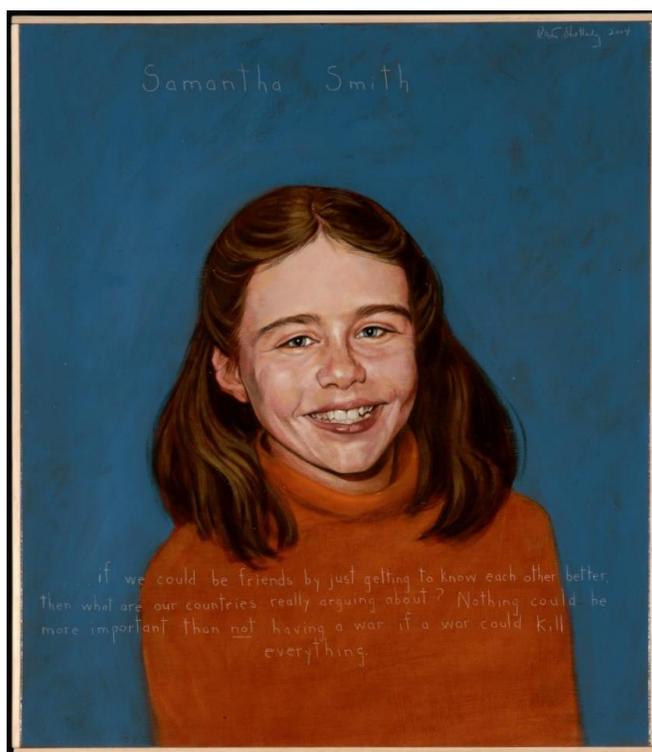


Creating Curious, Courageous, and Engaged Citizens

THE SAMANTHA SMITH CHALLENGE 2017/18

Social Justice Through the Arts



TAKE THE SAMANTHA SMITH CHALLENGE!

At the depths of the Cold War, when hot war between the Soviet Union and the United States seemed likely, a frightened young girl from Maine did something about that grim situation. [Samantha Smith](#) began by asking “Why?” She went on to advocate for open communication and peace. A compelling storyteller, Samantha left us a legacy and an inspiring challenge:

What can each of us do to make the world safer, healthier, and more fair?

**The arts showcase and bring attention
to your issue, your findings,
and your actions.**

THE 2017/18 SSC CALENDAR

- **October 9, 2017:** SSC Guidelines Available - 4th Annual SSC Registration Opens
- **OCTOBER 19-20, 2017:** Launch 4th Annual SSC at MAMLE Conference.
- **NOVEMBER 15, 2017- JANUARY 15, 2018:** Complete “Get to Know AWTT” activity and submit SSC registration form.
- **MARCH/APRIL 2018:** SSC workshops/school visits.
- **MAY 24, 2018:** SSC project reports submitted to AWTT.
- **JUNE 4, 2018:** Everyone attends the Samantha Smith Day celebration!

MISSION: The Samantha Smith Challenge, a dynamic educational program for Maine middle school students designed to build a bridge between the classroom and the world, teaches students that, no matter what age, they can be part of solving the challenges and problems they see around them.

THE POWER OF PARTNERS: The **Americans Who Tell the Truth (AWTT)** organization’s ability to bring the SSC service learning program into Maine schools and to honor [Samantha Smith](#) by encouraging students to act in her spirit depends on our strong partnerships with the **Maine Association for Middle Level Education** and **Thomas College’s Center for Innovation in Education**.

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EXERCISE: CONNECT WITH CHANGEMAKERS

***START NOW* GETTING TO KNOW AMERICANS WHO TELL THE TRUTH**

Before registering for the SSC complete this “Connect with Changemakers” activity with your students.

Becoming familiar with the Americans Who Tell the Truth portrait subjects is an important step in the Samantha Smith Challenge. These *models of courageous citizenship* serve as motivational guides for students as they begin their own journeys of engagement with the pressing social justice issues in their communities and the world. We have designed the following worksheet for your students to help them learn about the AWTT portrait subjects. When you are done, please include the list of themes and portraits that your students have explored in your registration.

Connect with Changemakers @ americanswhotellthetruth.org

1. On the AWTT homepage, click on the **Portrait Galleries** tab. To the right of the page look for the **Themes** menu. Choose a theme (or multiple themes) that is meaningful to you and your students.
2. Complete the following thought in a sentence or short paragraph:

We chose this theme because...

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3. Study (and list) the **portrait subjects** who have done work related to the selected theme.

