

By Herb Shoveller

Ryan and Jimmy

And the Well in Africa That
Brought Them Together



About Ryan and Jimmy

It costs a lot of money to build a well in Africa — a lot more than Ryan Hreljac had thought. Still, the six year old kept doing chores around his parents' house, even after he learned it could take him years to earn enough money. Then a friend of the family wrote an article in the local newspaper about Ryan's wish to build a well to supply people with safe, clean water. Before long, ripples of goodwill began spreading.

In Agweo, Uganda, villagers were used to walking a long way every day in search of water. What they found was often brown and smelly. It also made a lot of people sick. But when Ryan's Well was built, life in the village changed for the better. A young orphan named Akana Jimmy longed for a chance to thank Ryan in person for this gift of life — clean water.

When Ryan and Jimmy finally meet, an unbreakable bond forms between these two boys from very different backgrounds, and a long and sometimes life-threatening journey begins. Ryan and Jimmy is a true story of friendship and compassion in which a simple wish to help others brings focus to the necessities that unite us all.

About the Author

Herb Shoveller, a former *London Free Press* editor who is now an independent writer, editor and consultant, is the great-uncle of Ryan Hreljac.

Teacher Activity

PEN PALS

For this activity, find out your school board's policy on participating in a pen-pal program. If it is permitted, research local or international pen-pal programs and choose a suitable school and grade level for your class. At

the beginning of each week, set up a block of time for your students to write to their pen pals. After your class receives responses to their letters, ask each student to share interesting details about his/her pen pal.

OR

If your school does not participate in a pen-pal program, suggest setting up your own within the school. Start by asking other teachers if they would like to participate. Of the teachers who are willing to participate, choose a class or grade level and have students from your class communicate with students from the other class on a weekly basis. Once a week, have each student share interesting details about his/her pen pal with the class.

Discussion Topics and Activities

The following discussion topics and activities are suitable for classes in language and literature, media, visual arts, social studies, history and geography. Please note that some of the activities in the learning resource require students to visit their local library or use the Internet for research.

1. DESIGN YOUR DREAM HOME

When Jimmy first arrived in Canada, he was amazed to see how different Ryan's home was from his own. As part of a class discussion, ask students to discuss the differences between Ryan's home in Canada and Jimmy's home in Uganda. Have students compare and contrast the following: interior and exterior structure, layout, function, design and building materials.

As part of an individual research assignment, ask students to try and find out what materials were used to build their homes. Explain to students that they should talk to their parents, other family members or their neighbors, and ask them questions about the inte-

rior and exterior structure of their homes and the materials used to build them. Students should also use the Internet or their local library to research building materials.

Next, ask students to design their dream home. Explain to students that their design should include drawings of the interior and exterior structure. Ask students to think about function and comfort while designing their layout. After their designs are complete, have students answer the following questions in paragraph format: What materials would you use to build your dream home and why? What layout did you design and why? What is the function of each room? Which part of the design is your favorite and why? Once everyone has completed their designs and paragraph responses, have students present their work to the class.

2. HOW DIFFERENT IS YOUR SCHOOL FROM OTHERS?

Ryan went to Holy Cross School in Kemptville, Ontario, and Jimmy went to Angolo Primary School near the village of Agweo in Uganda. As part of a class discussion, ask students to describe the similarities and differences between both schools.

After the class discussion, divide students into four groups and ask each group to choose a school in another country and research the similarities and differences between their school and the school they chose. Ask each group to compare and contrast the following: school subjects, school building, class sizes, the types of materials used in the classroom and the surrounding community around the school. Have each group write and hand in a one-page report based on their research.

3. DESIGN A MAP OF YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Have a class discussion about the word “community.” Ask students to define the

word and explain what it means to them. Based on the class discussion, create a working definition of the word “community” on the blackboard.

As part of a class assignment, ask students to work together to design a map of their school community. Have students refer to Jimmy’s map of his village on page 31 of *Ryan and Jimmy* for some ideas to get started. Explain to students that they should first decide on the boundaries of their school community (e.g. the area where their school community begins and ends).

Next, divide students into small groups of field researchers and lead them on a community walk. (Make sure to provide teacher supervision at all times.) While on the walk, explain to each group that they will be responsible for locating and researching public and private spaces within the community that they feel should be included in the map (e.g. cultural services, retail services, parks, etc.). After all the groups have completed their field research, ask students to work together and design a map of their school community based on the information they gathered during the walk. Explain to students that the map should include labels of landmarks, buildings and street names. (Make sure to provide your students with large pieces of chart paper to draw the map on.) Once the map is complete, ask each student to identify a street, building or location on the school community map that is significant to him/her, and explain why it is important.

