pick one, combine several or use the “mild,” “medium” and “spicy” options—you can differentiate each task or strategy to suit your learners.

### Customizable to Your Students’ Needs

*Perspectives* allows you to create a comprehensive, customizable plan for instruction and assessment. You can use *Perspectives* any way you want: Choose a reading for your students to explore, or select a strategy or task to use in instruction. You can even build a lesson plan to investigate one of the hundreds of essential questions we provide—or write an essential question of your own. It’s all organized within Teaching Tolerance’s Social Justice Standards and rooted in backward design.



## SOCIAL JUSTICE STANDARDS ANCHOR STANDARDS AND DOMAINS

### IDENTITY

1. Students will develop positive social identities based on their membership in multiple groups in society.
2. Students will develop language and historical and cultural knowledge that affirm and accurately describe their membership in multiple identity groups.
3. Students will recognize that people’s multiple identities interact and create unique and complex individuals.
4. Students will express pride, confidence and healthy self-esteem without denying the value and dignity of other people.
5. Students will recognize traits of the dominant culture, their home culture and other cultures and understand how they negotiate their own identity in multiple spaces.

### DIVERSITY

6. Students will express comfort with people who are both similar to and different from them and engage respectfully with all people.
7. Students will develop language and knowledge to accurately and respectfully describe how people (including themselves) are both similar to and different from each other and others in their identity groups.
8. Students will respectfully express curiosity about the history and lived experiences of others and will exchange ideas and beliefs in an open-minded way.
9. Students will respond to diversity by building empathy, respect, understanding and connection.
10. Students will examine diversity in social, cultural, political and historical contexts rather than in ways that are superficial or oversimplified.

### JUSTICE

11. Students will recognize stereotypes and relate to people as individuals rather than representatives of groups.
12. Students will recognize unfairness on the individual level (e.g., biased speech) and injustice at the institutional or systemic level (e.g., discrimination).
13. Students will analyze the harmful impact of bias and injustice on the world, historically and today.
14. Students will recognize that power and privilege influence relationships on interpersonal, intergroup and institutional levels and consider how they have been affected by those dynamics.
15. Students will identify figures, groups, events and a variety of strategies and philosophies relevant to the history of social justice around the world.

### ACTION

16. Students will express empathy when people are excluded or mistreated because of their identities and concern when they themselves experience bias.
17. Students will recognize their own responsibility to stand up to exclusion, prejudice and injustice.
18. Students will speak up with courage and respect when they or someone else has been hurt or wronged by bias.
19. Students will make principled decisions about when and how to take a stand against bias and injustice in their everyday lives and will do so despite negative peer or group pressure.
20. Students will plan and carry out collective action against bias and injustice in the world and will evaluate what strategies are most effective.



# Sample Learning Plan

One of the benefits of a flexible curriculum tool like *Perspectives* is the ability to customize learning plans to meet students' needs. Consider this scenario, and read how Ms. Brown was able to use *Perspectives* to respond to a conflict among her students.

At recess, Jennifer told some of her third-grade classmates about her cousin Parker, the first girl to join her middle school's football team. Kenny said Parker was weird for playing football and that she should stick to girls' sports. His comments led to a heated argument with Jennifer; other students jumped in to take sides.

Their teacher, Ms. Brown, caught wind of the exchange just as recess was ending and contemplated how she might address it later.

She thought she needed to talk with the class about fairness, but couldn't take time away from the curriculum, so she decided to find a classroom reading to approach the topic. She went to *Perspectives* and started with the essential questions for grades 3–5. After coming across one in the Justice domain that she felt was perfect, Ms. Brown modified it a bit for her students: "How can I tell when people are being treated unfairly?"

After filtering for "Gender" and "Justice" in the Central Text Anthology, Ms. Brown found "Mama Played Baseball" by David Adler, in which Adler describes how his mother played in the women's baseball league during World War II. She had her students read the story and, to help build their vocabularies, she used the strategy "Word Cheering": Students sang, chanted and moved to the new words they'd learned. Then, to dig deeper into the story's key ideas, students used a close-reading strategy called "Annolighting" to annotate text, highlight important facts, summarize what they read and capture main ideas, concepts and details.

Although the students enjoyed "Word Cheering" and "Annolighting," Ms. Brown could tell some students were still struggling with comprehension. She decided to follow the close reading with a speaking and listening strategy called "Save the Last Word for Me." Students highlighted a few of the reading's most important sentences and discussed their text-based responses in small groups, building their communication skills while increasing their comprehension.

As she put her learning plan together, Ms. Brown decided she'd assess her students using the task "What's the Argument?" which allows students to demonstrate their argumentative and analytical writing skills. The "spicy" version of the task asks students to interpret direct quotes from the story, "referencing personal experience or other texts." It made for a prime opportunity to discuss Jennifer and Kenny's exchange—and Parker's role on an otherwise all-boy team—in a calm and logical way.

Finally, the students wrote and shared original poems and stories about community issues or themes from "Mama Played Baseball" in a "Do Something" task called "Poetry and Storytelling Café." Many students used the opportunity to return to the essential question, writing poems about how they could tell when a situation was unfair and what they could do about it.



*A complete learning plan, like the one Ms. Brown developed, delivers every element of literacy instruction—vocabulary, close reading, speaking and listening, and writing—and includes possible adaptations for English language learners. Ms. Brown had other options, too. She could have used only the text or any combination of individual tasks and strategies, depending on how much time she had and what kind of support her students needed.*

## HEAR FROM OUR USERS...

“I browse the content and then pick and choose what I want to incorporate into my own lessons.”

“*[Perspectives]* has been amazing and I would recommend it to anyone. My students frequently ask, ‘Are we going to have more uncomfortable conversations?’ This makes me happy and makes me feel like I’m doing my job, exposing my students to issues of social justice. I appreciate the central texts included in *Perspectives* and I use them frequently. Thank you!”

“Extraordinary collection of materials! This saved hundreds of hours of research and preparation, and yields results far beyond what I could have accomplished.”

## ...AND FROM OUR COLLEAGUES IN THE FIELD!

“*Perspectives for a Diverse America* provides the most powerful collection of any curriculum I have seen on issues of tolerance, bias reduction, bullying prevention and diversity.”

—BECKI COHN-VARGAS, DIRECTOR, NOT IN OUR SCHOOL

“*Perspectives for a Diverse America* offers a user-friendly curriculum that is aligned with the Common Core (for those who need so) and appropriate for anything from subtle inclusion in, to wholesale transformation of, your curriculum.”

—KEVIN K. KUMASHIRO, DEAN, UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

“The *Perspectives* anthology answers educators’ call for rigorous, engaging works that celebrate and reflect social justice themes and students’ identities.”

—CRAIG LOW, PRESIDENT, LEE & LOW BOOKS

**GET STARTED TODAY** [perspectives.tolerance.org](http://perspectives.tolerance.org)



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