

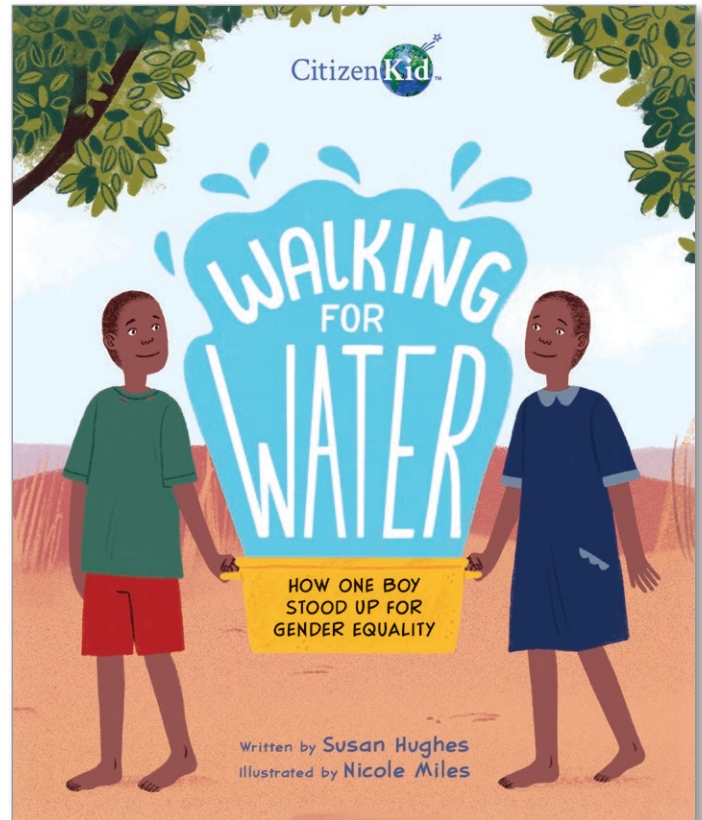
WALKING FOR WATER – TEACHING GUIDE

About the Book

In this inspiring story of individual activism, a boy recognizes gender inequality when his sister must stop attending school — and decides to do something about it.

Victor is very close to his twin sister, Linesi. But now that they have turned eight years old, she no longer goes to school with him. Instead, Linesi, like the other older girls in their community, walks to the river to get water five times a day, to give their mother more time for farming. Victor knows this is the way it has always been. But he has begun learning about equality at school, and his teacher has asked the class to consider whether boys and girls are treated equally. Though he never thought about it before, Victor realizes they're not. And it's not fair to his sister. So Victor comes up with a plan to help.

Based on a true story of a Malawian boy, award-winning author Susan Hughes's inspiring book celebrates how one person can make a big difference in the lives of others. It's a perfect starting point for children to explore themes of gender inequality and unequal access to education, as well as the lack of clean water in some parts of the world. Nicole Miles's appealing artwork in this hybrid graphic novel–picture book adds emotional context to the story. Also included are information about education and water availability in Malawi, resources and a glossary of Chichewa words. Part of the CitizenKid collection and featuring a growth mindset, this important book has links to social studies lessons on global communities and cultures, as well as to character education lessons on initiative, fairness and adaptability.



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About the Author

SUSAN HUGHES is an award-winning author, whose books for children include *Lights Day and Night*, *Sounds All Around* and *Walking in the City with Jane*. She lives in Toronto, Ontario.

About the Illustrator

NICOLE MILES is a cartoonist, graphic designer and illustrator. Her work has appeared on greeting cards and in digital and print media, and her comic *Barbara* was nominated for an Eisner Award. Originally from the Bahamas, Nicole lives in England.

Outline Of Activities

Activity One: Group Read

Activity Two: What Makes Me Me?

Activity Three: Where Do We See Inequality?



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Activity One: Group Read

Whole Group

Begin by pre-reading *Walking for Water*. Flip through the book, showing children the pictures but not reading the words. On each spread, pause and let the children see the pictures clearly, and ask them to imagine, or predict, what is happening in the pictures. Ask them questions such as, *How do you think the people in these pictures feel?* And *What do you think they're doing?* It doesn't matter if students are right or wrong in their answers. Pre-reading helps students engage with the story and keeps them interested as you read aloud.

Pause at the Chichewa glossary on page 31, and practice pronouncing the words and phrases. This will help you as you read the book aloud. It will also prepare students for reading a book with some foreign-language words in it and help them begin to understand where this book is set.

