

## CCSS-Aligned Curriculum Guide for grades K-6

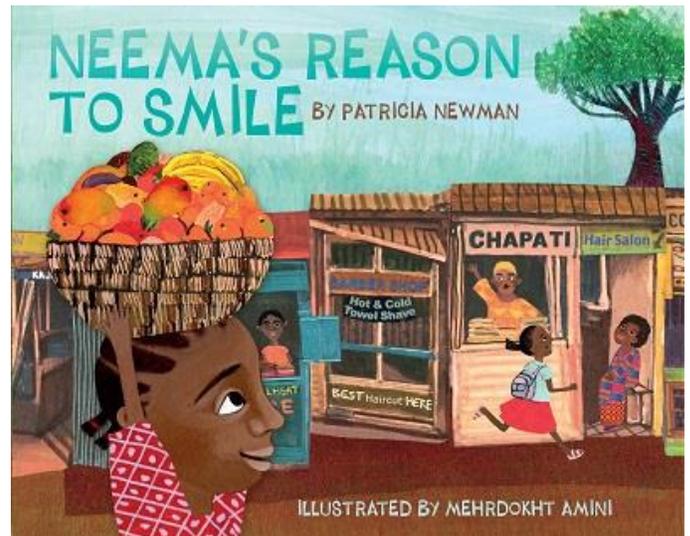
### Neema's Reason to Smile by Patricia Newman and Mehrdokht Amini

This text pairs well with units of study that examine the following:

- Social Emotional Learning – global citizenship, character education
- Social Studies – geography, cultural comparisons, comparisons of schools
- Literacy - comprehension, writing, literary devices
- Financial Literacy – value of money, budgeting, international currency
- Genre - Informational

#### Curriculum Designer:

Donna Rosenblum, Teacher Librarian and Executive Director of Reason2Smile



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### About the Author

Patricia Newman's award-winning books show kids how their actions can ripple around the world. She is the author of Robert F. Sibert Honor Book *Sea Otter Heroes: The Predators That Saved an Ecosystem*; as well as NSTA Outstanding Science Trade Book *Eavesdropping on Elephants: How Listening Helps Conservation*; Zoo Scientists to the Rescue, a Bank Street College of Education Best Children's Book; Green Earth Book Award winner, *Plastic, Ahoy! Investigating the Great Pacific Garbage Patch*; Booklist Editor's Choice title *Ebola: Fears and Facts*; and *Neema's Reason to Smile*, winner of a Parents' Choice Award. Newman hopes to empower kids to think about the adults they'd like to become. Her author visits are described as "phenomenal," "passionate," and "inspirational."

For more information, visit her website at [www.patriciamnewman.com](http://www.patriciamnewman.com) or email her at [newmanbooks@live.com](mailto:newmanbooks@live.com).

### About the Illustrator

Mehrdokht Amini was born Iran and is currently living in England. Her book *Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns*, written by Hena Khan, was selected for the 2013 Association for Library Service to Children notable children's booklist. In 2016, her book *Chicken in the Kitchen* won Best Book at the Children's Africana Book Awards as was nominated for the Kate Greaway Medal.

For more information, visit her website at [www.myart2c.com](http://www.myart2c.com) or email her at [mehrdokht1976@yahoo.com](mailto:mehrdokht1976@yahoo.com).

### Book Summary

*"A wonderful story that captures the dreams and hopes of a young Kenyan girl wanting to be more!"*

Eric Walters, author and founder of Creation of Hope, an orphanage in the Mbooni Region in Kenya

Every day Neema balances a heavy basket of fruit on her head and traces the dusty path to town that unwinds like a cheetah's tail. She wants to go to school, but Mama cannot afford the uniform and supplies. Neema saves her money and dreams big dreams, until one day hope skips down the street wearing a red skirt and a white shirt.

*"Lyrical and lovely, Neema's Reason to Smile reminds us that education is the greatest gift we can give a child, and that with enough love and determination, dreams sometimes do come true. Moving, important, and inspiring."*

Newbery Medalist Katherine Applegate

# Lesson Plan – Readers’ Theater

**Instructions:** Read the book aloud to children first, so that they can enjoy the illustrations and become familiar with the story. Then, hand out a set of photocopied scripts to students. You can use the roles below or combine some of them depending on the number of students. Ask the remaining children to be the audience. Have performers face the audience and simply read their parts on the first run-through. Once all readers are comfortable with their parts, have a second reading with the opportunity to act out the story while reading. Add costumes and props if desired. Each performer should have a name tag/sign identifying their role to the audience.

