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By Sita Brahmachari



Empowerment Through Solidarity for Human Rights



Seen



&



Heard

Human Rights Education resource 4

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Empowerment Through Solidarity for Human Rights

By Sita Brahmachari

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Seen and Heard: Young People's Voices and Freedom of Expression.

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ISBN 978-83-977605-6-1

This human rights education resource is one of a set of five, titled *Seen and Heard: Creative Journeys into Children's Rights*, designed to engage, inspire and support young people through creativity and critical thinking. The full set includes:

- Hear Me, See Me: A Creative Introduction to Children's Rights
- In Our Hands: Exploring Freedom of Expression Through Creative Action in Our Communities
- The Power of Empathy: Standing Up for Refugee and Migrant Rights
- Empowerment Through Solidarity for Human Rights
- Global Citizens Take Action: Creative Protest for Change

All five resources can be downloaded for free at <https://seenandheardproject.eu/hre-resources>

This resource is part of the *Seen and Heard: Young People's Voices and Freedom of Expression* – a European co-funded project that supports the empowerment of children and young people, particularly those at risk of exclusion, to exercise their right to freedom of expression through literature, art, creative protest and human rights education.

The project combines research, mentoring and activism to foster youth participation and amplify their voices in public dialogue. It brings together academics, educators, artists, and policymakers from Malta, Germany and Poland to support children aged 10 to 14 to speak out on issues that matter to them. More information: <https://seenandheardproject.eu/>

Project led by the University of Malta and co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the authors only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



Foreword

It is a pleasure to present *Seen and Heard: Creative Journeys into Children's Rights* – a collection of creative human rights education resources developed to support educators working with children and young people on key themes such as freedom of expression, migration, child rights, solidarity, creative action and protest.

These resources are grounded in a simple but urgent truth: every child has rights – and those rights must be protected. Children are not just future citizens – they are rights-holders here and now. When young people know their rights and are supported to explore and express them, they gain the tools to stand up for themselves and for others.

This set of five resources offers flexible, creative tools to explore human rights through discussion, storytelling, art, drama and reflection – in ways that are both engaging and transformative.

Each activity is designed to take children on a meaningful and imaginative journey into discovering, expressing and defending their rights. We hope they inspire educators to adapt and expand these ideas to suit the needs, interests and possibilities of their own groups. There is no single way to teach human rights – these materials are an open invitation to make the topic your own. Our intention is these activities will support you in creating meaningful learning experiences that leave a positive and lasting impact.

My heartfelt thanks go to Sita Brahmachari, whose longstanding commitment to human rights with young people – in communities, youth theatre, and through her novels – brings these lessons to life with such magic and depth. I am also deeply grateful to Nicky Parker, whose extraordinary editorial hand shaped the materials into something meaningful and usable for every educator. It has been a true privilege to work with you both.

Katarzyna Salejko
Head of Human Rights Education
Amnesty International Poland



Introduction

About human rights education

Human rights education is important at every age. From birth, everyone is entitled to the rights under the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. These international laws are rooted in shared human values which are, in essence, ideas and feelings that guide how we live well together. Human rights values include fairness, equality, truth and safety.

We all have the right to human rights education. When we know and understand our rights and how they apply in everyday life, we are better able to stand up for ourselves and others. This is just as important for children as it is for adults.

Human rights education involves three dimensions:

- **Learning *about* human rights:** Gaining knowledge about what human rights are, and how they are defined and protected;
- **Learning *through* human rights:** Ensuring that the learning environment and process reflect human rights values – such as participation, respect, freedom of thought and expression. In human rights education, *how* we teach is just as important as *what* we teach;
- **Learning *for* human rights:** Developing the skills, attitudes and values needed to apply human rights in everyday life and to take action, individually or collectively, to promote and defend them.

Safeguarding

As educators we are in 'loco parentis' – acting as trusted guardians for the children and young people in our care. During these workshops, if a student raises a safeguarding concern, follow your school's protocols.

