



**Classroom Guide for**  
**LEND A HAND: POEMS ABOUT**  
**GIVING**

Written by **John Frank**  
Illustrated by **London Ladd**

### **Reading Level**

\*Reading Level: Grades 2–3

Interest Level: Grades 1–5

Guided Reading Level: M

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points: 4.4/0.5

\*Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula

### **Themes**

Caring/Kindness, Respect, Responsibility, Volunteering and Activism, Cultural Diversity, Intergenerational Relationships, Environmentalism, Poetry

### **Synopsis**

Making a difference in the world can be as simple as planting a tree, giving up your seat on a bus to a disabled or an elderly person, sharing your sandwich with a friend, volunteering to help build a home, or training a puppy to become a service dog. These are just a few of the acts of kindness featured in this collection of fourteen original poems.

Each of these tender and empowering poems emphasizes the compassion and joy of giving. Representing diverse voices—different ages, backgrounds, and abilities—the collection shows the bridging of invisible boundaries between people who are often perceived as being different from one another. The first step in bridging those boundaries is to extend a hand.

John Frank is an accomplished poet and the author of several children's books, including three highly-praised poetry collections. Coupled with London Ladd's emotive illustrations, *Lend a Hand* demonstrates that empathy and social awareness can start at an early age. Young readers will feel inspired to lend a hand to others and practice kindness and giving every day.

## BACKGROUND

(from *Illustrator's Note*) As I started the illustration process for *Lend a Hand*, I realized how important it was to capture the essence of the poems and the spirit of these young people doing selfless acts. I work from photographs and use ordinary people, not professional models, as references for the illustrations. The most surprising and rewarding part of working on this book was how people from all walks of life connected with the poems in their own ways. The amazing thing I came away with from this project is that when we step out of our comfort zone, take time to meet other people, talk to one another, and help those who may differ from ourselves, we find we have more in common than we think. I'll never forget all the people who trusted me and gave their time to lend me a hand. —London Ladd

*Volunteering in the United States: The [Corporation for National & Community Service \(CNCS\)](#) tracks volunteerism and civic engagement in the United States.<sup>1</sup> CNCS is an independent federal agency that “provides opportunities for Americans of all ages and backgrounds to serve their communities and address critical needs” through programs and initiatives such as the Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Social Innovation Fund. According to the CNCS, 62.6 million Americans (or 25.4 US adults) nationwide volunteered in [2014](#), averaging about 32.1 volunteer hours per resident.<sup>2</sup> Fully 62.5% of residents do favors for their neighbors. Check out your state's volunteering and civic engagement [profile](#)<sup>3</sup> and the CNCS [infographic](#)<sup>4</sup> summarizing how America volunteers. Looking for ways to volunteer with students and families? Check out [America's Natural and Cultural Resources Volunteer Portal](#) for ideas and opportunities.<sup>5</sup>*

## BEFORE READING

### Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

Before introducing the book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

1. Take a look at the front and back covers. Take a picture walk. Ask students to make a prediction. Do you think this book will be fiction or nonfiction? What makes you think so? What clues does the author and illustrator give to help you know whether this book will be fiction or nonfiction?
2. What do you know about poetry? What are some typical features of poetry? Why do you think authors write poems? How do you think their reasons differ from authors who write prose?
3. What does the word *volunteer* mean? What does it mean for a person to volunteer? Why might someone want to volunteer? What are some ways a person might volunteer in her or his school and community? Describe a time you volunteered to help someone.
4. What is a community? What are the features of a community? What kinds of events or situations bring a community together? Of what kind of communities are you a part?
5. Why do you think I chose this book for us to read today?

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.volunteeringinamerica.gov/about.cfm>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.volunteeringinamerica.gov/national>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.volunteeringinamerica.gov/rankings.cfm>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.volunteeringinamerica.gov/infographic.cfm>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.volunteer.gov/>

### Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1, Craft & Structure, Strand 5, and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

Read and talk about the title of the book. Ask students what they think the title, *Lend a Hand*, means. Then ask them what they think this book will most likely be about and who the book might be about. What situations might be talked about in the text? What do you think might happen? What information do you think you might learn? What makes you think that?

Take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: front and back covers, title page, dedications, illustrations, and the illustrator's note.

### Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out ways people help others, how helping others makes people feel, what motivates people to help others, and to what the title, *Lend a Hand*, refers. Encourage students to consider why the author, John Frank, and illustrator, London Ladd, would want to share this story with young people.

### VOCABULARY

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below. Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

#### CONTENT SPECIFIC

cafeteria	ukulele	electric guitar	jammed	traded riffs
klutziest	sickness	square his stance	World Series	bunt
scrawny	playful	shrink back	PE	hack at the air
chucked	game seven	mothballs	inspected	jam-packed
motioned	scout troop	fish out	bank (river)	beat (music)
saplings	marvel	molting	pulled him aside	
fall over with laughter		stare into space	belt one out of the park	

#### ACADEMIC

eighty	uncovered	treasure	noticed	suppose
medicine	practiced	harsh	explore(r)	rhythm
thousands	multiplication	maximum	stream/creek	brave
shivering	trembling	doubt	perform	attention
struggling	lonely	wonder	travel	limit

### AFTER READING

#### Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite evidence with their answers.**

**Literal Comprehension**

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

1. Who is the narrator in the poem, “Sandwich?” (ask this question for each poem)
2. In “Puppy,” why will the narrator have to give the puppy away even though the puppy’s eyes say, “I want to be yours forever”?
3. In “Jammin,” why does the narrator spend time with Mr. Kellerman playing music?
4. In “Stream,” what is the narrator’s reward for picking up someone else’s trash? How does the narrator feel before she picks up the trash? How does she feel after? What causes her to change her attitude?
5. In “Explorer,” who or what is an explorer?
6. In “Bus Ride,” why does the narrator give up his seat? What clue does he have that the man may need the seat more than he does?
7. In “No Bounds,” how does the narrator learn multiplication? How does quilting make learning to multiply seem less difficult?
8. What is the central idea of all the poems in the *Lend a Hand* collection?

**Extension/Higher Level Thinking**

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4–6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4 and 5)

1. In “Sandwich,” how does the narrator figure out the new girl doesn’t have her own lunch? What does the narrator mean when she says, “. . . I had/ only half for myself,/ after I ate it/ I somehow felt full.”?
2. In “Hair,” why does the narrator think she might look like sisters with the person who gets her hair?
3. In “Trees,” why does the narrator plant saplings that probably won’t provide shade or benefit to the neighborhood until many years later? What does he hope his action inspires?
4. Compare the poems, “Trees” and “No Charge.” How are these two poems examples of the expression “paying it forward”? How do the narrators demonstrate selflessness?
5. In “No Charge,” if the narrator took the tip the woman offered to him, would he still be helping her? Can you help someone and still be paid money for it? How so? Would he still be “lending a hand”? How would accepting money change his experience or the effect/impact of his action?
6. In “Explorer,” what does author, John Frank, mean by “ants-in-his-pants kid”? What words in the poem help you figure out the meaning of this phrase? What other ways could you describe a child who wiggles and can’t sit still?
7. How can reading make someone an explorer?
8. Based on what happens in all the poems together, what does “lend a hand” mean?
9. The image on the dedication page is taken from the image for the last poem, “No Bounds.” Why do you think illustrator London Ladd chooses to begin and end the book with the same image, and with this illustration in particular?
10. Why do you think author uses first person narration throughout, for all the poems? How does this help the reader identify with the characters and situations?
11. In “Letter,” why is the poem shown in two different typefaces? What do the two different typefaces communicate to the reader? Of what does this remind the reader?
12. Study the illustrations and pay attention to the settings and characters. Why do you think the author and illustrator want to show people of diverse backgrounds, ages, and abilities lending a hand?
13. Who do you think is the intended audience for this collection of poems (adults or students)? Why do you think so? What might the author and illustrator want the reader to do with this message about giving and “lending a hand”?

14. Why do you think the author, John Frank, writes about volunteering at all? Why might adults want children to learn about community service?
15. After reading all fourteen poems, think about why author includes them together as a collection. What do all the poems have in common? How do they complement each other? What does the author, John Frank, want readers to learn from these snapshots and experiences?
16. What is the purpose of the Illustrator's Note at the end of the book? Why is it important that illustrator London Ladd included more background information about his work and inspiration? How does this information add to the central idea of the book?