**Roles:**

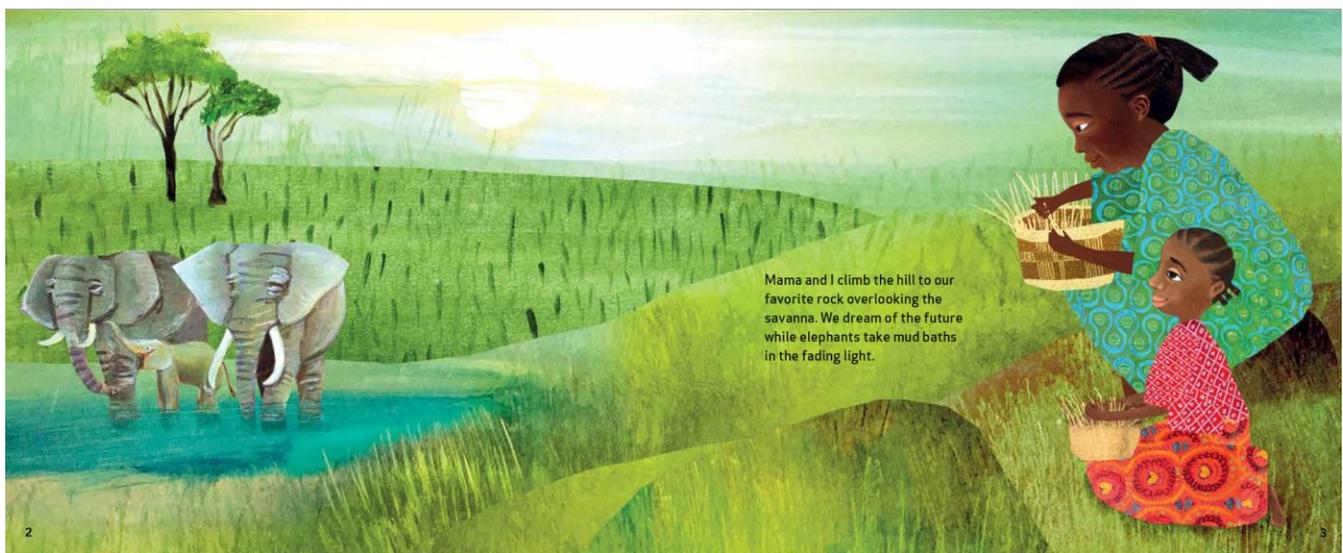
- Narrator 1
- Narrator 2
- Narrator 3
- Neema
- Mama
- Teacher Madam
- Old Beggar Man
- Water Cart Man
- Asha
- Corn Man
- Chapati Woman

**Script:**

See pages 3 through 5 of this curriculum guide

**CCSS Anchor Standards**

SL.1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.



# Readers' Theater Script

*Adapted by Donna Rosenblum from the book Neema's Reason to Smile  
by Patricia Newman, illustrated by Mehrdokht Amini, LightSwitch Learning, 2018*

**Narrator 1:** The story is set in the country of Kenya, Africa, along the south eastern coastline near the city of Mombasa. At the end of the day, Neema and her mother climb the hill near their favorite rock that overlooks the savanna. They dream of the future while elephants take their mud bath in the fading light.

**Neema:** I want to go to school, but without money I can only dream.

**Mama:** You could be a nurse

**Neema:** Or a scientist

**Narrator 2:** They empty their pockets and the coins jingle with the promise of dreams come true. They take out what they need for food and one lonely coin remains.

**Neema:** I will put it in the dream basket we made for my school money.

**Narrator 3:** They next morning, Mama gives Neema a heavy basket of fruit to sell. She must walk all the way to town on a dusty path that unwinds like a cheetah's tail.