Do all your students know what these protocols are? If not, it might be helpful to talk through them with the whole class in a straightforward and calm way.

Making sure everyone understands who they can talk to and what support is available helps create a safer, more trusting environment for all.

About this resource

Empowerment Through Solidarity for Human Rights features two ready-to-use lessons designed to help 10 to 14-year-olds understand, feel and practise solidarity in the context of human rights.

Through discussion, creative writing, visual mapping and playful metaphor, students will explore the idea of 'standing together', moving from initial impressions of solidarity to safe, age-appropriate ways of taking meaningful action.

These activities invite children to explore solidarity on both an emotional and intellectual level: what it feels like to stand with others, what makes it possible, and how it can be sustained over time. Through creative exploration, they learn how small acts of kindness, empathy and collaboration can contribute to powerful collective change. They'll also encounter inspiring real-life examples of young activists who combine their passions and skills with a sense of justice to improve their communities and the wider world.

You can work through all the activities as a term-long project, or pick and mix individual activities to suit your available time and students' needs. Each lesson begins with clear learning objectives.

The methodology underpinning this resource is rooted in the following children's rights:

- Participation
- Freedom of expression
- Freedom of association
- Equality and non-discrimination
- Education
- Play
- Protection from violence

Target age range

All activities are suitable for students aged 10 to 14.

Learning objectives

This resource encourages participants to:

- **Understand** the concept of solidarity and explain its role in protecting and promoting human rights;
- **Analyse** the relationship between empathy, activism and collective action through real-life and fictional examples;
- **Apply** creative and collaborative methods to express solidarity in ways that are safe, inclusive and meaningful;



- **Evaluate** diverse forms of activism and reflect on how different skills and passions can contribute to long-term change;
- **Create** original expressions of solidarity – such as poems, letters, stories or artwork – that connect personal values with global human rights action.

Solidarity at a glance

Solidarity means recognising our shared humanity and acting – together – to uphold everyone’s rights. It is not only a feeling; it is a practice. Sometimes solidarity looks like listening carefully and believing someone’s experience; other times it means sharing skills, raising a banner, writing a letter or changing everyday behaviours to make spaces more welcoming and safe. Real solidarity centres the needs and choices of those most affected and asks: ‘What support is helpful – and how can we offer it responsibly?’

Activism is how people turn values into action and change. For young people, it can be creative, joyful and sustainable, especially when it grows from what they love like drawing, coding, baking, organising, music, sport. Youth activism happens online and offline: making posters, hosting assemblies, recording podcasts, fact-checking, meeting decision-makers, or building caring, inclusive peer networks. It also includes ‘quiet’ actions: checking in on a classmate, challenging stereotypes, and making room for different voices.

Effective youth activism is collective and intersectional. It connects local issues to wider patterns, notices who is missing from the conversation, and shares roles so everyone can contribute safely – researchers, speakers, artists, planners, carers. It balances courage with care: assessing risks, gaining consent, protecting privacy, and following safeguarding guidance. Reflection is part of the work. What changed? What did we learn? How can we keep going?

One powerful entry point is Amnesty International’s Write for Rights campaign. Every year, people around the world – children included – send messages of support to individuals and communities whose rights are under threat, and letters to authorities calling for change. This global campaign shows how solidarity, even through a simple message, can make a real impact, especially when amplified by millions of other voices.

