

Kids Take **Action**

by Lisa Jo Rudy

How can young
people help improve
the world?

INFORMATIONAL TEXT
SOCIAL STUDIES

Level	S/40
Lexile®	900L

Informational Text

Look for the genre features noted below as you read this book. Use the features to help you understand the text.

The text has one or more main idea(s).

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The text includes facts and examples to support the main idea(s).

Informational Text

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Information is shown visually through photographs, charts, and other graphics.

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Kids Can Change the World

Kids have the power to affect the world around them. They can help change unfair rules or help end pollution. Kids can help save animals or feed hungry people.

Some young people work on their own to make change. Many work in groups. Sometimes they have adult advisers, teachers, or local leaders to guide them. Often, groups of kids join adult-led organizations that can offer help and even financial support.



▲ Kids can work with adult groups to organize large projects for change.



▲ Young people meet with former U.S. Senator and Secretary of State John Kerry.

Young people have made a difference in many ways. Working alone or with others, kids have

- changed rules to help protect the lives of animals
- changed laws to protect the environment
- helped bring lifesaving techniques to classrooms
- helped inform the public about the dangers animals face in the wild
- changed school rules to improve student nutrition

▼ **People pick up litter near a local stream. A simple way to make change is to get involved with a local community improvement project.**

- informed people about healthy eating habits and helped feed homeless people.

All of these kid-led projects are featured in this book. These students have worked hard to improve things. Some of those kids worked for a long time. All of them succeeded in making change.

▼ **Young people often take part in projects that restore natural areas so native plants and animals can thrive.**





▲ Young people meet with leaders.



The changes young people make often happen locally in their own communities or schools. When an issue is important to students, there's no stopping them. They ask parents, teachers, or other adults questions about what they can do to solve a problem. Most importantly, they ask about and contact offices that can help them accomplish their goals.

Sometimes it is easy to make things happen, and other times it takes hard work and grit.

Most students have noticed something that they felt was unfair, unhealthy, or wrong. They can make a change!

▼ Community members paint a wall in a city playground.



Six Steps for Changing the World

1. Students should choose issues they care about. For example, they might notice litter in a park or a problem at school.
2. Learn what has already been done to try to fix the problem and what stands in the way of change.
3. Find friends, family, teachers, youth group organizers, or local politicians who care.

4. Decide what actions will have an impact. Some problems can be solved with an afternoon of hard work. Others require changes to local or even state laws.
5. Get organized. Meet with the team to make a plan.
6. Take action!

It's important to remember that some young people in this book worked for years to make change. In the end, though, they succeeded.



◀ Students voice their concerns at a school meeting.

Young people gather and sign up to help make a difference in the world. ▶



Protecting Animals

A Petition for Change

There are many causes that are important. But one cause that is particularly important to young people is protecting and helping animals.

Sixth grader Laurie Wolff was a student in Clark County, Nevada. She was required to **dissect** an earthworm in science class.

Some students feel uncomfortable cutting apart a dead animal to study it. Many times, though, students have no choice. They either take part or get a lower grade.

Laurie was a good student, but she refused to dissect an animal. She had always received As in science. She was upset when this time she got a C.

With her grandmother's encouragement, Laurie decided to take action. As an eighth grader, Laurie started a petition among her schoolmates. Then she presented the petition to the school board. A petition with many signatures can help change local rules. Petitions allow people to show others that their ideas have a great deal of support.



▲ Students gather to sign a petition to make a change in their school.

Laurie asked the school **district** to offer another option to dissection. After reviewing Laurie's request, the school district—the ninth largest in the country—looked for options. It found that it was possible to do dissections using computers. The district changed its rules. Now students in Las Vegas can decide if they want to dissect real or **virtual** animals.

Students around the country began following Laurie's lead. They protested dissection. Within a few years, nine states had policies allowing students to say no to dissecting real animals. The **Humane** Society supports the students and protects animals. It lends computer dissection software to schools. Now many students can choose to dissect virtual animals.



▲ According to animal protection groups, computer dissection programs are easier to use and less expensive than dissecting real animals in class.

What Is a Petition?

A petition is a document that is shared to help a cause, protest something, voice a complaint, or get a rule or law changed. The document is signed by people who want to support the issue.

The petitioner gets as many people to sign the petition as possible. This can be done online or by taking the petition to a public place, such as a public event, and asking people to sign.

When the petitioner has many signatures, the petition may be presented to courts, government officials, or other groups. These people decide whether to move forward with the cause.

With enough signatures, a petition sends a powerful message to leaders that people want change. ►





◀ Students in a science classroom work on a virtual dissection on a computer. No animals are harmed.



Partly due to the work of students expressing their concerns, many schools around the country now offer virtual dissection labs. Students can see inside animals' bodies and learn about them. They can also use virtual dissection tools such as special scissors and tweezers. Students watch videos and learn about the different parts of the animals' bodies without hurting the animals.

Some teachers feel that virtual dissection is not as useful as real dissection. They believe students learn more by working with tools and animals in a real lab.

Other teachers like virtual labs better than real dissection. They like that virtual labs show and tell students about the animals they're studying. Virtual labs also allow students to look at different animals, such as frogs, earthworms, and rats. Real dissection of so many animals is very costly and difficult.

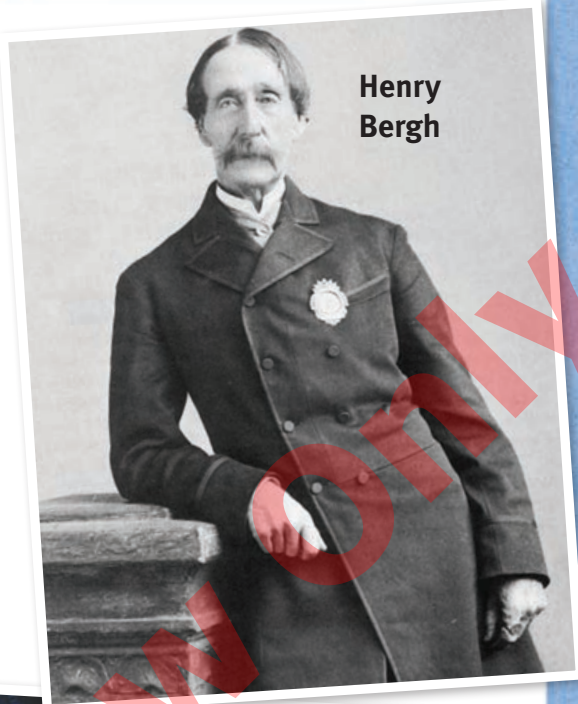
CASE STUDY

The ASPCA

The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) was founded in 1866. At the time, animals were extremely important to everyday life, especially horses. But instead of being respected for their hard work, horses were often overworked and harmed by their owners. New Yorker Henry Bergh felt all animals deserved fair treatment, so he founded the ASPCA.

Today there are branches of the organization all over the country, rescuing and protecting animals and encouraging people to adopt them as pets. Kids can volunteer at the ASPCA. They can visit rescued animals, help out at adoption events, and raise awareness about animal protection and rescue.

Through the ASPCA, people can find ways to help animals. ►



Henry Bergh