4. Choose (at least) two portraits connected to the chosen theme and **for each of the selected portraits answer the following questions** as a class, in breakout groups, or as an individual activity (whichever suits your classroom goals and methods):

Portrait subject name:

- **Look at the portrait.** How does it make you feel? Why do you think it makes you feel that way?
- List three (3) things this person **did** to address their issue:
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.
- In a short paragraph, say **what motivated this** person committed time and energy to this issue?

Now that you have completed this activity with your class, you can [register your class for the 2017/2018 Samantha Smith Challenge!](#) You will list the themes and portraits you studied on the registration form.

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The Samantha Smith Challenge Guidelines

Social Justice through the Arts

YOUR MISSION IS TO GET A RESPONSE!

Collaboration between classes and disciplines is encouraged!

4 Simple Steps to this year's Samantha Smith Challenge

- Choose an issue.
- Do Research.
- Create and communicate a message that provokes response to your issue.
- Share projects at the 2018 Samantha Smith Challenge Celebration!

3 Guiding Questions

- How do our personal experiences shape our concerns for social justice issues?
- How/why can creative arts and writing inspire action on serious issues?
- What strategies and actions in addition to your creative message can be used to provoke a response from your intended audience?

STEP ONE

EXPRESSING CONCERNS, IDENTIFYING ISSUES

1. Students write **questions and concerns** they have about their lives, their community, nation, or world.
2. **Identify common themes** among the concerns students have expressed.
3. **Explore the AWTT website** for examples of people who have addressed similar themes (Go to **Portrait Galleries**, click on **Themes**, find related theme and select it. Need help finding portraits related to your theme? Get in touch with us!)

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4. **Select a few portraits** and read about what each person did to address the issue. What did they do? How did they get a response? What was the response they got?
5. **Invite a panel of community members** to talk with your class about the community concerns/issues/themes the students have identified. (AWTT can help connect you with people.)
6. **Select your issue/s**, one or more social, environmental, or economic issue to address as a class or in groups. Be as specific as possible. This will help students focus on making a difference.
7. **Ask each student:** Why does this issue matter to you? How does it affect you personally?

STEP TWO

DO RESEARCH

1. **Students generate a list of questions** about all the things they don't know or understand about their chosen topics.
2. Individually or in teams, **students find answers to the questions** and become fact gathering machines! Go back to the [Portrait Galleries on the AWTT](#) website. There they can learn about changemakers who addressed their issues (or related ones). Pay special attention to what the people **DID** to make a difference and get a response about their issue. Explore the resources listed beside the portraits.
3. **Identify and interview local stakeholders** (people concerned about the issue). Why is this issue important to them? What are they doing to address the issue? What is their strategy/plan for making a long-term difference? What are the obstacles to improving this issue? What else needs to be done? How can we help?
4. **Contact AWTT to be connected to a living AWTT portrait subject** who can be a resource for your issue. (connie@americanswhotellthetruth.org)
5. **Figure out who you want to respond to your message.** Parents? Teachers? Lawmakers? Other students? People in your community?

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STEP THREE

CREATE A POWERFUL MESSAGE -- INFORM, INSPIRE, GET A RESPONSE!

1. Discuss not only *what* students want to say, but *how* they want to say it.

KEY QUESTION: Who is the most appropriate audience/s for this message? Some options:

- a. Help people in their communities to reimagine where they live.
 - b. Provoke local authorities by calling out an injustice in the community.
 - c. Inspire people to join the fight against climate change, homelessness, inequality, etc.
 - d. Shed light on a practice or event most people don't know or don't understand.
 - e. Encourage or challenge people in power who are doing good/not good work.
2. Make paintings, original musical compositions, essays, theater skits or any other form of creative expression that communicates the identified concern and responds to the academic needs of your classroom. (*Some students may choose their medium while others may be working in a specific class that teaches drawing or painting, theater or filmmaking where the medium will be defined by the teacher.*)

**** See below for a list of possible creative art forms***

3. Get a response!!! Contact the target audience/s and schedule an exhibit, performance, forum or other method of presentation, connection, march, or happening. **Think about how to present the message to provoke the desired response.**

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STEP FOUR

ATTEND THE SSC CELEBRATION AND SHARE THE STORY OF YOUR JOURNEY

Reflect on the following: (These questions will be sent to you just before the SSC Celebration.)

- What did you learn about your chosen issue?
- What did you learn about yourself?
- Why do you think the using the arts to get a response to a concern works?
- What was the most challenging part of the SSC?
- What was the most rewarding part of the SSC?