Lesson plans and activities

Lesson 1. Understanding solidarity

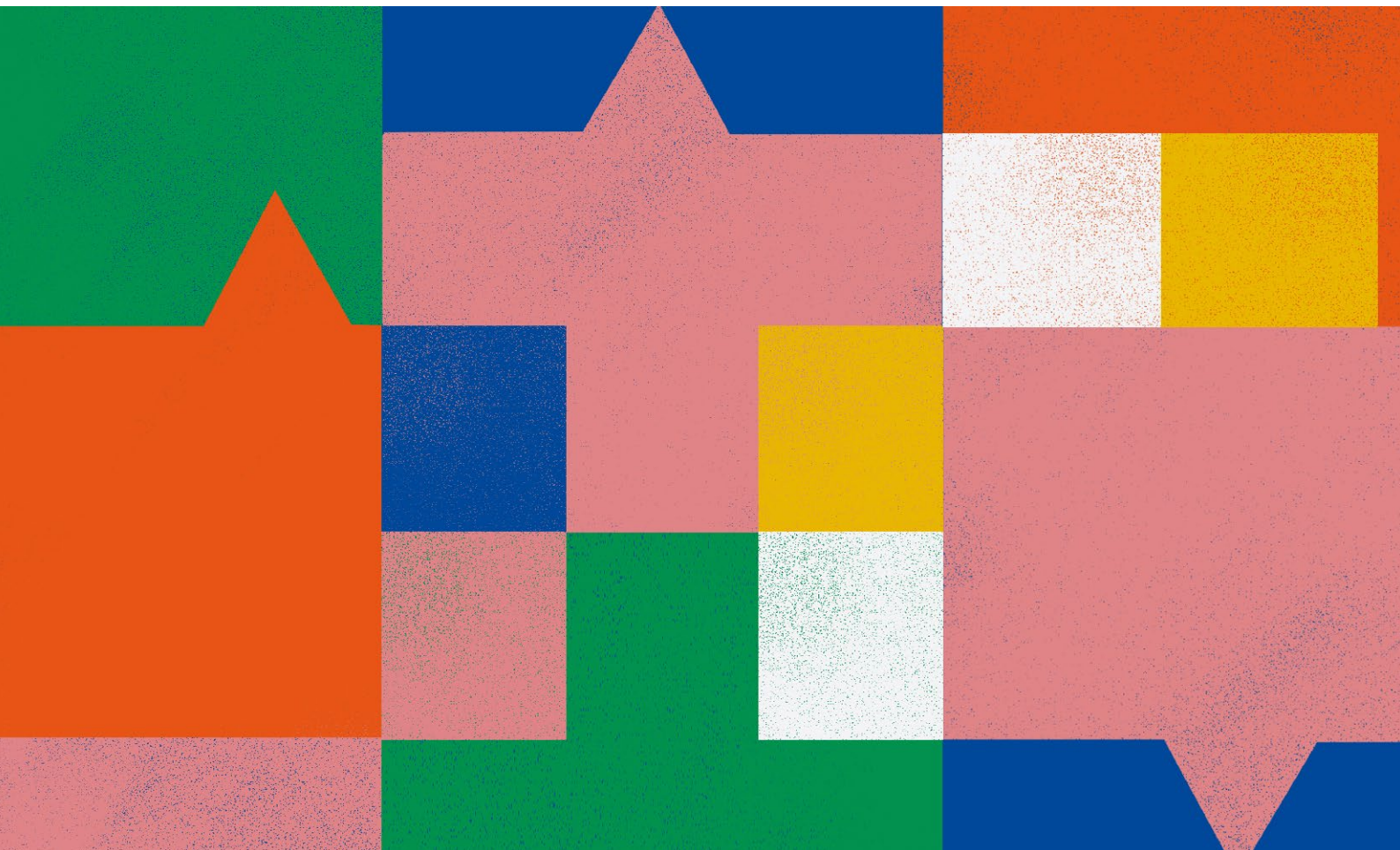
- Activity 1. The power of words – solidarity brainstorm
- Activity 2. Walking in empathy towards solidarity
- Activity 3. Baking a solidarity cake

Lesson 2. Solidarity in action

- Activity 1. Loving what you do
- Activity 2. Write a letter, change a life
- Activity 3. Solidarity through writing

Included in this resource

- Leaf template (page 18)
- Jigsaw of child rights: Simplified 15 groups of child rights (page 19)



Lesson 1

Understanding solidarity

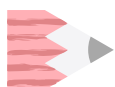
This lesson introduces participants to the meaning of solidarity through words, empathy and creativity. By exploring language, mapping emotional journeys and inventing imaginative 'solidarity' recipes, participants reflect on how people with different personalities and strengths can come together for justice and human rights. The activities invite students to challenge stereotypes about activists and discover that solidarity is made up of many small acts of courage, kindness and collaboration.



