

THE RENEE & CHAIM GROSS FOUNDATION



Building Community, Helping Others

Grade level: Grades 2-5

Time estimate: 15-20 minutes for looking and discussion of the images in the slideshow, 30-45 minutes for classroom activities.

Overview and Learning Objectives:

Students will learn about two settlement houses that helped people who recently arrived in New York City during the early 20th century. Students will observe and discuss historical photographs as primary source documents. They will discuss the important role of community organizations that help people with basic needs such as meals, childcare, language, and education.

Classroom activities:

Helping a Community (Social Studies, Language Arts):

As a class, brainstorm community centers that are important in your neighborhood, town, or city, such as a recreation center, YMCA, library, soup kitchen, or refugee center. Do research to find out what takes place there and why it is important. How does each place help people? Write a thank you letter (can be done collaboratively for younger writers) to someone at one of the community centers, thanking them for the specific ways their organization helps people in your community.

“How to” Help! (Social Studies, Language Arts):

Brainstorm different ways we can offer help to people in our community, such as spending time with senior citizens, cleaning up litter, caring for animals at the shelter, or providing food for those in need. Have each student select one idea and write a “how to” book on how to help, describing the need and then what the steps would be to address that need.

Extensions:

Find out more about settlement houses in the United States by examining and discussing the primary source documents in this online lesson plan developed by the Digital Public Library of America:

<https://dp.la/primary-source-sets/settlement-houses-in-the-progressive-era/teaching-guide>

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Discover another settlement house, Hull-House, founded by Jane Addams in Chicago in 1889. Their website shares the history of this important organization as well as educational materials: <https://www.hullhousemuseum.org>

Learn more about the Great Migration by looking at Jacob Lawrence's series of paintings, published in a book called *The Great Migration: An American Story*. Further the conversation about Jacob Lawrence by reading the wonderful picture book about his life, *Jake Makes a World*, by Sharifa Rhodes-Pitts.