RESOURCES FOR THE SAMANTHA SMITH CHALLENGE

CREATIVE ARTS FORMATS (a few possibilities)

- **A short story.** Pick one incident or critical moment and tell it as a first person story as though you were Barbara Johns, Samantha Smith, Abraham Lincoln, or another change maker.
- **A letter.** Write to the stakeholders and others in positions of responsibility with respect to the chosen issue. Explain what you do or don't understand about his/her work.
- **A rap.** Add movement or beat boxing to animate your story.
- **Slam poetry.** Think spoken word, powerful emotions, smiles, & tears.

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SOCIAL JUSTICE THROUGH THE ARTS

Samantha was a *narrative activist*. By telling *HER story* she changed *THE story* -- definitely a creative art! The power of the arts to deliver a message or to invoke action is indisputable. Americans Who Tell the Truth (AWTT) combines art and other media to inspire a new generation of engaged Americans who will act for the common good, our communities, and the Earth. Over thirty of the AWTT portrait subjects have used the creative arts to inspire action. We share here just a few examples:

An international program entitled [Barefoot Artists](#), founded by **artist Lily Yeh** in 2002, trains and empowers local residents, organizes communities around communal art projects, and takes action for a more compassionate, just and sustainable future in countries such as Rwanda, Kenya, Ghana, Ecuador, and China; this program is an offshoot of the non-profit organization Yeh founded in 1986 called The Village of Arts and Humanities in Philadelphia which was developed to build communities through art, learning, land transformation, and economic development.

- **A collage, a drawing or painting, a poem, sculpture, a song or piece of music, a video.**
- **You are creative, you decide!!**

TIPS FOR MAKING A COMPELLING CREATIVE PIECE

- **Make it personal.** Why is this important to you?
- **Be real and brief.**
- **Highlight adversity.** If focusing on another person's story, highlight moments when they were tested or challenged.
- **Show why you care.** Include what you admire about a person affected by or working for your issue.
- **Be specific.**
- **Play to your strengths.** Use a creative art medium that is comfortable for you.
- **Be descriptive!** Use the descriptive power of your medium -- color, harmonies, graphics, tone of voice, vocabulary.
- **Don't tell, but show.** Don't tell about anger or truth or justice; show what made you angry, sad, happy, or committed to your subject.

**The storytelling suggestions are based on This I Believe in association with National Public Radio and Bird by Bird by Anne Lamott.*

CHANGEMAKERS: Examples to view with students.

- [Robert Shetterly talks at about truth and courage in a democracy](#) at the 2017 Thrivals 10.0 conference in Louisville, Kentucky (begins at 52:45)
- [Ryan Hreljac, a young water rights activist from Canada](#) talks about what he did to make a difference.

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SOCIAL JUSTICE THROUGH THE ARTS

Musician [David Rovics](#)

believes music can connect people in ways nothing else an: "Keep writing. Keep earning. Be open to criticism from yourself or others on music or politics. Never delude yourself into thinking you're original. Keep listening to music and learning songs other people wrote. Keep your heart open. See the world. Put yourself in other people's shoes regularly..."

An education professor at Syracuse niversity, [Mara Sapon Shevin](#) says "I am very interested in continuing my work in ommunity building and teaching for ocial justice through the arts. I give workshops on using music, dance and movement to teach about oppression and liberation and I hope to continue this work with more people of all ages and backgrounds."

It is clear that the AWTT version of art-as-activism gives students the chance to juxtapose seemingly disparate issues and find commonalities - building the big tent, breaking down the silos. It forces people to understand the importance of dissent and disagreement in our society and how, sometimes, what seemed out of step with our culture becomes the accepted norm.

- As a teenager, [LeAlan Jones](#) galvanized a nation [about what it was like growing up in his Chicago neighborhood](#).
- [Tim DeChristopher](#) talks with [Bill Moyers](#) [about building a community to create change](#).
- [Claudette Colvin](#) explains [why, when she was just 15, she didn't get up from her bus seat in 1951](#) in Montgomery, Alabama.
- [Diane Wilson](#) tells a group of students [what it was like when she decided to protect the bay she relied on for her livelihood](#).
- [Bill McKibben](#) talks about [what needs to happen to address climate change](#).

SOME OF THE AWTT CHANGEMAKERS WHO USE THE CREATIVE ARTS TO GET A RESPONSE:

James Baldwin	Fiction writer, essayist
Wendell Berry	Essayist, novelist, poet
Sue Coe	Artist
Peter Davis	Filmmaker, writer
Ossie Davis	Actor
James Douglass	Writer
Ralph Ellison	Novelist
Eve Ensler	Playwright, performer
Denise Giardina	Writer
Nikki Giovanni	Poet
Woody Guthrie	Folksinger, writer
Jim Harney	Photojournalist
Reggie Harris	Musician, storyteller
Kim Harris	Musician, storyteller

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SOCIAL JUSTICE THROUGH THE ARTS

While we are emphasizing creative expression -- storytelling, art making, drama, music -- as effective means of communicating about social justice, we do not expect the SSC to take place only -- or even primarily -- in art classes. This is about identifying important community and world issues, understanding them, and making a compelling argument in an effective medium. Think about it as combining any subject discipline with debate, service learning, and creative expression.