Learning objectives

This lesson encourages participants to:

- Define the concept of solidarity in their own words;
- Analyse how empathy can move people from isolation to collective action;
- Evaluate stereotypes about activists and identify diverse ways to show solidarity;
- Create personal expressions of solidarity through writing, visual timelines and metaphors;
- Reflect on and justify why solidarity is essential for protecting child rights and promoting human rights.



You will need

- Large sheets of paper or flipchart paper
- Markers or pens
- (Optional) printed A-Z templates for each group
- Whiteboard or board space
- Leaf template (page 18)

Activity 1

The power of words – solidarity brainstorm

This activity invites participants to explore the meaning of solidarity through words, creativity and collective expression. By brainstorming together and creating a shared poem, they reflect on how standing with others can be powerful, courageous and inspiring.



How long will it take?

40-60 minutes



What to do

- Begin with a short introduction. Explain to participants that today they will explore the word *solidarity* – standing together, supporting one another and taking action for justice and human rights. Emphasise that solidarity can take many forms – through words, art, music, everyday kindness or collective action.
- Divide participants into small groups (three to five people). Give each group a sheet of paper and ask them to write the alphabet vertically down the side. Their task is to brainstorm words, actions and ideas related to solidarity, starting with each letter.
- If time is limited, ask them to focus only on the letters in the word **SOLIDARITY**.
- Offer some examples to get ideas flowing:
 - **A** – Artists create art as an act of solidarity
 - **B** – Banners raised high
 - **C** – Choirs singing together
 - **D** – Daring to speak out
 - **E** – Empathy is essential for solidarity
- After brainstorming, bring everyone together for a class game of ‘Snap!’. Each group takes turns reading out their ideas for one letter. If other groups have the same or a very similar idea, they call out ‘Snap!’.
- Invite groups to choose up to 10 words or phrases from their brainstorm that they feel most connected to. Encourage them to combine these into short verses, creating a collective solidarity poem. Example:
 - Artists speak out
 - Banners raised high
 - Empathy shining bright
- Ask the participants to write their verses on leaf templates and display them in the classroom. If your group has previously worked with *Hear Me, See Me: a Creative Introduction to Human Rights*, add the leaves to the existing Child Rights Listening Tree to show how solidarity grows alongside children’s rights.

- Finish with a short reflection. Ask:
 - Which words or images best capture what solidarity means to you?
 - How did it feel when other groups shouted 'Snap!' and shared similar ideas?
 - Does solidarity sometimes require courage? Why?
 - What small acts of solidarity can you show in your school, home or community?
 - Why is solidarity important for protecting and promoting human rights?

Activity 2

Walking in empathy towards solidarity

This activity invites participants to explore the differences between sympathy, empathy, activism and solidarity. Through discussion, creative mapping and group reflection, they trace the emotional and practical journey from feeling alone to standing together.



How long will it take?

40-60 minutes



What to do

- Begin with a class discussion. What is the difference between *sympathy* and *empathy*? Collect examples (for the board).
- Introduce the term *activist* and ask how it relates to empathy and solidarity.
- Then, ask pairs to complete the following SEAS definitions:
 - Sympathy is...
 - Empathy is...
 - An activist is...
 - Solidarity is...
- Ask participants to write down reasons why young people might need to call on others to act in solidarity with them to protect their child rights. If there are sensitivities in the group, suggest they use fictional characters familiar to the class. For instance, in *Tender Earth* by Sita Brahmachari, Pari does not feel safe using the lift because of anti-refugee graffiti. She and her friends want to change the situation.
- Divide the class into small groups. Give each group a large sheet of paper to create an Empathy-Solidarity line. At one end, they need to write 'Alone'; at the other, 'Solidarity'.
- Ask groups to imagine a real or fictional journey where a young person moves from feeling alone to finding support through solidarity. Along the line, they should fill it with words, drawings and

scenes; emotions and thoughts; and key moments or turning points (for example, confiding in someone, learning about rights, feeling heard).

