

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Pre-Mission Activity

MISSION US: "No Turning Back"

A NOTE TO THE EDUCATOR:

The following group activity is designed as an introductory activity, and should be completed before your students begin playing "No Turning Back." Its purpose is to spark students thinking about what it takes to take action to address problems in their communities. In addition to asking students to identify problems they would like to address in their communities and designing a strategy for doing so, the activity also prompts students to consider the opposition, challenges, and setbacks they might encounter. This theme connects to the final project of this teacher's guide, in which students reflect on the sources of support and inspiration that Verna, the game's main character, drew strength from in her experiences in 1960s Mississippi and participation in the civil rights movement there.

The graphic organizer will help the groups synthesize and record their thoughts about the issue they would like to address and their plan of action.

Feel free to adapt or amend the activity to best meet your curricular goals and the needs of your students.

Steps to Complete:

- 1) Distribute to your students the activity handout "How do you address a community problem?", and read together the scenario and questions on the first page.
- 2) Divide students into small groups of 3-4 students each. Ask each group to discuss and respond to the questions on the graphic organizer on the handout.
- 3) After about 20 minutes, or when the groups have answered the questions in the graphic organizer, meet as a whole group and have each small group present their ideas to the class.
- 4) Debrief the sharing in a whole group discussion with the following questions:
 1. What problems, causes, solutions, and ways to encourage support did groups come up with? What were similarities that came up across groups? Were there major differences?
 2. What are the risks or limitations of these different strategies (go through examples of using art, words, and talking/listening to different communities)?
 3. Where have you seen people using any of these strategies (or similar ones) in real life?
 4. What opposition and setbacks might you face as you work to address the community problem? What sources of support and inspiration (i.e. specific people, groups, or activities) might you draw strength from as you try to overcome the challenges?
- 5) Explain to your students that they will soon play MISSION US: "No Turning Back," where they will learn about the campaign for voting rights in Mississippi in the early 1960s. They will learn about civil rights activists using words, art, community organizing and more to overcome Jim Crow segregation. They will also learn about the opposition, challenges, and setbacks that African American communities experienced during the campaign, as well as the complicated many individuals were faced with about if, when, and how to support the civil rights movement.

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Pre-Mission Activity
MISSION US: "No Turning Back"

How Do You Address a Community Problem?

Your local city council member has asked your class to serve as a youth council to advise her and help solve problems facing your community.

In groups of 3-4, identify something you want to improve in your community. Your group should discuss and answer the following questions:

- What is the problem? What is causing it?
- Who is impacted?
- What do you need in order to fix it?
- How will you help other people in your community learn about this issue and encourage them to support your cause? How might you use the three tactics given to take action?

The Problem	Who is Impacted?	What's Causing the Problem?	Actions You Can Take to Address the Problem: 1. Use Words 2. Make Art 3. Bring People Together

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Pre-Mission Activity
MISSION US: "No Turning Back"

Example:

The Problem	Who is Impacted?	What's Causing the Problem?	Actions You Can Take to Address the Problem: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use Words 2. Make Art 3. Bring People Together
<p>Your local community garden is a really important part of your neighborhood. Very few people have enough space for their own gardens, but you share some public park space together. Not only do you have fun learning how to make things grow, but when the vegetables come in, people take turns cooking for one another, and you even have movie nights outdoors in the summer.</p> <p>But the train company is trying to spray weed-killing chemicals on the bridge across from the garden. Your fellow gardeners and you are very concerned that the wind could blow the weed-killer into your garden and kill all the plants there.</p>	<p>You and your neighbors are being negatively impacted, since you are at risk of losing your plants, your connection, and your gathering space</p>	<p>Many other people in the town have private gardens in their backyards, and don't live near train tracks, so they don't understand why you're so concerned about your community garden.</p> <p>A lot of people in the town work for the train company, and they don't want to speak up or go to meetings because they are concerned it will affect their job.</p>	<p><i>Use Words?</i></p> <p>You write letters to the train company explaining why the spray might be harmful, and suggesting another way to remove the weeds.</p> <p><i>Make Art?</i></p> <p>You find a friend who's really good at drawing, and create "Say It, Don't Spray It" flyers that explain to the rest of the community why the garden is so important from your perspective</p> <p><i>Bring Different Communities Together?</i></p> <p>You join forces with the local Environmental Club to hold a town hall event to explain to the town how weed-killers can be harmful.</p>