

## Lesson 1

# A Beloved Community

Service Learning—Grades 6–8

NATIONAL &  
COMMUNITY  
SERVICE



Teacher Instructions

**Goals:** Learn about Dr. King’s vision of a caring community, identify needs in the students’ own community, and determine, as a class, a focus for a group service project.

**Time Required:** Two class periods

**Materials:** Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service PSA (<http://1.usa.gov/Tbl9ob>); **Listen!** Student Worksheet

### Get Started:

1. Begin the lesson by sharing this short MLK Day of Service public service announcement (<http://1.usa.gov/Tbl9ob>) to introduce the concept of serving others as a way to honor Dr. King’s memory. Ask: *Why do you think performing acts of service in one’s community would be a fitting way to remember Dr. King? According to Dr. King, what makes a person “great”? Do you think Dr. King felt that greatness was something only a few people could achieve? Why or why not? Have you ever helped others in your community on your own, with your family, or as part of a group? What did you do? How did it make you feel? How did your service help change someone else’s life for the better?*
2. Moderate a discussion about the idea of “needs” by creating a graphic organizer on the board. Ask students to identify the basic things people need in order to live each day (food, shelter, water, clothes, etc.).
3. Review the brainstorming results. Ask: *Are these needs common to everyone or do only certain groups of people need these things? Do you think there is a benefit to everyone when all members of a community have their basic needs met? What might this benefit be? Do you think there might even be people you don’t know who are part of the larger community who support you? Who might they be?*

### Investigate:

4. Explain that Dr. King’s actions during his life were guided by a powerful vision of a caring and supportive world that

he called a “Beloved Community.” Read this description of Dr. King’s Beloved Community:

“Dr. King’s Beloved Community is a global vision, in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth. In the Beloved Community, poverty, hunger, and homelessness will not be tolerated because international standards of human decency will not allow it. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry, and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood. In the Beloved Community, international disputes will be resolved by peaceful conflict resolution and reconciliation of adversaries, instead of military power. Love and trust will triumph over fear and hatred. Peace with justice will prevail over war and military conflict.” (Source: thekingcenter.org)

5. Encourage students to share their responses to the idea of a Beloved Community. Ask: *What are some of the similarities between Dr. King’s vision of a Beloved Community and the community in which we live? What are some of the differences? Do you feel our local community is close to becoming a Beloved Community? Why or why not? What do you think might help Dr. King’s vision of a Beloved Community become a reality? Who will make it happen?*
6. Draw on what students already know about current economic conditions and begin a discussion about how difficult economic times might impact a community. Ask: *What have you heard from the news, from friends, and from family members about the state of our country’s economy over the past few years? Have you heard stories of people looking for work, but not being able to find suitable jobs? When people are out of work, how does that impact their ability to meet their basic needs? What tough choices might they have to make if money is tight? What tough choices do you think local and national governments might have to make in terms*

*of services for citizens, such as libraries, schools, health care, and public assistance? Do you think more or fewer people are in need of help from their community at the current time? Why? Do you think everyone in a community will be impacted by slow economic times in the same way? Why or why not? What might this mean for the variety of ways that you can help people in your community? How do you think members of a Beloved Community like Dr. King envisioned would respond to tough economic times?*

7. Distribute a copy of the **Listen!** Student Worksheet to each student. Share with students that part of Dr. King’s message was that everyone has the power to serve others and that each person can work to make a Beloved Community a reality through his or her own actions. The first step to a great service project is identifying a need in the community.
8. Divide students into small groups to complete the worksheet and consider the service scenarios.

### Wrap Up:

9. Have students work in small groups to brainstorm a list of needs they see in their community, and then select a single issue to present back to the class.
10. Ask each group to prepare a short presentation that defines a need they see in the community (homelessness, hunger, older citizens who need health care, kids with nowhere to go after school, etc.), the reasons why they feel this issue should be addressed through a service project, and how the class might be able to contribute to a solution.
11. Take a class vote to determine the focus of the group service project. Students will explore this issue in further detail and map out their service project in **Lesson 2: You Are Needed.**

# Listen!

*Serving your community begins with careful observation to identify opportunities to help others.*

Directions: Read each scenario and answer the corresponding questions:

**Scenario 1:** While walking home from school one day, you pass your local park. You notice there aren't any children or adults enjoying the green space. Upon closer inspection, you find empty plastic bags and bottles around the benches and a swing seat that is dangling unhooked at one side. The playground slide has been covered with graffiti and the paint on the monkey bars is peeling.

1. What needs do you see in this scenario? \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

2. What service projects might address these needs? \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. How would these service projects benefit the community and help create the "Beloved Community" that Dr. King envisioned? \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Scenario 2:** On the evening news, you hear a story about the number of students in your city who go to school each morning without having eaten breakfast. As the report explains, not eating breakfast makes it harder to learn and to focus while in class. Not having enough to eat can be an uncomfortable topic to discuss and some students would rather go hungry than tell a friend or teacher that there's no food at their house.

1. What needs do you see in this scenario? \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_



**LISTEN! continued...**

2. What service projects might address these needs? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. How might you create a project that addresses the sensitivity of this issue? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Scenario 3:** At the dinner table, you twirl your fork in your pasta as your parents chat. You're not particularly listening, but a bit of the conversation catches your attention. "Mrs. Mitchell had to move into a nursing home last week. With no one left to care for her at her house, there just wasn't any other option. I know she'll be with other people her age, but she won't have anyone to visit her, or bring holiday treats and birthday cards, or sit and chat with her. I know there are others in her same situation, but all the same, it's just so sad."

1. What needs do you see in this scenario? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What service projects might address these needs? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. How would these service projects benefit the community and help create the "Beloved Community" that Dr. King envisioned? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Bonus:** Write a paragraph describing a community scenario you've noticed and challenge a friend to come up with ideas for a service project to address the needs in your scenario.