- This line can look like a cartoon strip, timeline or illustrated path, showing the progression of the character and their situation as they shift, step by step, toward solidarity.
- For example, under 'Alone' students might include words like lonely, weak, disempowered, along with drawings of an isolated figure. As the line progresses, they might add stages such as: confides in older brother → feels relieved → others join → group acts → begins to feel safer, ending near 'Solidarity' with hopeful images representing confidence, connection and uplift.
- Emphasise that this activity is designed to create space for participants to discuss the nuances and possible complexities of moving from isolation to solidarity.
- Display the following guiding questions on the board as prompts for group work:
 - What is the problem?
 - What is the first step to change?
 - How does that step shift the situation?
 - How does knowing their child rights help?
 - If more people know about the situation, what is the safest way to involve others?
 - What obstacles might young people face on their journey to solidarity?
 - What would a strong plan for solidarity look like?
- Invite groups to present their Empathy-Solidarity journeys to the class. Ask them to reflect on positive shifts to the story; any challenges or risks; how the character's emotions or confidence changed.
- To conclude, ask each group to design a solidarity banner. They should use no more than 10 words and include images or symbols that could be held up in an act of solidarity.
- Display the Empathy-Solidarity lines and banners around the classroom.
- Finish with a short reflection. Ask:
 - What was the most powerful moment in the journey from 'alone' to 'solidarity'?
 - Did you notice how emotions or confidence changed along the way?
 - Why is empathy an important step towards solidarity?
 - What can be challenging about standing in solidarity?
 - How might these lessons apply to situations in your school, community or the wider world?



Activity 3

Baking a solidarity cake

This playful, metaphor-based activity uses the idea of a recipe to explore the many qualities and actions that make up solidarity. Participants reflect on stereotypes of activists, then create their own personal 'ingredients list' for standing together with others.



How long will it take?

40 minutes



What to do

- Begin with a class discussion about perceptions of activists. Ask: What kind of person do you think an activist is?
- Discuss where these perceptions come from – media, social networks, personal experience – and whether they are always true.
- Emphasise that an activist is anyone who shows solidarity with others. This means there is no one 'type' of activist. Different personalities, talents and approaches can all have a place.
- In small groups, ask your students to brainstorm the 'ingredients' essential to stand in solidarity with others. Encourage them to be imaginative. For example:
 - A cup of kindness
 - A litre of time to listen carefully
 - A teaspoon of courage
 - A tablespoon of patience
 - Scales – to weigh the best way to act
- After the brainstorm, invite everyone to write their own recipe for solidarity. Their recipe should describe the unique mix of qualities, actions and values they bring to supporting others.
- Ask participants to share their recipes with the group.
- If there's time, collect the recipes to create a solidarity recipe book to display or share, celebrating the different ways people can contribute to collective action.
- If you have time, discuss the following questions:
 - What stereotypes about activists came up at the start of this activity? Did your recipe challenge any?
 - Which 'ingredients' do you value most in your recipe?
 - How do different recipes show there are many ways to be part of solidarity?
 - Why is it important to recognise diverse personalities and strengths when working together for change?

Lesson 2

Solidarity in action

This lesson helps participants move from understanding solidarity as a concept to actually living it out in the real world. Through stories, reflections, and creative action, children explore what it means to stay committed to human rights – not just for a day, but over time. They discover that activism can be joyful, sustainable, and deeply personal when it grows from the things we love to do.

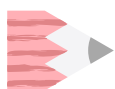
Participants will have the chance to connect their own talents and interests with acts of solidarity, engage in Amnesty's Write for Rights campaign, and create original stories or artwork that express care and connection across borders.



