



'Year of the Sister'

Well-Read Mom Family Supplement

Well-Read Mom's Guide to Bringing the Great Books into Your Home

January: Who Is My Neighbor?

Discuss along with *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee

On what does human dignity depend? Does dignity depend on social status? Why should I care about my neighbor at all? How do their concerns have anything to do with me? How do we see past the differences and quirks that are obvious in our neighbor to embrace their human dignity?

***The Vanderbeekers of 141st Street* by Katrina Yan Glaser**

The biracial Vanderbeeker family have been informed by their reclusive and grouchy landlord that they must move out of their Harlem brownstone. The five children realize they have eleven days to convince him to change his mind and let them stay.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are some of the qualities that make the Vanderbeekers such an enjoyable family? Which kid is the most appealing to you? Which Vanderbeeker kid is most like you?
2. How do the children apply their virtues to Mr. Biederman?
3. Why does learning of Mr. Biederman's personal tragedy change his status as an "enemy"?

More for older readers:

Out of My Mind by Sharon Draper



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For Younger Readers

***Last Stop on Market Street* by Matt de la Peña** Young CJ skips down the steps after church in a mood to find fault with the details of the day and the details of his life. His Nana, unperturbed, offers CJ small opportunities to see his circumstances and the people in them differently. Beginning with the blind man on the bus, CJ begins to have a different perspective. At the end, CJ is grateful.

Discussion Questions:

1. The bus drives more slowly than cars and makes many stops. Are you able to appreciate more when you are curious or when you are in a rush? Do you see "more" when you are curious or do you see more when you are in a hurry?
2. When you are grateful for what you have, are you happier? Does anyone in your family help you to be grateful?
3. How does the blind man on the bus help CJ to see his circumstances differently?
4. At the beginning of the story CJ and his Nana are coming out of church. At the end of the story CJ and his Nana serve food at a shelter. What connection is there between going to church and helping others?
5. Why is CJ "glad [he] came"?

More for younger readers:

The Bell Rang by James E. Ransome

The Other Side by Jacqueline Woodson