**Mama:** Off you go little one.

**Narrator 1:** Neema begins her long walk to town.

**Neema:** Oranges, mangoes. Bananas.

**Corn Man:** Two oranges here. Still not in school Neema? Do you want to be like me and roast corn your whole life?

**Neema:** Mama and I are saving for the government school.

**Corn Man:** That school is free.

**Neema:** But uniforms, paper and pencils are not.

**Narrator 2:** As Neema approaches the town she spies a girl in a red skirt and white shirt skip by. The government school students wear blue and white. Is there another school in town? Neema follows hers carefully balancing her fruit basket.

**Chapati Woman:** Mangoes over here child.

**Narrator 3:** By the time Neema pockets her coins the girl is gone.

**Narrator 1:** Neema spots the girl in red and white days later crossing the log bridge to town and follows. As she walks, she meets the toothless old beggar and gives him his daily orange.

**Old Beggar:** Thank you Neema for giving me this fruit. The heart of a lion beats inside you.

**Narrator 2:** Once again the girl in the uniform disappears.

**Water Cart Man:** One banana little one. Still not in school? Do you want to be like me and peddle drinking water your whole life?

**Neema:** Mama and I are saving for the government school.

**Water Cart Man:** Those tourists look hungry for fruit.

**Narrator 3:** That night after chores Neema and her mother climb the hill. After taking coins for food they place the remaining coins in the dream basket.

Later mama's last good needle breaks.

**Mama:** I am sorry. Neema, but I must buy new ones.

**Neema:** Will there ever be enough for school and make my dreams come true?

**Narrator 1:** Days later in town, Neema spots the girl in the uniform. She follows through the red doors and into a school.

**Asha:** I am Asha. Welcome to my school.

Teacher Madam, a visitor.

**Neema:** Some fruit bibi.

**Teacher Madam:** Here is a coin for the mango. Do you go to school, little one?

**Neema:** Mama and I are saving for the government school.

**Teacher Madam:** Come tomorrow with your mama. I have an idea for you.

**Narrator 2:** That night Neema tells Mama about the school and Asha and Teacher Madam. They empty the dream basket and count the coins.

**Neema:** Are they enough Mama? I don't need to ride the matatu.

**Mama:** Maybe. Someday you can work in an office.

**Neema:** Or be an inventor.

**Narrator 3:** The next day Neema and Mama walked to town along the dusty path to meet with Teacher Madam. She weaves a bright future of lessons, books and two meals a day.

**Mama:** How much for uniforms and supplies.

**Teacher Madam:** Pay what you can. We provide the rest. Neema found us because you sparked her desire to learn. Let's give her the skills to make her dreams come true.

**Mama:** How will we live without your fruit money, little one.

**Neema:** I can sell fruit on my way to school. I could become a teacher.

**Mama:** Or a doctor.

**Narrator 1:** Mama gives their coins to Teacher Madam and she gives Neema her school uniform. Neema spends the day in school as a new member of the flock. She learns her letters and spends time in the library.

**Narrator 2:** Later that evening Mama and Neema put coins in the dream basket.

**Neema:** For your sewing machine dream Mama.

**Mama:** With a machine I can work faster and take in more work. Maybe I can have my own business one day.

**Narrator 3:** Months later as Neema walks to town in her school uniform of red and white, another girl with a basket of yams on her head follows her. They cross the log bridge and travel into town to stop at outside the red door to school.

**Neema:** I am Neema. Welcome to my school.

# Lesson Plan – Acts of Kindness

## Character Education

After reading *Neema's Reason to Smile*, ask students to use the graphic organizer on the next page to identify:

1. The acts of kindness in the story.
2. The character traits that prompt these acts of kindness.
3. Then, identify ways students could be kind to one other and to their families.

Start an Acts of Kindness Campaign in your classroom.

1. Give each student a journal notebook to record his/her ACTS OF KINDNESS.
2. Students will be responsible for jotting one or more acts of kindness they did each day for two weeks. Encourage students to include photos or illustrations.
3. After the two weeks are up, reflect on these acts in some concrete way. Write a poem, create a bulletin board, a story board, or an infographic.

Take the campaign to the next level:

1. Assign students a writing project that uses their persuasive and informational writing skills about a teen activist.
2. Students may choose an activist or a cause from a list you provide or choose their own.
3. Research the teen activist/cause.
4. Students create a presentation about their activist or cause and share it with the class. One of the components of the presentation must be how students can help.