Learning objectives

This lesson encourages participants to:

- Explain how solidarity can be nurtured through long-term commitment and personal passions;
- Analyse real-life examples of young activists making a difference;
- Apply earlier learning (like Child Rights Snap and the Empathy-Solidarity line) to explore current human rights cases;
- Create letters, reports, or artistic works to show solidarity with real young activists;
- Reflect on their own role in sustaining solidarity individually and collectively within their communities and beyond.



You will need

- Large sheets of paper or flipchart paper
- Markers or pens
- Whiteboard or board space
- Access to Amnesty's Write for Rights materials (online or printed cases)
- Leaf template (page 18)
- Jigsaw of child rights: Simplified 15 groups of child rights (page 19)



Activity 1

Loving what you do

Sometimes people think activism means marching with placards or giving speeches on the news – and it can be. But solidarity also grows in quiet, consistent actions. This activity encourages young people to reflect on how doing what they love can become a long-term act of solidarity.



How long will it take?

40 minutes



What to do

- Begin with a discussion about the idea that solidarity is not only a one-off action but often a long-term commitment. Ask participants: What examples of young activists do you know who have dedicated themselves to change?
- Share some well-known examples such as:
 - Malala Yousafzai – fighting for girls' education
 - Greta Thunberg – climate change
 - Mya-Rose Craig – ornithologist and environmental justice

You may wish to explore additional examples of young activists from your own cultural or community contexts, to help students connect more personally with the idea of activism and solidarity.

- Now share a quieter story. A student loved baking so much that she began baking cakes for a local refugee centre every Wednesday when she was in primary school. She kept it up throughout secondary school. Later, she started volunteering at the centre, turning her passion for baking into a long-term, generous act of solidarity.
- In pairs, ask participants to discuss what this story tells them about solidarity.
- Invite them to reflect on the following:
 - What do I love doing?
 - What do I care about changing in the world?
 - How could I use my skills or interests to support others?
- Collect the ideas and create a class skills map for solidarity, listing everyone's talents, interests and contributions for action – things like songwriting, drawing, speech-making, baking, organising. Explain that these skills will be important for later activities.
- Remind participants that when we use what we love to help others, activism becomes something we can sustain with joy and care.

Activity 2

Write a letter, change a life

After exploring what solidarity means and how it shows up in everyday life, this activity gives participants the chance to take real-world action by joining Amnesty International's annual **Write for Rights** campaign. It's a powerful and practical way to show that words can make a difference especially when it comes to standing up for child rights, and that young people have the right and the power to use their voices for justice and solidarity.



How long will it take?

Project work can be done over a week or split into three 1 hour sessions



What to do

- Start with a class discussion. Ask: Have you ever written a letter to someone to show support or stand up for something?
- Then introduce the idea of writing as a form of activism. Letters and messages can build connection, raise awareness and change lives.
- Also explain that while child rights are protected by law, not everyone respects them. But when enough people speak up together, change can happen.
- Share the concept behind Write for Rights – Amnesty International's global letter-writing campaign. Every year, millions of people all over the world send messages of support to individuals – sometimes young people – whose rights are under threat. And the impact is real, often life-changing.
- Explore a few cases from this year's campaign on Amnesty's website: [amnesty.org/en/get-involved/write-for-rights](https://www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/write-for-rights)
- Emphasise that young people have just as much right as adults to speak out.
- In groups, invite your students to choose one or more cases that they feel strongly about.
- Ask them to analyse the cases using two tools:
 - Jigsaw of child rights: Simplified 15 groups of child rights – to identify which rights are being denied in each case.
 - Empathy-Solidarity line – to map out how this person or community might be feeling, and the qualities they show.
- Next, ask each group to prepare a short presentation about their case, highlighting which rights are at stake, what challenges the individual or community faces, and how solidarity can make a difference.
- Invite each participant to write a letter of solidarity to the chosen person or community, using their analysis to explain why the situation violates child rights, and offering encouragement,

words of kindness and hope and recognition of their courage. These letters don't need to be long – what matters is they're sincere and thoughtful.

