

## Comprehension and Empathy: Understanding Social Issues Through Fiction

### Developing Reading Comprehension Skills and Strategies

#### Example 1: Jigsaw – Understanding the Issues in Nepal

- building/activating background knowledge
- reading for main ideas and details
- summarizing
- understanding cause and effect
- cooperative learning

#### One Important Issue for Nepal

Increasing access to secondary education (grades 9-12) remains a major challenge, as evidenced by the disturbingly low net enrollment rate of 24 percent at this level. More than half of primary students do not enter secondary schools, and only one-half of them complete secondary schooling. In addition, fewer girls than boys join secondary schools and, among those who do join, fewer complete the 10th grade.

What is the problem?

What do you think are some effects of this problem on people's lives?

If this problem could be solved/improved, how would life change for average people? (In other words, imagine how life might be different for people if this were not a problem.)

Issue	Some ways it affects people's lives
Not enough access to secondary education	



Example 2: Research Activity – Learning about an anti-trafficking organization

- Internet research and reporting
- Reading for specific information
- Paraphrasing

Anti-Trafficking Organizations

International Justice Mission [www.ijm.org](http://www.ijm.org)

Somaly Mam Foundation [www.somaly.org](http://www.somaly.org)

Shared Hope International [www.sharedhope.org](http://www.sharedhope.org)

Polaris Project [www.polarisproject.org](http://www.polarisproject.org)

Child Rescue Association [www.childrescue.org](http://www.childrescue.org)

The A21 Campaign [www.thea21campaign.org](http://www.thea21campaign.org)

Zoe [www.zoechildren.org](http://www.zoechildren.org)

Internet Research– Help for Victims

Group Members: \_\_\_\_\_

Use the chart to organize information you find about your organization. Note whether the organization is involved in this aspect of anti-trafficking work, and provide some specific information about what it does in this area.

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Location(s) that it focuses on: \_\_\_\_\_

Mission:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Rescuing Victims	Victim Care/ Services	Prosecuting Criminals	Working on Laws/Policies	Raising Money/ Awareness	Other



## Developing Empathy

Activities that allow students to take on the perspective of a character:

- Write a journal entry
- Write the next chapter
- Circles of Viewpoint
- “Facebook pages” and interactive comments  
<https://www.template.net/social-media-templates/facebook/facebook-template/>
- News reports/interviews

### Example 1: Sample Diary Entry – Harish (by Anastasiia)

(Assignment: Write a diary entry from another character in Happiness House. Imagine that you are that character and you are writing in your diary/journal about Lakshmi. Use your knowledge of the characters and plot along with your own imagination to write one diary entry about your interactions/thoughts/feelings related to Lakshmi.)

*A few days ago, a girl was moved into our room. Her name is Lakshmi. She looks very sad and tormented and for some reason always looks at me, and in her eyes I see hatred. But I understand that in fact she is very good, it just hurts her from the way her life has turned out. One day when I came home from school I saw Lakshmi reading my book. Her reaction seemed strange to me, she abruptly ran out, perhaps she was embarrassed. I decided to make friends with the girl and began to teach her two languages Hindi and English. Lakshmi turned out to be very talented and grasped everything on the fly. After a while, she became like a sister to me, and I was not mistaken she is really a very good and kind girl.*

*I noticed that Lakshmi was constantly writing something in her notebook, but her pencil was almost gone. Then I decided to encourage my foster sister and gave her a yellow pencil. I was very glad to see happiness in Lakshmi's eyes. And the next day, she gave me a soccer ball that she made for me. I was surprised that the last things that reminded her of home she gave to me. I hope she can get out of our house soon and go back to her mom, because I can see how homesick she is.*

### Example 2: Circles of Viewpoint (Small group activity)

At a given point in the story

What are the possible perspectives to take?

I am thinking about \_\_\_\_\_ as \_\_\_\_\_

Right now I am thinking.....because....

A question or concern I have right now is ...

Example:

Student 1: I am thinking about Lakshmi's departure from the village to the city as Lakshmi.

Right now I am thinking that I don't think I can go because I will miss my Ama and my little brother too much; but I have to go because it is my chance to help my family.

A question or concern I have right now is what my mistress will be like and what the house where I'll work as a maid will be like and when I will see my Ama again.

Student 2: I am thinking about Lakshmi's departure from the village to the city as Lakshmi's stepfather.

Right now I am thinking about what else I can buy for myself with all money I've just received as part of this deal. Maybe another motorbike.

A question or concern I have right now is whether I will get the rest of the money that was promised to me after Lakshmi gets started with her work.



### Example 3: Write the Next Chapter

#### Lakshmi's Next Chapter

*Sold* ends at the moment of Lakshmi's escape from Happiness House. We wonder what happens next. Use your imagination and anything you know about issues like Nepal as a developing country, actions that anti-human trafficking organizations might take, etc. to write the "next chapter" for Lakshmi.

First, decide some key elements:

When does this part of the story take place?

One day later

One month later

One year later

Five years later

Some other time?

Fill in your ideas before writing.

Where is she living?	What is she doing?	Who are her friends/ family/ community?	What are her goals?	What are her feelings?

After you have decided some aspects of Lakshmi's next chapter, write a short chapter to add to *Sold*. Like the other chapters, it should be written in 1<sup>st</sup> person (from Lakshmi's perspective) and show some important things about her life and experience. *Use at least one simile, metaphor, or personification.* Write 1-3 paragraphs in the space below.