As part of a class activity, ask students to estimate the distance between various points on the map (e.g. the distance from the school to the nearest park). Students can measure the distance by time or by using a unit of length such as kilometers (km) or miles (mi). Have students refer back to Jimmy’s map (p. 31) and compare the measured distances between places that they travel with the measured distances that Jimmy had to travel.



4. WHAT DO YOU CELEBRATE?

Upon Ryan's arrival in Uganda, Jimmy's village prepared a traditional feast and a presentation to welcome Ryan to the village and celebrate the new well. They named that day "Ryan's Day" and celebrate it each year.

Ask students to share stories about seasonal or traditional celebrations or heritage festivals that they celebrate every year. With your class, create a list of these celebrations on the board. Here are some examples to help your students get started: Black History Month, Canada Day, Independence Day, Remembrance Day and Thanksgiving. Once you have completed the list, divide students into small groups and ask each group to research a festival or celebration. As part of their research, ask students to answer the following questions: When and why did this tradition or festival begin? When is it celebrated? What is the importance of this day? Who takes part in the celebration? How do people celebrate? Ask students to use the Internet or visit their local library to conduct their research. Once all the groups have completed their research, ask them to prepare a skit about their festival or celebration and present it to the class.

5. RECORD YOUR FAMILY HISTORY

Discuss the following words with your class: immigration, refugee and landed immigrant. Start up a class discussion and create a working definition for each word on the blackboard.

As part of an individual assignment, ask students to research the genealogy of their family. Explain to students that they should interview their immediate and extended family members as part of their research. Ask students to prepare eight to ten general questions for each interview. (Remind students to take thorough notes when interviewing each person.) Based on the research from each interview, ask students to write a one-page essay about their family's history and create a family tree or chart that illustrates where their family came from and where they live now. Once everyone has completed their research, ask students to partner up and share their family history with each other.

6. RESEARCH LOCAL OR INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Divide students into groups of three, then ask each group to research local or international organizations that support environmental or humanitarian causes. The following are names of organizations that are mentioned in *Ryan and Jimmy: WaterCan*, Canadian Physicians for Aid and Relief (CPAR) and Ryan's Well Foundation. Other well-known global organizations are Greenpeace, the World Wildlife Federation and Green Cross International.

Ask each group to choose and research one of the above-mentioned organizations or find another organization that they would like to learn more about. If any group decides to choose its own organization, ask the students to submit the name and a brief description for your approval. (Make sure that each group chooses a different organization.) As part of their research, ask students to answer

some of the following questions: What type of organization is it? (e.g. government, non-government, profit, nonprofit.) What is the history of the organization? Who was involved in starting the organization and why? What is its cause or mission statement? What goals has the organization accomplished? What are some of their campaigns? Once each group has completed its research, ask students to prepare a 3-5 minute commercial or skit and present it to the class. Encourage students to use props, statistics, charts and pictures to highlight important facts about the organization they chose as part of their presentations.

7. RESEARCH AN IMPORTANT ISSUE

When Ryan was six years old, he was already becoming interested in world issues. As part of a class discussion, ask students to answer the following question: What local or world issue interests you the most and why?

Divide students into four or five groups, and ask each group to research a local or international issue that interests them. For example, AIDS, hunger, poverty, displaced people, pollution, animal cruelty, etc. (Make sure that each group submits a description of the issue for approval.) As part of their research, ask each group to answer the following questions: What is the history of the issue? Why is this an important issue? Who or what does it affect and why? What are people doing to



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help educate others? Ask each group to prepare a 3-5 minute commercial or skit that highlights important facts about the issue to present to the class. After each group has presented, ask students to work together and brainstorm ideas that will help educate others about each issue. Use these ideas to create banners or posters to hang throughout the school.

8. SET AND ACCOMPLISH A GOAL

At age six, Ryan Hreljac set a very ambitious goal: to collect enough money to create a well in Africa. With your class, discuss the importance of setting and accomplishing goals, big and small. (Use Ryan's experience as an example.) As part of the discussion, ask students to answer the following questions: What is the hardest goal you have ever set for yourself? What is the hardest goal that you have ever accomplished?

As part of an individual in-class assignment, ask students to set a personal goal that either relates to home or to school. Have students set a start date and end date within the school year, create a chart or timeline and write a weekly journal to record their progress from start to finish. At the end of the year, ask students to share their goal charts and diary entries with the class.

As an extension to this activity, take it one step further and work with your students to set a class goal that relates to the school or the community (e.g. reduce waste, help out others in need, volunteer for community service). With your class, choose a goal and discuss how everyone can participate to complete the goal. Set a start and end date and ask students to create a chart or timeline to record their progress from start to finish. If the goal is accomplished before the end of the school year, work with your class to set a new goal. Each time your class accomplishes a goal, make sure to spread the word around your school by making a formal announcement.