This paper is based upon the notions that literature provides many avenues to create powerful discussions with our students, and that stories are excellent vehicles for advancing critical thoughts and eventually creating action. It also relies upon the insight that encouraging our students to speak up and speak out is a significant goal in our new international era of civic interest. Several books are discussed that are excellent examples of stories that can encourage the reader to take a stand and behave like an 'upstander'. Two classroom activities are described; Town Hall Meeting and Constructed Controversy. It is shown how they can be applied with books by Frank Asch, Sam Swope, Paul Fleischman and Martin Waddell.

**Keywords:** literature, children’s literature, social justice, upstander, classroom activities, democratic classroom, empowerment