Each group involved in this year's SSC will use art, drama, music, spoken word, storytelling, media arts, dance, and other forms of creative expression to deliver a message about their chosen topic or issue.

Paint a portrait of a truth teller in your community. Create a dramatic production or tell a compelling story about your issue. Write music that makes us feel braver and less alone. Write an essay that makes the most compelling argument you know for why we should all join you in your effort to make the world a better place.

Langston Hughes	Poet, novelist, playwright
Pat Humphries	Singer, songwriter
Zora Neale Hurston	Author Folklorist
Becci Ingram	Dramatist
Jonathan Kozol	Writer
Dorothea Lange	Photographer
Frances Moore Lappe	Writer
Natasha Mayers	Artist
Arthur Miller	Playwright
Janice Mirikitani	Poet
Sandy O	Singer/songwriter
Bruce Utah Phillips	Songwriter, storyteller, humorist
Michael Pollan	Journalist
Bernice Johnson Reagon	Singer, composer
Paul Robeson	Singer, writer
David Rovics	Singer, songwriter
Pete Seeger	Singer, songwriter
Mara Sapon-Shevin	Writer, singer
Alice Walker	Novelist, essayist, poet
Walt Whitman	Poet
Terry Tempest Williams	Writer
Tilly Woodward	Artist
Lily Yeh	Artist

SOCIAL JUSTICE THROUGH THE ARTS

Use the arts to showcase and bring attention to your issue, your findings, and your actions.

Touch people's hearts and minds. Make the world a better place.

All you have to do is take the first step. Accept the challenge!

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SHARE SAMANTHA SMITH'S STORY WITH YOUR STUDENTS

In December 1982 during the Cold War, ten-year-old Samantha Smith of Manchester, Maine, asked her mother “who would start a war and why. [My mother] showed me a news magazine with a story about America and Russia, one that had a picture of the new Russian leader, Yuri Andropov, on the cover. We read it together. It seemed that the people in both Russia and America were worried that the other country would start a nuclear war. It all seemed so dumb to me. I had learned about the awful things that had happened during World War II, so I thought that nobody would ever want to have another war. I told Mom that she should write to Mr. Andropov to find out who was causing all the trouble. She said, ‘Why don't you write to him?’ So I did.”

[Watch the Samantha Smith interview with Ted Koppel here.](#)

She wrote a letter to Soviet Premier Yuri Andropov asking him to, “Please tell me how you are going to help to not have war.” Andropov invited Samantha to visit the Soviet Union. She agreed to go and learned something powerful from her experience that she was able to share with Russians and Americans alike: that the fear and hatred sustaining the Cold War came from the countries’ leaders, not from the countries’ people. From the one question -- “who would start a war and why?” -- a peace-making venture unfolded that brought Russian and American students together to discover understanding and appreciation of one another, to build connections instead of armies and bombs. This eleven year old from Maine had become a teacher, telling her story to adults and children about how the world could b

e a more peaceful place. She said, “If we could be friends by just getting to know each other better, then what are our countries really arguing about? Nothing could be more important than not having a war if a war could kill everything.”

Sadly, in August 1985, both Samantha and her father were killed in a plane crash. But Samantha’s memory lives on in her example.

Her progress from concern to courageous engagement began with a series of small steps and decisions—something each of us can do! That is our challenge!

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GET INSPIRED BY PREVIOUS SSC CELEBRATIONS!

- [Senator Angus King's statement at the 1st annual SSC.](#)
- [Lyman Moore Middle School responds to the SSC.](#)
- [Leonard Middle School combats poverty for the SSC.](#)
- [King Middle School address sustainable energy with SSC.](#)
- [Messalonskee Middle School took on hunger in their community for the SSC.](#)

TEACHER RESOURCES TO SUPPORT SSC IN THE CLASSROOM

- <http://www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/news/changing-story-using-arts-advance-social-justice>
- <https://www.arteducators.org/advocacy/articles/118-position-statement-on-art-education-and-social-justice>

SSC AND STANDARDS

The SSC is applicable to a wide range of academic standards, including the Common Core, CASEL's social and emotional literacy standards, and the 21st Century Learning Standards.

Educator Nancy Doda, PhD, compiled a list of the "Power Standards" most relevant to the SSC. [You can see her list and comments in this PDF.](#)

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