- As an optional extension, ask participants to create a journalistic piece (a short article, video report or podcast) about their case, to raise awareness in the wider school community. This allows them to become ambassadors for solidarity and inspire others to take action.
- To close the activity, ask participants to write a solidarity leaf (using the template included in this resource) to mark their action. If your group has worked with *Hear Me, See Me: A Creative Introduction to Children's Rights*, participants can add their leaves to the Child Rights Listening Tree to visually show the class's growing commitment to justice and solidarity.
- End with a reflection on how it feels to write to someone who needs support and to raise their voices alongside others worldwide.

Activity 3

Solidarity through writing

This final creative activity is about imagination, empathy and storytelling. It invites participants to take everything they have learned – about rights, feelings and standing together – and turn it into fiction, poetry or art. By creating their own work, they will discover that when stories include solidarity, they can inspire change.



How long will it take?

40 minutes (can be extended as project work or homework)



What to do

- Introduce the idea. Ask: Can a story change the world? Then explain that fiction and art can be powerful ways to inspire empathy and solidarity – helping others feel what it's like to walk in someone else's shoes and how people can take action.
- Ask participants to write a short story or poem with these key elements:
 - A character faces a problem and feels alone.
 - The character knows their child rights.
 - They share their story with others.
 - Other characters show empathy and take action.
- The story ends with solidarity bringing change – big or small – possibly, in a person's life, a community, or even the law.
- Encourage participants to add *magical moments of transformation* if they wish. And to illustrate their stories. What matters is the emotional journey from isolation to connection.

- Inspire with examples. Share some books that reflect empathy, courage and solidarity in action. Here are a few suggestions:

- *Dreams of Freedom* – Amnesty International
- *We Have a Dream* – Mya-Rose Craig
- *Tender Earth* – Sita Brahmachari
- *Fight Back and Kicked Out* – A. M. Dassu
- *The Boy at the Back of the Class* – Onjali Q. Rauf
- *The Arrival* – Shaun Tan
- *Alpha* – Bessora and Barroux

Feel free to explore additional books and stories from your own cultural or community contexts.

- Collect everyone's writing and artwork into a class Solidarity Stories anthology. You could read some of the stories aloud and display selected pages in the classroom or hallway.
- Finally, reflect: What message does your story send to others? What does your story say about the power of standing together?



