

# BOOKNOTES

EDUCATORS GUIDE

## thematic connections

**Discrimination • Injustice  
Social Action • Civil Rights**

**Grades 3–5**

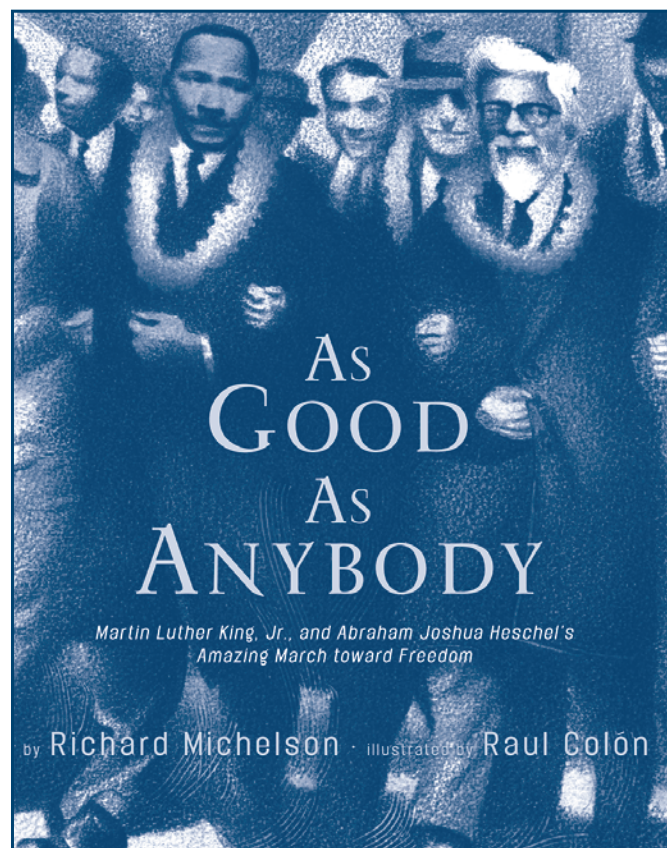
## about the book

**As boys, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Abraham Joshua Heschel were, literally, worlds apart, yet what they experienced in their formative years—for Martin, the injustices of discrimination in racially divided America, and for Abraham, the evils of religious hatred and bigotry in Nazi Germany—would draw them together in adulthood to help change the course of history.**

*As Good as Anybody* is the story of how these two seemingly unlike boys rose above their own personal suffering to become great civil rights leaders. Armed with the power of love, courage, and friendship, together they showed that peace, tolerance, and acceptance are worth standing up for, and that united in our differences the world is a stronger and better place.



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Alfred A. Knopf HC: 978-0-375-83335-9  
GLB: 978-0-375-93335-6

**"I solemnly pledge to uphold the fair name of Jews. Not only because we need their friendship, and surely we do, but mainly because bigotry in any form is an affront to us all."**

—The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.

**"One hundred years ago, the emancipation was proclaimed. It is time for the white man to strive for self-emancipation, to set himself free of bigotry."**

—Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

Illustration © 2008 by Raul Colón

## pre-reading activity

Show students the cover of *As Good as Anybody*. Have them “read the cover” to predict what the story might be about.

Discuss what the title means. Elicit many different responses, recording each on chart paper. Next, ask students if they recognize any of the people shown in the cover illustration (some students may recognize Dr. King).

Activate prior knowledge about Dr. King’s life and the civil rights movement, and tell students that they will be learning about another important figure in the struggle for civil rights, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel.

# thematic connections

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

**Discrimination**—Ask students to write a personal definition of the words *discriminate* and *discrimination*. Ask for volunteers to share their definitions; write key words and commonalities on the board. Gradually, begin to form a final definition for each word to which the whole class can refer. Form a large circle and lead a book talk to discuss how both King and Heschel personally experienced discrimination in their lives. Offer students an opportunity to share their own personal or observed experiences with discrimination.

**Injustice**—After being forced to leave Germany, Abraham discovers that no one will hire Jews. He decides to leave for the United States because, “In America, he’d heard, everyone was treated fairly.” Do you think what Abraham had heard about America was true? What injustices did he encounter in the United States after he had settled there? What did he do to make his new country a more fair and just place for all people? Discuss what Abraham meant when he said, “God did not make a world with just one color flower.”

**Social Action**—Both Dr. King and Rabbi Heschel were men of words—words that inspired thousands of people. But they backed up their words with action. Discuss what the term *social action* means. Challenge students to offer examples of social action (petitions, protests, marches, writing to government leaders, boycotts, sit-ins, etc.). Discuss Rabbi Heschel’s statement, “It is important not only to protest evil, but to be seen protesting.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why or why not? Challenge students to generate a list of social actions that they can do to make their school/community/world a better place.

Write the phrase *power in numbers* on the board. Lead a discussion on the meaning of this phrase and how it applies to events in the text.

**Civil Rights**—Some students may have heard or read about the Civil Rights Movement, but many may not know what the term actually means. Pass out dictionaries and direct students to look up the words *civil* and *rights*. After all students have found, read, and written the definitions, organize the class in a large circle to discuss the meaning of each word and to come up with a class definition of *civil rights*. While in the circle, conduct an interactive read-aloud of *As Good as Anybody*, focusing on the civil rights that Dr. King and Rabbi Heschel were denied, and as adults, worked to obtain.



# connecting to the curriculum

**History/Social Studies**—Readers learn that “a colored woman refused to stand and move to the back of the bus so that a white man could sit down. She was arrested and sent to jail.” That woman was Rosa Parks (1913–2005). Her act of civil disobedience helped launch the civil rights movement. Give students time to research this important act and the subsequent Montgomery Bus Boycott.