Now go back to the beginning and read the book aloud to children, stopping after reading each spread to talk in more depth about the pictures and the details of the story as it unfolds.

These questions can help guide your conversation.



Pages 2–3:

- What is the relationship between Victor and Linesi?
- If we hadn't already read the glossary, would you be able to guess what "Ndimakukondani" means? Which words or pictures help you know?

Pages 4–5:

- Why do Linesi and Enifa knock their buckets together?
- What was tugging at Victor's heart?

Pages 6–7:

- What does Victor like about school?
- What does he not like about school?
- Where is Linesi now?

Pages 8–9:

- Why does Linesi have to go to the river?
- What would the village need for people not to have to fetch water at the river?
- What is a well? (If students don't know, spend some time talking about wells and the ways in which a well can help the people of a rural village.)

Pages 10–11:

- What do you notice about the students in Victor's class? Are they all the same age?
- How do they look as Mr. Tambala talks to them about equality?
- What is equality?

Pages 12–13:

- What do the girls do after school?
- What do the boys do after school?

Pages 14–15:

- What is Victor's homework assignment?
- What kinds of questions does his assignment help him think about?
- What do you think Victor is starting to realize about his life versus his sister's life?

Pages 16–17:

- Why can't Victor teach his sister math?
- Why is Linesi sleeping instead of studying?

Pages 18–19:

- Make some predictions about Victor's plan. What do you think he's suggested to his family?

Pages 20–21:

- What is different on this day? Who goes to school? Who fetches water?
- How do you think Linesi feels?
- How do you think Victor feels?

Pages 22–23:

- Describe Victor's plan in your own words.
- Did anyone predict this would be his plan a couple of pages earlier?

Pages 24–25:

- Why do you think Victor and Linesi can now share their homework assignments?
- Do you think Victor has gotten better at math?

Pages 26–27:

- How has Victor's plan affected the other people in the story? What are Chikondi and Enifa doing today?
- What do you think this means about one person's actions? Can one person change how other people see the world or behave in it?

Pages 28–29:

- Make some predictions about what kinds of changes might be coming to the village. How do you know those things might happen?
- Do you think a well would change the life of everyone in the village, or just the children?

Page 30: Read the author's note to the class and discuss ideas about equality, clean water and the importance of individual activism.

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Activity Two: What Makes Me Me?

Individual Work

Provide students with blank paper and markers and pencils. Have each student work individually, but with your guidance. You will ask questions of the whole group, and each student will mark their responses on their own paper — without sharing or speaking up.

Prompt students with questions to help them think about who they are, reminding them they don't have to answer every question if they don't want to:

- What color is your hair?
- What color is your skin?
- What color are your eyes?
- What gender do you identify with?
- Are you able-bodied or disabled?
- Do you share any features with other members of your family?
- What features are unique to just you?

Ask students to think about their emotional and mental selves and add to their pictures or write down their answers:

- What do you most like to do with your time?
- What do you dream about?
- What is your favorite holiday or family custom?
- How do you feel when you wake up in the morning?
- How do you feel when you go to bed at night?

Now ask students to think about their national identity:

- What country do you live in?
- Does your family come from another country?
- Do you think place of origin matters for your own identity?

Finally, ask students to make a list of their identities. You can provide an example of yourself, to help guide them.

For instance: I am a Black Canadian woman who uses a cane; my family is originally from Ghana; and I dreamed of being a teacher when I was growing up.

Students can share their identity statements if they want to and if it feels productive. But this exercise is intended for their own personal understanding of self, and it leads to the next activity, so sharing is not essential.

Activity Three: Where Do We See Inequality?

Pairs

Now that students have spent some time thinking about their own identities, divide them into pairs to brainstorm about how different identities sometimes lead to people being treated differently.

Remind the whole group about how it dawns on Victor that Linesi is treated differently because she is a girl — and point out that he might not have noticed the difference in how they're treated and what opportunities they have if his teacher hadn't asked him to think about equality.

Encourage pairs to talk for 5–10 minutes about times they have been treated unfairly or witnessed someone being treated unfairly. Then come back together as a whole group to discuss.

As students share what experiences came up in each pair, write on the board ones that seem based on the identity of the person who was treated unfairly. As a whole group, talk about ways each situation could have been approached differently, or things others in the situation could have done to help.

Remind students about how Victor's actions were only meant to affect his own family — he just wanted Linesi to be able to go to school — but those actions ended up making a difference in at least one other family's life.

Who do students hope their actions will most affect?