Activity resources

Leaf template



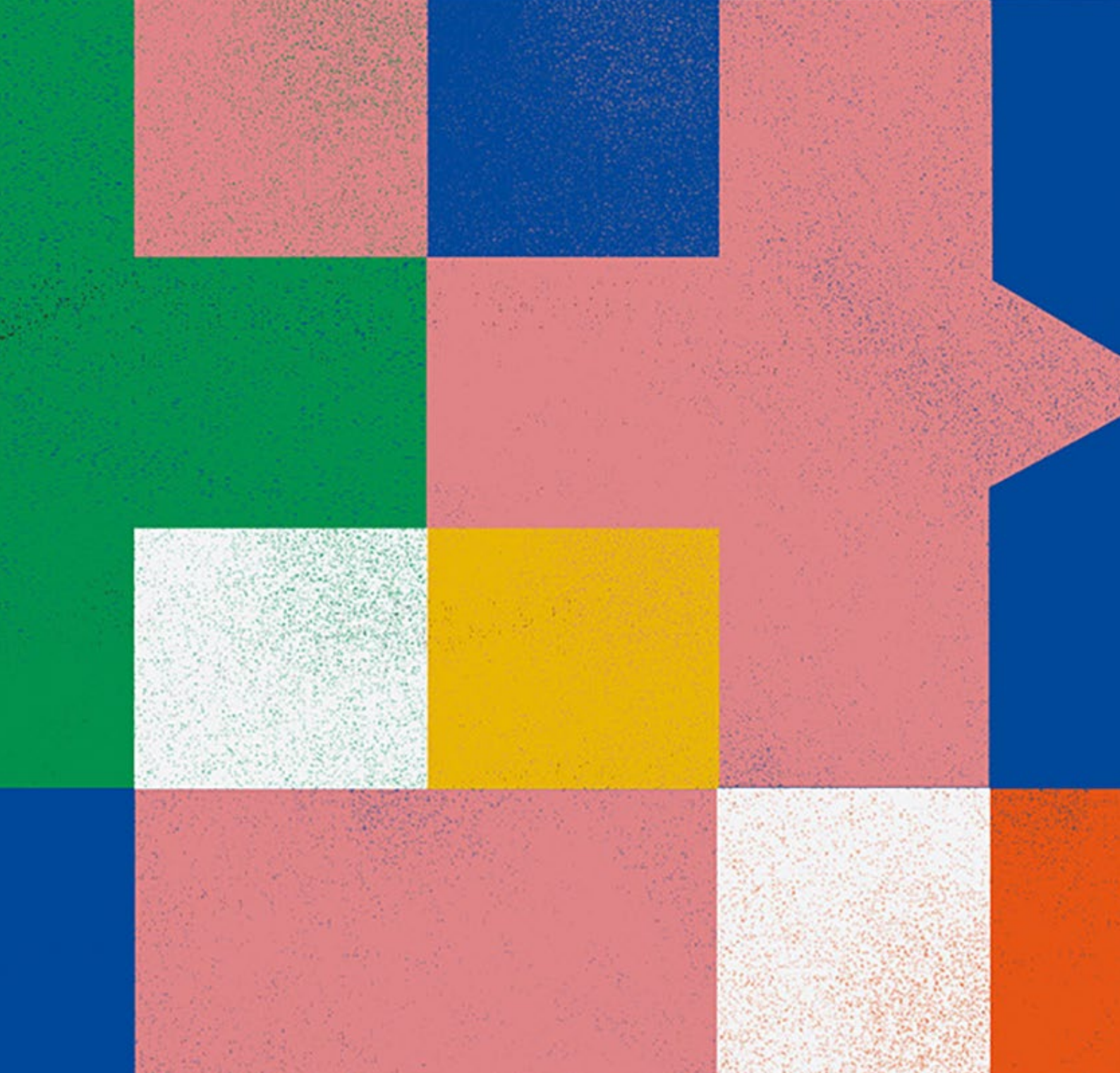
Jigsaw of child rights: Simplified 15 groups of child rights



Source: Nicky Parker, Amnesty International, *These Rights Are Your Rights: An Empowering Guide for Children Everywhere*, Andersen Press, 2024

Further resources

- Amnesty International, *Dreams of Freedom*, Frances Lincoln Children's Books, 2015.
- Amnesty International, *Write for Rights – A Short Guide* (e-learning course).
academy.amnesty.org
- Amnesty International, *Write for Rights* – annual global campaign of solidarity with people whose rights are under threat.
amnesty.org/en/get-involved/write-for-rights
- Amnesty International, Angelina Jolie and Geraldine Van Bueren, *Know Your Rights and Claim Them: A Guide for Youth*, Andersen Press, 2021.
- Bessora and Barroux, *Alpha*, Barrington Stoke, 2016.
- A. M. Dassu, *Fight Back*, Scholastic, 2022.
- A. M. Dassu, *Kicked Out*, Scholastic, 2024.
- Mya-Rose Craig, *We Have a Dream*, Magic Cat Publishing, 2021.
- Nicky Parker and Amnesty International, *These Rights Are Your Rights: An Empowering Guide for Children Everywhere*, Andersen Press, 2024.
- Onjali Q. Rauf, *The Boy at the Back of the Class*, Orion Children's Books, 2018.
- Sita Brahmachari, *Tender Earth*, Macmillan Children's Books, 2017.
- Shaun Tan, *The Arrival*, Hodder Children's Books, 2006.
- *Seen and Heard: Young People's Voices and Freedom of Expression* – European co-funded project on young people's freedom of expression.
seenandheardproject.eu



This resource is part of the *Seen and Heard: Young People's Voices and Freedom of Expression*. More information:
<https://seenandheardproject.eu/>

Project led by the University of Malta and co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the authors only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