Give your Acts of Kindness Campaign a social justice focus:

1. Students gather pledges for their Acts of Kindness.
2. Sponsors may choose to give a flat rate (\$1.00, \$5.00, \$10.00, etc...) for participating OR any dollar figure they want for each act of kindness the child performs and logs. At the end of the two weeks students will be asked to bring in all sponsorship money they raised through their Acts of Kindness.
3. Donate the money raised to an organization that values education, such as Reason2Smile, the nonprofit that supports Jambo Jipya, Neema's school.
4. Students may want to set a goal ahead of time. For instance, \$300 is the cost to sponsor one student for a year a Jampo Jipya.

## CCSS Anchor Standards

R.1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

R.4: Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

W.7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

W.8: Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### ACTS OF KINDNESS

- Find at least three acts of kindness in *Neema's Reason to Smile*. Write them in the white boxes.
- Then list words that describe the people who performed these acts of kindness. Write your words in the gray boxes.




# Lesson Plan – Reason to Solve

## Math-a-thon for Social Justice

This activity is a terrific way to simultaneously review math concepts already taught in class and raise money for a good cause.

1. Select an educational organization for the class to sponsor, e.g. Reason2Smile.org, the nonprofit that makes it possible for students such as Neema to attend Jambo Jipya School in Kenya.
2. Send home the sponsor sheet on the next page with a letter to families about the school's Reason to Solve math-a-thon for social justice. Be sure to add in the name of the school/organization you are supporting and to whom checks should be made payable.
3. Students collect sponsors who will pay a per-problem rate, e.g. \$.01 per correct problem or \$.25 per correct problem.
4. Develop a packet of 100 math problems for the students in your classroom. These packets may contain review problems from all of the units studied so far this year, e.g. arithmetic skills, fractions, area, word problems, etc.
5. Send the packet home with each student.
6. Students must return the packet by the assigned deadline.
7. Grade the packets and record the number of correct problems on the packet and student's sponsor sheet.
8. Students return to sponsors to collect pledges. Sponsors pay only for correct problems.
9. Prepare a short video for the students at Jambo Jipya (or whichever school/organization students chose to support).

## CCSS Anchor Standards

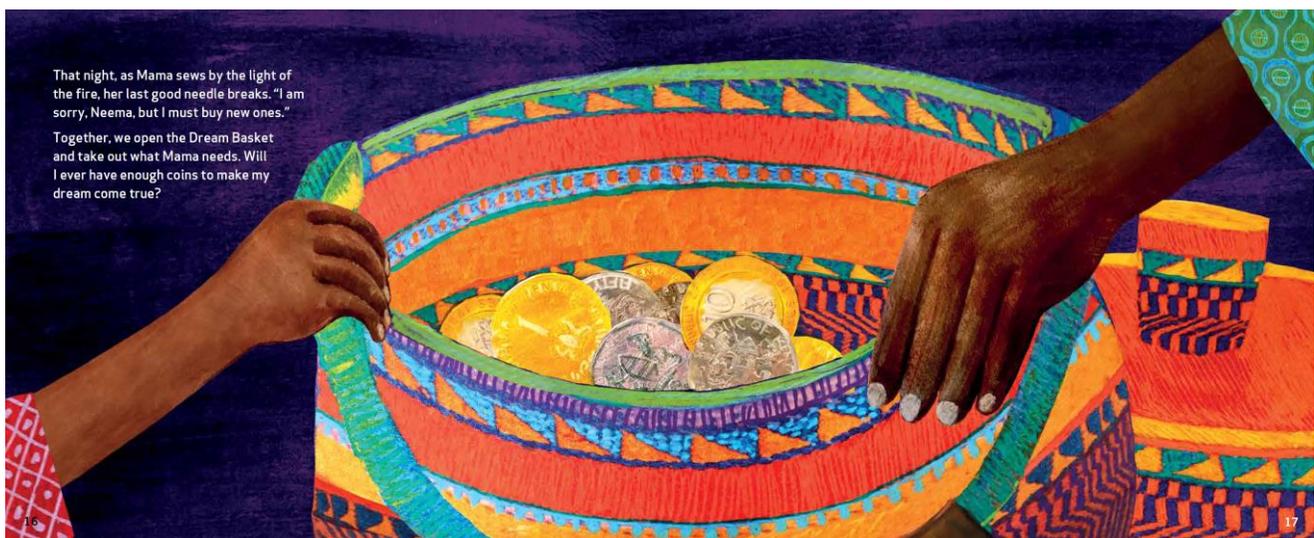
MP.1: Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.

