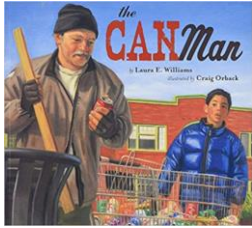


## **Family Book Club: Grateful to give back**

“Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’” Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said to an audience in Montgomery, Alabama in 1957. In honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, we’ve collected a list with some texts about giving back and taking care of others. With a day off from school to honor Martin Luther King, it’s a perfect opportunity to cozy up to one of these books.

**See the suggested book list with discussion ideas on the following pages.**

## **The Can Man by Laura Williams**



Tim's birthday is just a week away, and more than anything he wants a skateboard. But money is tight, and Tim knows his family cannot afford to buy him a board. As Tim ponders how he might earn money for a skateboard, he hears The Can Man down the street collecting empty soft drink cans. The clang of the cans in the homeless man's cart gives Tim an idea. He will collect cans too, and cash them in for the redemption money. By the end of the week, Tim has almost reached his goal--until a couple of chance encounters with The Can Man change everything. Told with honesty and respect, this timely story shines a perceptive light on current social concerns. Readers will be encouraged to think beyond themselves and celebrate the simple acts of kindness and sharing that make a difference in people's lives.

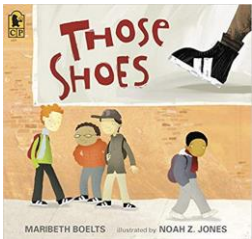
### **Discussion Extensions:**

- Have you ever encountered a homeless person. What happened?
- After reading [The Can Man](#), how might you respond differently?
- What did you learn from this story?
- How might you turn what you learned into action?
- Compare and contrast Tim, Mr. Peters, and Mike. Think about socio-economic circumstances, needs vs. wants, and general character traits.
- Why is this story timely and (how) does it connect to our community?

Written for ages 5-10, but can be extended through conversation, for ages 11 and 12.

## **Those Shoes**

By Maribeth Boelts



All Jeremy wants is a pair of those shoes, the ones everyone at school seems to be wearing. Though Jeremy's grandma says they don't have room for "want," just "need," when his old shoes fall apart at school, he is more determined than ever to have those shoes, even a thrift-shop pair that are much too small. But sore feet aren't much fun, and Jeremy soon sees that the things he has – warm boots, a loving grandma, and the chance to help a friend – are worth more than the things he wants.

### **Discussion Extensions:**

- This book is ripe for a discussion about **NEEDS** versus **WANTS**. Chat about the difference between these two ideas and categorize some familiar things into these two categories.
- Was it easy for Jeremy to give up the shoes? Why or why not?
- How does Jeremy change from the beginning to the end? What things happened along the way that caused the change?
- Have you ever felt torn between wanting something so much, but knowing you did not need it? How did you manage those emotions?
- Think about a time when it was hard for you to give something up, but after you did you felt proud.

Written for ages 5-8, but can be extended through conversation, for ages 9-10.

**The Mitten Tree**  
by Candace  
Christiansen



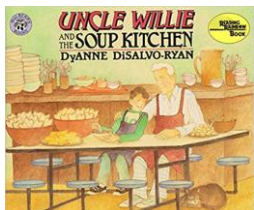
One snowy day an elderly woman, Sarah, watches children gathering at the bus stop. While they never seem to notice her, she notices them, especially one little boy who has no mittens. That night, Sarah knits the boy a pair of cozy mittens and places them on the blue spruce tree for him to discover. It soon becomes a game, with the children looking for new mittens on the mysterious tree every morning, and Sarah joyfully knitting new ones each night. With its touching message and delightful illustrations, adults and children will enjoy this intergenerational tale for years to come.

**Discussion Extensions**

1. A discussion about seen and unseen acts of kindness would beautifully support this text. Often we do things for others without them knowing. How does this make us feel?
2. Why do you think Sarah put the mittens on the tree instead of giving them to the boy?
3. Did it matter to Sarah whether or not the other children acknowledged what she had done?
4. What have you done to help other people? Did they know or not know?

Written for ages 3-6. Can extend a bit with 7 year olds

**Uncle Willie and the Soup Kitchen** by Dyanne Disalvo-Ryan



A gentle and age-appropriate introduction to two key issues of our time—hunger and homelessness—from a kid’s point of view. This empathy-building book is good for sharing at home or in a classroom.

“Based on the actual volunteer experience of the author, this picture book provides a look into the soup kitchen without an overly sentimental view of the hungry or a dose of pessimism for the reader. With a note about soup kitchens introducing the story, this is informative and new, but not scary,” praised *Booklist*.

“A boy wonders about the people he sees on his city’s streets until he goes to the soup kitchen where his uncle works. The varied needs of the individuals there become clear to the young narrator. The watercolors use earthtones and careful detail to illustrate aptly the warm, friendly story,” according to *The Horn Book*.

**Discussion Extensions:**

- Talk about what a soup kitchen is and name why people need soup kitchens; for example weather conditions, hunger, and shelter.
- Describe what the community is like in the story.
- What are some of the ways people’s lives change if they are homeless?
- What does the boy learn while helping at the soup kitchen?
- Who contributes to the soup kitchen and what do they receive in return?
- What did Uncle Willie mean when he said that, “If it wasn’t for George we’d all be in hot water?”

Written for ages 6-9, but can extend through 5th grade.

## **Resources for supporting learning about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

The following websites can be used as part of the discussion regarding discrimination, segregation and the Civil Rights Movement:

[https://www.ducksters.com/history/civil\\_rights/](https://www.ducksters.com/history/civil_rights/)

<http://www.historyforkids.net/civil-rights.html>

[https://kids.kiddle.co/African-American\\_Civil\\_Rights\\_Movement](https://kids.kiddle.co/African-American_Civil_Rights_Movement)

### **Follow-Up and Extension Activities:**

<https://www.songsforteaching.com/pdf/cp/mlkjrCP.pdf>

<https://www.puzzles-to-print.com/printable-word-search/PDFs/martin-luther-king-word-search.pdf>

### **A BrainPop video about Martin Luther King:**

<https://www.brainpop.com/socialstudies/famoushistoricalfigures/martinlutherkingjr/>