



HOW THE WORLD CAN DO BETTER IN 2017

ELEMENTARY RESOURCES



Gord Downie performing a song from Secret Path at WE Day Toronto. Photo source: WE Archives.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- International diplomats failed to create a cease-fire—a stop to fighting—in the civil war in Syria. Over 46,000 people were killed in 2016. This brings the total number of deaths in Syria to more than 450,000 since the war began in 2011—50,000 of those deaths were children. ([I Am Syria](#))
- Civil war continued to rage in Yemen. As of October 2016, more than 4,000 civilians have been killed by fighting between pro- and anti-government forces, and bombing by other involved countries like Saudi Arabia. Destruction of infrastructure like food depots and water systems affects more than 21 million people. ([BBC](#))
- On October 4, Hurricane Matthew struck Haiti. An estimated 1,000 people were killed, and many communities in southern Haiti experienced up to 90 percent destruction of homes and buildings. Many health centres were damaged, and almost 800 schools were damaged or converted to use as shelters, affecting education for 150,000 children. Many farm crops were almost completely destroyed, leaving more than 112,000 children at risk of severe malnutrition. ([United Nations](#))
- In June, the United Kingdom held a referendum on leaving the European Union.

- The United States held an election for its President. Both votes were very socially divisive, with a lot of anger directed at immigrants. Since these votes, both the US and UK have experienced significant increases in hate crimes against minorities. ([USNews.com](#), [CNN](#))
- During the Summer Olympics in Rio, Brazil, media was heavily criticized on social media for sexist comments and gender-biased coverage. ([Huffington Post](#))
- Many famous individuals and celebrities passed away in 2016, including: Canadian musician Leonard Cohen, singer David Bowie, astronaut John Glenn, actor Alan Rickman, actor Gene Wilder, author Harper Lee, singer Prince, hockey star Gordie Howe, author and Holocaust survivor Elie Weisel, the first woman to serve as US Attorney General Janet Reno, Canadian actor Alan Thicke and boxing champion and activist Muhammad Ali.
- Viola Desmond was chosen to be the first individual woman, apart from the Queen, to appear on Canadian currency. Desmond was an African-Canadian businesswoman in Nova Scotia who fought racial segregation in Canada. She refused to sit in the back of a movie theatre several years before Rosa Parks' famous bus protest in the United States. ([The Toronto Star](#))

NOTE TO EDUCATORS

The following activities are designed to stimulate a current events discussion. Generative in nature, these questions can be a launching point for additional assignments or research projects.

Teachers are encouraged to adapt these activities to meet the contextual needs of their classroom.

In some cases, reading the article with students may be appropriate, coupled with reviewing the information sheet to further explore the concepts and contexts being discussed. From here, teachers can select from the questions provided below. The activity is structured to introduce students to the issues, then allow them to explore and apply their learnings. Students are encouraged to further reflect on the issues.

Core Skill Sets:



These icons identify the most relevant core skills students will develop using this resource. Learn more about the WE Learning Framework at www.we.org/we-at-school/we-schools/learning-framework/.

KEY TERMS

Dumpster fire—A slang term for a very chaotic or disastrous situation.

“To-do list”—A list of tasks that needs to be accomplished.

Divisive—When something causes disagreement and hostility between people.

Vitriol—Very extreme and nasty criticism.

Gender parity—Full equality between women and men, for example in hiring or pay rates.

THEMES AND COURSE CONNECTIONS

- **Themes:** Local Issues, Global Issues, Politics, War and Conflict, Economy, Inspirational Figures, Employment, Health, Community, Women's Rights, Canada's First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples, Environment Values and Ethics, Natural Disasters, Socially Conscious Living
- **Course Connections:** Language, Social Studies

MATERIALS

- Front board
- Paper and writing utensils

SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS AND LEARNING GOALS

Students will:

- Explore the events of the past year with a historical perspective
- Understand that they play a role in significant events directly or indirectly
- Create connections between events happening around the world and their community

MAP IT

Have students locate the following locations that were mentioned in the *Global Voices* article "How the world can do better in 2017" to help them understand the geographical perspective of the events.

- Syria
- Yemen
- Haiti
- The United States
- The United Kingdom
- Canada
- Louisiana, USA
- Fort McMurray, Alberta, Canada

DISCUSS

1. How can we focus on the positive while acknowledging the negative moments of 2016? How can we be a part of a good 2017?
2. How might some of the events outlined in the article have affected you? Were you a part of any of the events identified in the article? If so, explain.

DIVE DEEPER

Take stock of significant events in 2016. Using think-pair-share, ask students to create a list of events that took place in 2016. Events may be any that the students deem important, though the activity will focus on events that have a significant effect on people, places and politics. Events may be positive or negative. If students are having trouble getting started, suggest that they consider what made headline news over the past year. Headline news may include top stories that were covered on TV news programs, the front pages of the newspapers and events that created buzz on social media.

Next, in partners, ask students to select three to five events from their lists that they believe are the most significant and explain why they chose these events. Ask students to consider the following questions:

- Why is this event noteworthy?
- Is the event positive or negative?
- How does it affect people or places?
- Will people still be talking about it in five year's time? If so, in what way?
- Will it continue into 2017?
- If the event is negative, how can you as an individual or as part of a community make it better?
- If the event is positive, how can you as an individual or as part of a community continue to keep it positive?
- How can the world do better in 2017?

Once pairs have their lists and have recorded their responses to the appropriate questions, have them share their responses to another pair.

Do a quick share or poll with the class to identify whether there is a trend or not of what students believe are the significant events of the year.

Independently, instruct students to reflect on this activity, the past year and to look forward to 2017. Ask students to explain what was the best and worst events of 2016. Then have them write out their hopes for the next year. Students should consider what they hope for their local, national and international communities and how they plan to be a part of it.

Have students hand in their reflection pieces, then at a later point in the school year, hand them back to students and have them read and reflect on their hopes for 2017: Have them come true? What have they done to help fulfill them? What can they do now if it has not been fulfilled?