### **Reader's Response**

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. Suggest that students respond in reader's response journals, essays, or oral discussion. You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. With which poem do you most closely identify? What about the narrator, action, or situation resonates with you? Why do you think this is an important example or message to share with others about giving?
2. If you could pick only one poem from the collection to give someone to show the person the importance of "lending a hand," which poem would you choose? Why? How is this poem an effective or meaningful example to inspire others?
3. Think about the message of each poem as an example of giving. What situation or example of service or giving would you add to ones explored in the collection? Why is your idea an important example to share with students?
4. In *Lend a Hand*, helping others has the powerful effects of bringing people in the community together and creating new friends. Describe a time you helped someone else or someone helped you. Why did you or that person need help? How did this event make you feel? How did you or that person show appreciation?

### **ELL/ESL Teaching Strategies**

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Language Learners.

1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the book with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
2. Have each student write three questions about the text. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
  - Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing.
  - Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the book or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about what they admire about one of the poems or author's message in the book.

5. The story contains some content-specific words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

### INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Student who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

#### Writing

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

1. Have students think about the structure, tone, and characteristics of each poem included in *Lend a Hand*. What example might adult author John Frank missed of an example of *students* giving or lending a hand? Encourage students to write a free verse poem to add to the book. Consider creating a class book with all of the students' examples included for them to present to their families, the school library, or a younger grade classroom.
2. People help others all year around. There are also special times of the year when people are encouraged to make a special effort to be more thoughtful about helping others. Write a paragraph about a holiday or time of year that you think the poems in *Lend a Hand* would be useful to share and explain why.
3. The examples of giving and helping in the poems in *Lend a Hand* all show young people utilizing their skills, for example: singing, working with tools, and writing. Ask students to think about what they are good at—computers, working with animals or younger people, gardening, playing an instrument, reading, and so on—and then think about how they can put those skills to use. In a paragraph, encourage students to describe their skills and how they could use their skills to help other people.

#### Visual Literacy

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1 and 2, Craft & Structure, Strands 4–6, and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strand 1 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4)

1. Check out the *Lend a Hand* [infographic](#) included at the end of this guide.<sup>6</sup> Have students compare the infographic with the book. What is the central idea of the infographic? Compare how the infographic and the book convey the ideas of helping and giving. How are they similar? How are they different? How does the infographic support or extend the book's central message?
2. What is the tone of the infographic (humorous, serious, threatening, etc.)? How do the colors and pictures help convey the tone?
3. Who do you think is the intended audience for the infographic (adults or students)? Why do you think so? What might the creators of the infographic want readers to do with the information?

---

<sup>6</sup> <http://blog.leeandlow.com/2014/12/02/infographic-10-ways-to-lend-a-hand/>

4. Next to the suggestion "Teach a Skill" is a picture of an artist's palette. Why do you think the illustrator chose this picture to illustrate the accompanying text? Next to the suggestion "Clean Things Up" is a picture of a flower. Why do you think the illustrator chose this picture to illustrate the accompanying text?
5. What would you add to the list of suggestions in the infographic? What would you revise on the infographic to make it even more effective, convincing, or exciting?
6. The last idea in the last suggestion on the list is "When you help others, you may inspire them to help someone else." Do you think this is true? Why or why not? How do you feel when someone helps you? How do you feel when someone doesn't help you?
7. Have students create their own poster of one or several ways to "lend a hand." Brainstorm places in the community or school where you could place the poster to inspire and teach other young people about community service.

### Reader's Theater

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strand 3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 5)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4 and 6)

Break students into fourteen groups with two students (maximum three) per group.

Encourage students to add dialogue and act out the poems in the book to perform for parents/guardians at Back to School Night or for a class in a lower grade. Support students to lead a discussion on why giving, kindness, and helping others are important.

### Mathematics

(Mathematics Standards for Grade 2, Measurement & Data, Represent & Interpret Data, Strand 10)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4 and 5)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strand 2, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strand 7)

As a class, vote on your favorite way to help someone from the fourteen examples presented in *Lend a Hand*. Make a bar graph or pie graph showing how many students voted for each type of giving. As an extension, encourage students to interview five people outside of class and create a class graph with all the results.