MP.2: Reason abstractly and quantitatively.

MP.6: Attend to precision.

SL.5: Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.

W.6: Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.





# Lesson Plan – Compare and Contrast

## Compare and Contrast

Ask students to work in groups or individually to compare and contrast Neema’s school to their school. How are the schools the same? How are they different?

Have them complete the following graphic organizer using text-based evidence.

Read more books about schools in other countries—a suggested reading list is provided below. Discuss the similarities and differences between:

- your school and the schools in these other books, and
- between Neema’s school and these other schools.

Some suggestions include:

### Fiction

- *Yasmin’s Hammer* by Ann Malaspina, illustrated by Doug Chayka
- *Nasreen’s Secret School* written and illustrated by Jeanette Winter
- *Razia’s Ray of Hope: One Girl’s Dream of an Education* by Elizabeth Suneby, illustrated by Suana Verelst

### Nonfiction

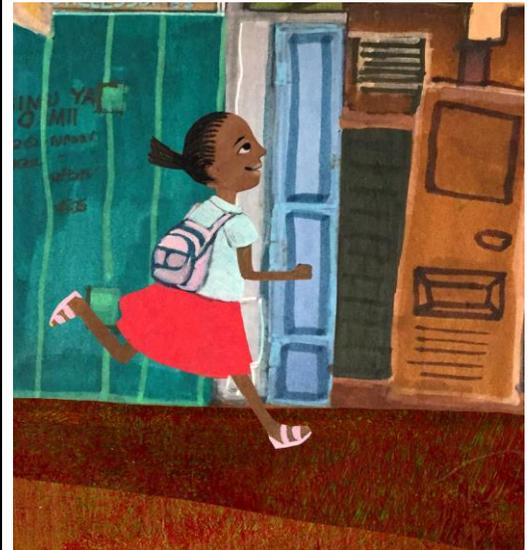
- *Adventures to School: Real-Life Journeys of Students From Around the World* by Baptiste Paul, Miranda Paul and illustrated by Isabel Muñoz
- *Girl Rising: Changing the World One Girl at a Time* by Tanya Lee Stone in association with Girl Rising
- *The Story Of Ruby Bridges* by Robert Coles, illustrated by George Ford
- *She Persisted* by Chelsea Clinton, illustrated by Alexandra Boiger
- *Malala: Activist for Girls’ Education* by Raphaële Frier, illustrated by Aurélia Fronty

## CCSS Anchor Standards

R.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

R.5 Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

R.9 Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**In each box. write one way your school and Neema's school are the same.**



**List the ways your school and Neema's school are different.**

My school

Neema's school



# Lesson Plan – Close Reading

## Close Reading - My Favorite Scene

Describe in detail your favorite scene from the book and include the following information.

- Why it is a significant scene?
- Does the scene relate to another book you have read?
- Use specific evidence to support the connections from the first two bullets.
- How can you personally identify with the characters in this scene or the scene itself? What evidence are you using to support this connection?

## Close Reading as STEM-Thinking

To a STEM-thinker, reading is a way to access and accumulate data. Through reading, we absorb information, analyze it, and draw conclusions, much like a scientist would.

Here's a fun STEM-thinking activity for students that connects to literacy:

1. List all of the plot points in *Neema's Reason to Smile*, one plot point per sticky note.
2. Organize them in chronological order.
3. Discuss how each of these plot points fit together to tell the big picture of *Neema's Reason to Smile*.
4. Remove one of the plot points. Does the story still work? Why or why not?
5. Reorder the plot points. What kind of story can you tell?

## CCSS Anchor Standards

R.3 Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

R.5 Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

SL.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.



### About the Curriculum Designer:

**Donna Rosenblum** has been an educator for over 30 years – first as a high school social studies teacher and then as a school librarian. She is presently the Supervisor of the School Library System for Nassau BOCES. Donna is passionate about children and education and became a member of the Reason2Smile's board in 2011 and Executive Director in 2015.