

# THE RENEE & CHAIM GROSS FOUNDATION



## Standing Up for What You Believe in: Renee Gross's Story

**Grade level:** Grades 2–5

**Time estimate:** 15–20 minutes for looking at and discussing the images in the slideshow, variable for classroom activities.

### **Overview and Learning Objectives:**

Through this slideshow and related classroom activities, students will learn about Renee Gross's inspiring life story. She and her family immigrated to the United States in 1921, fleeing the violence against Jewish people in Russia (now Lithuania) and settled in New York City. Through photographs and portraits of Renee, students will observe, discuss, and reflect on her life experience. Students will learn about some of the social justice issues that were important to Renee and how she continued to support those in need throughout her life.

### **Classroom activities:**

#### **Supporting a cause** (Language Arts, Math, K–5):

Have a class discussion about what causes are important to you. Perhaps it's helping animals in the local animal shelter, donating food to those in need, or supporting recent immigrants. Identify a local non-profit you'd like to support as a class. Create a donation goal based on a specific need and brainstorm ways to raise the money, such as having a crazy sock day at school and having everyone bring in a dollar. Write a short paragraph or create posters using persuasive writing about why it's important to support this cause and share it with others. Add up the donations and donate the money as a class and reflect on how it made everyone feel.

Non-monetary donations are also important and could be pursued instead. For example, the students could donate their time to help clean up a school or community space, host a collection of used books or toys for a local group, or another creative idea.

#### **Opinion writing** (Language Arts, grades 2–5):

Have students brainstorm issues that are important to them. It could be something local, such as the need for a new or improved playground, or something faced by the larger world such as pollution. Research the topics and write an opinion piece with reasons that support the opinion with related facts and details. Share the opinion pieces and reflect on the ideas shared.

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**Role models** (Language Arts, Art, grades 2–5):

Have students research people who have led inspiring lives and select one person to focus on. Research the person’s life and accomplishments, taking notes about specific details. Looking at a picture of your role model, create a portrait that shows their unique characteristics and inspiring qualities. Write a paragraph with facts about their life and display next to the portrait.

**Universal Declaration of Human Rights** (Language Arts, Social Studies, grades 4–5):

Have students read the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. Discuss the parts of the statement, and why it is important to declare for the world’s citizens. As an extension, students can each take one part of the declaration to illustrate and display together.

**Extensions:**

For K–2 students, *Say Something* by Peter Reynolds and *The Smallest Girl in the Smallest Grade* by Christian Robinson address the importance of speaking up for what is right. *Sometimes People March* by Tessa Allen shares reasons why people gather and march in support of different causes.

*It’s Your World* by Chelsea Clinton is a good resource for older students to identify causes that are important to them and offers ways to get involved.

*Big Dreams, Small Fish* by Paula Cohen is a wonderful picture book about a girl whose family owns a grocery store, and her efforts to help increase the sale of gefilte fish.

*Letters from Rifke* by Karen Hesse is a chapter book for ages 9+ about a Jewish girl who immigrates to the US from Russia in 1919.