### Home-School Connection

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strand 2 and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strand 7)

1. Encourage students to interview a parent, grandparent, or guardian. Students might ask questions such as the following and record for class: When has there been a time when you made a difference or impacted the world around you? What changed because of your actions? Do you think anyone can make a difference in the world or their community? Why or why not? Does age matter, or can even children make a difference in the world or community around them? Describe a time you helped someone. Why did you help? Why did the person need help? How did this event make you feel? How did the person show appreciation? Why do you think it is important to help others and our community?
2. What can we do to help in our community? Help students and families find ways to volunteer in their community and neighborhood in a way that is right for them. Show

families [America's Natural and Cultural Resources Volunteer Portal](#) for ideas and local opportunities.<sup>7</sup>

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**John Frank** is the author of several children's books, including three poetry collections, which have garnered awards and starred reviews. Frank taught for more than thirty years and says he "witnessed students belittle and bully others—and [also] witnessed students helping others. The former drew most of the attention. *Lend a Hand* is a salute to the latter." He lives with his wife in Redmond, Washington.

### ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

**London Ladd's** art career began with painting local murals and illustrating album covers. He works in a realistic, painterly style that combines acrylic, pastel, and color pencils, for which his picture book illustrations have been highly praised. He carries a sketchbook and paints with him everywhere he goes. He hopes to one day open an art center so that families can have a space to create their own artwork. Ladd lives with his family in Syracuse, New York.

### Book Information

\$17.95, HARDCOVER

978-1-60060-970-1

32 pages, 8-1/2 x 10-3/4

\*Reading Level: Grades 2–3

\*Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula

Interest Level: Grades 1–5

Guided Reading Level: M

Accelerated Reader<sup>®</sup> Level/Points: 4.4/0.5

Themes: Caring/Kindness, Respect, Responsibility, Volunteering and Activism, Cultural Diversity, Intergenerational Relationships, Environmentalism, Poetry

### RESOURCES ON THE WEB:

Learn more about *Lend a Hand* at: <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2849>

### ORDER INFORMATION

#### On the Web:

<https://www.leeandlow.com/contact/ordering> (general order information)

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2849> (secure online ordering)

**By Phone:** 212-779-4400 ext. 25

**By Fax:** 212-683-1894

**By Mail:** Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue, NY, NY 10016

Copyright © 2015 The Active Learner,  
Lee & Low Books. All rights reserved.

For questions, comments, and/or more information,  
please contact us at [general@leeandlow.com](mailto:general@leeandlow.com)

---

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.volunteer.gov/>

# 10 WAYS TO LEND A HAND



## SHARE YOUR SNACK

Sharing your food is a great way to make a new friend and help someone in need.



## VISIT A SENIOR CENTER OR NURSING HOME

With a parent or teacher, find a nursing home, senior center, or elderly neighbor to visit. Play card or board games together, teach them computer skills, or find other ways to help them with things that might be hard for them.



## GROW YOUR HAIR OUT TO DONATE

Many organizations collect donated hair to make wigs for those who have lost their hair due to sickness.



## TEACH A SKILL

What are you really good at? Find a way to share your talent with others and you may both learn something new.



## CLEAN THINGS UP

Grab some friends and spend an afternoon picking up litter around a local park or playground.



## SHARE THE MUSIC

Are you in a choir or band? Find a local hospital or nursing home where you can perform.



## PLANT A TREE

Make the earth a little greener by planting a tree in your neighborhood. Years later, others will enjoy its shade.



## OFFER YOUR SEAT

When riding the bus or subway, give up your seat to someone who needs it more.



## WRITE A LETTER TO A SOLDIER

With a parent or teacher, write a letter to a soldier. Tell a joke, talk about your day, or just say thank you. Many organizations can make sure your letter gets to a soldier who needs a friendly note from back home.



## START THE PAY-IT-FORWARD CHAIN

Go out of your way to hold open a door or help someone with heavy bags. Helping others can make people feel connected, like a chain. When you help others, you may inspire them to help someone else, too. Perhaps your pay-it-forward chain will make it around the world!



For more ideas, check out  
*Lend a Hand: Poems About Giving*  
by John Frank, illustrated by London Ladd  
9781600699701 \$17.95 hardcover  
published by LEE & LOW BOOKS

ABOUT EVERYONE WHO EVER LIVED  
LEE & LOW BOOKS