

Lesson 17: Wishing

“Without new visions, we don’t know what to build, only what to knock down. We not only end up confused, rudderless, and cynical, but we forget that making a revolution is not a series of clever maneuvers and tactics, but a process that can and must transform us.” —Robin D. G. Kelley

Social Justice Standards: Action 16, 17

Summary

At the end of the year, seasonal gatherings abound, and holidays from numerous cultural and spiritual traditions dot our calendars. The thread that weaves the holidays, traditions, and resolutions together is of the concepts of wishing, of dreaming, and of imagining.

In the face of continued struggle, wishes for a kind and equitable future for current generations and those yet to come can feel so woefully unfulfilled. And the anger, sorrow, and hurt for these unfulfilled dreams are vital to feel. Even so, in the quest to find ways to sustain hope, we are reminded of the ways wishing propels into bolder futures. To wish is to desire and to yearn, often knowing that what we’re wishing for isn’t easily attainable. How then do we ensure that our wishes are paired with action? That we are not left with silence, pervasive cynicism, and ultimately inaction?

In the following lesson you’ll find diverse perspectives into the power of wishes and how they inspire us to try new things and be a part of change, and comfort us when facing hardship. Our older selections take us a step further, showing the importance of wishing in the face of obstacles.

Booklist

- Follow Your Dreams, Little One by Vashti Harrison
- Carmela Full of Wishes by Matt de la Peña, illustrated by Christian Robinson
- Wishes by Muon Thi Van, illustrated by Victo Ngai
- Change Sings: A Children’s Anthem by Amanda Gorman, illustrated by Loren Long

Consider This

- What's a wish that you had? How did it make you feel? Did it cause you to change any of your actions?
- How do you build a practice of wishing, dreaming, and imagining in the face of struggle?
- How are activists, organizers, and change makers envisioning what's possible for your community?
- Where and when are places you can wish?

Talk Together

- If you could make a wish for someone other than yourself, who would it be, and what would you wish for?
- Have you ever had a wish that came true? How did it happen? How did it make you feel?
- What is the difference between a wish and a goal? A wish and a dream?
- Do all wishes come true?

Engage

- Make a wish list. Consider dividing the wish list into categories to broaden thinking and considerations. Possible wish lists could include: wishes for me, wishes for my family, wishes for my school, wishes for the world, etc.
- Create a "wishing tree" in your neighborhood, outside your school, or in a park. Find a place near a fence, tree, or bush (make sure you have permission if it is not in your yard) to leave paper, writing utensils, and string for people to write their wishes on and hang them from a common area.

Explore More

- *A People's Future of the United States*, edited by Victor La Valle and Joseph Adams (One World, 2019)
- *This Is Not a Small Voice* by Sonia Sanchez
- NPR podcast *Code Switch's* "Imagining a World Without Prisons or Police" (December 1, 2021)