Rabbi Heschel fled to the United States from Warsaw, Poland, before the Nazis began rounding up Jewish people and sending them to concentration camps. Many members of his family were killed in those camps. During the Nazi regime, Jews were forced to wear yellow Star of David patches on their clothing, a symbol of the Jewish religion.

To help students build empathy for this form of ethnic and religious discrimination, conduct a one-day simulation in which some members of the class will be placed together based on a personal similarity that is deemed undesirable. (In this simulation, the teacher will represent the government; the students will represent the citizens of the country). Divide students into two groups. Group one will be comprised of students with brown eyes. Group two will be comprised of students with any eye color other than brown. Tape a sticky note onto each student in group two and instruct them to wear it throughout the day. Group one will be afforded many privileges throughout the day, such as being able to get a drink first after recess, leaving two minutes early to line up for lunch, being given stickers of stars for their work, etc.; group two will not. The next day, switch the process.

On day three, gather the class into a circle and have a discussion on the discrimination simulation and how students felt from both sides. Follow up the discussion with a writing assignment in which students write a personal essay that describes what the simulation taught them about discrimination.

**Language Arts**—Both Dr. King and Rabbi Heschel loved words and used words to inspire people. After reading *As Good as Anybody*, work with students to write name poems to honor both men. Show students how to begin by writing the name Martin, vertically, on the board or chart paper. Beginning with the letter *m*, ask students to come up with a word (it can be a noun, verb, or adjective) that describes Dr. King, such as *mighty* or *minister*. Continue until all letters of his name are covered. Do the same for Abraham. Display poems in a prominent location in the room or hallway.

**Music/Art**—Work with the school music teacher to create a short unit on the music of the civil rights movement. (Visit the following Web site for a listing of the top 10 songs of the civil rights movement: [folkmusic.about.com/od/toptens/tp/CivilRightsSong.htm](http://folkmusic.about.com/od/toptens/tp/CivilRightsSong.htm)). Give students time to listen to these songs; have copies of the lyrics available for students to read, and spend time discussing the social and historical contexts and meanings of the lyrics. Give students an opportunity to perform some of the songs to parents and other students.

## vocabulary/ use of language

Ask students to write down unfamiliar words and define them by taking clues from the context of the book. Such words may include: *bigotry*, *affront*, *emancipation*, *ignorant*, *congregation*, *sermons*, *jeered*, *prejudice*, *rabbi*, and *protest*.



## related titles

### by theme

#### **A Thousand Never Evers**

Shana Burg  
Grades 5 up

Delacorte Press HC: 978-0-385-73470-7  
GLB: 978-0-385-90468-1

#### **Night Running**

Elisa Carbone  
Illustrated by E. B. Lewis  
Grades K–3

Alfred A. Knopf HC: 978-0-375-82247-6  
GLB: 978-0-375-92247-3

#### **The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963**

Christopher Paul Curtis  
Grades 5 up

Yearling PB: 978-0-440-41412-4  
Delacorte Press HC: 978-0-385-32175-4

#### **Jacob's Rescue**

Malka Drucker and Michael Halperin  
Grades 4–7

Yearling PB: 978-0-440-40965-6

#### **Many Thousand Gone: African Americans from Slavery to Freedom**

Virginia Hamilton  
Illustrated by Leo and Diane Dillon  
Grades 3 up

Alfred A. Knopf trade PB: 978-0-679-87936-7  
GLB: 978-0-394-92873-9

#### **The People Could Fly: The Picture Book**

Virginia Hamilton  
Illustrated by Leo and Diane Dillon  
All Grades

Alfred A. Knopf HC: 978-0-375-82405-0  
Book and CD package: 978-0-375-84553-6

#### **Mirandy and Brother Wind**

Patricia C. McKissack  
Illustrated by Jerry Pinkney  
Grades K–3

Dragonfly PB: 978-0-679-88333-3  
Alfred A. Knopf HC: 978-0-394-88765-4

#### **Follow the Drinking Gourd**

Jeanette Winter  
Grades 1–7

Dragonfly PB: 978-0-679-81997-4  
Alfred A. Knopf HC: 978-0-394-89694-6  
GLB: 978-0-394-99694-3

## about the author

**Richard Michelson** is a native New Yorker who was born and raised in Brooklyn. He is the author of numerous books for both adults and children, including *Across the Alley*, a National Jewish Book Award finalist. He is also the owner of R. Michelson Galleries in Northampton, Massachusetts, where he represents many of the country's most prominent children's book illustrators. To learn more about his work, visit [www.richardmichelson.com](http://www.richardmichelson.com).

## about the illustrator

**Raul Colón** is an award-winning illustrator who has won both the Gold and Silver Medals from the Society of Illustrators. His award-winning picture books include *Doña Flor* and *Tomás and the Library Lady*, both by Pat Mora; *A Band of Angels* by Deborah Hopkinson; and *Roberto Clemente* by Jonah Winter. His work has appeared in many publications, including *The New York Times*, *Time Magazine*, *The New Yorker*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. To learn more about Raul Colón, visit [www.raulcolon.com](http://www.raulcolon.com).

## internet resources

### **The King Center**

[www.thekingcenter.org](http://www.thekingcenter.org)

The official Web site of the King Center  
located in Atlanta, Georgia

### **R3 (Remembrance, Reflection, Response)**

[r3program.ushmm.org/intro.php](http://r3program.ushmm.org/intro.php)

The United States Holocaust  
Memorial Museum Youth Service Project.

### **Voices of Civil Rights**

[www.voicesofcivilrights.org](http://www.voicesofcivilrights.org)

Archive of recordings made by people telling their  
personal stories of the civil rights movement.