

Echoes of October – Classroom Activities (Grades 5–7)

Teachers Guide

This **teachers' guide** offers four classroom-ready activities designed to complement *Echoes of October*. Each activity supports literacy, empathy, and critical thinking aligned with middle school (Grades 5–7) learning outcomes.

1. Four Voices, One Event with worksheet

****Focus:**** Perspective-taking & critical thinking

****Objective:**** Students learn that the same event can be interpreted differently depending on point of view.

Choose one shared event from the novel (e.g., the bombing, a classroom discussion, or a shared news broadcast). Divide students into four groups—each representing one of the protagonists. Each group writes a short diary entry or comic-panel narration describing what “really happened,” from their character’s perspective. The class then compares how details, tone, and emotion differ.

****Curriculum Link:**** Literacy, empathy, character development, media studies.

2. Map of Emotions with worksheet

****Focus:**** Geography, emotional literacy & context building

****Objective:**** Connect place with emotion and identity.

Display a simple map of Israel and Gaza. Students mark key locations from the story (e.g., Tel Aviv, Gaza City, Nova festival site). For each location, they attach a sticky note or color label representing how a character felt there (e.g., fear, pride, loss, hope). Discuss: How can one place hold such different meanings for different people?

****Curriculum Link:**** Social studies, geography, emotional awareness.

3. Newsroom Challenge

****Focus:**** Media literacy & bias detection

****Objective:**** Explore how stories are framed differently.

Students act as reporters from four imaginary newspapers—each with its own bias (e.g., pro-peace, nationalist, humanitarian, international). Using one event from the book, each team writes a short headline and 3-sentence news article. The class compares the different framings and discusses why bias matters.

****Curriculum Link:**** Language arts, civics, media literacy.

4. Bridge Builders

****Focus:**** Conflict resolution & citizenship education

****Objective:**** Encourage creative problem-solving around division and empathy.

After reading a chapter where tensions rise, ask: 'If you were there, what could help both sides understand each other?' Students brainstorm actions, symbols, or community projects (art mural, shared soccer game, etc.) that could build trust. Optionally, groups can pitch their "bridge-building idea" in a 60-second presentation.

****Curriculum Link:**** Character education, ethics, social studies.

5. The Local Lens: Understanding Media Bias

****Focus:**** Media literacy, critical thinking, civic awareness

****Objective:**** Students investigate how the same local event can be portrayed differently depending on the source or bias.

1. As a class, select a recent local issue or event (e.g., a new bylaw, a school board decision, a community protest, or a sports controversy).
2. Students collect 4–6 media articles covering that same event — ideally from different outlets (local news sites, community blogs, national papers, etc.).
3. Working in small groups, students identify:
 - The headline and tone (positive, neutral, negative).
 - What facts are emphasized or omitted.
 - What language choices shape perception (e.g., "protesters" vs "rioters").
4. Each group presents their findings on a shared chart or slide, showing how bias changes the narrative.
5. The class then discusses: What does this teach us about truth, media, and perspective?

****Extension Options:****

- Write your own balanced article using information from all sources.
- Create a visual "bias spectrum" showing where each outlet might fall (left–right, sensational–factual).
- Connect to **Echoes of October** by asking: How do media narratives in the story influence what the characters believe or fear?

****Curriculum Link:**** Language arts, media literacy, civics, social studies

6. Between Parent and Child: Conversations that Connect

****Focus:**** Family relationships, empathy, communication, creative expression

****Objective:**** Help students reflect on the importance of dialogue between parents and children, and express that connection through art.

1. Each student creates an individual art project (poster, collage, drawing, or digital artwork) that features themselves and a parent, guardian, or trusted adult.
2. The artwork should show a place where meaningful conversations happen — for example, walking home from school, at the kitchen table, during a car ride, or while doing a shared activity.
3. Around or below the image, students make a list of 5–10 “conversation topics” they imagine (or actually have) in those moments.
 - Topics could include dreams for the future, handling fear, family traditions, fairness, or personal challenges.
4. Optionally, students can write a short reflection paragraph describing what makes that space or relationship special.

****Extension Options:****

- Create a classroom gallery called ***“Conversations That Matter”*** to display the artworks.
- Invite parents to view the exhibit or contribute a short note about their child’s artwork.
- Connect to ***Echoes of October*** by discussing how parent-child relationships shape the characters’ choices and resilience.

****Curriculum Link:**** Visual arts, social-emotional learning, language arts, character education

Worksheet: Map of Emotions

****Name:**** _____

****Date:**** _____

1. Choose three key locations from the story and describe how each feels to one character.

Location 1: _____ | Emotion: _____

Why:

Location 2: _____ | Emotion: _____

Why:

Location 3: _____ | Emotion: _____

Why:

2. Reflection: Why might different people feel differently about the same place?

Worksheet: Bridge Builders

****Name:**** _____ ****Date:**** _____

1. What moment or conflict from the story inspired your bridge-building idea?

2. Describe your idea (project, action, or symbol):

3. How would this idea help people understand each other better?

Worksheet: The Local Lens – Media Bias

****Name:**** _____ ****Date:**** _____

1. Local issue or event chosen: _____

2. List of media sources found:

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____

3. For each source, fill out:

Source	Headline	Tone	Key Facts	Missing Facts	Biased Words

4. Reflection: What did you learn about bias and truth in news stories?

Worksheet: Between Parent and Child – Conversations that Connect

****Name:**** _____ ****Date:**** _____

1. Draw or describe the place where you and your parent/guardian have meaningful conversations:

2. List 5-10 conversation topics you might have there:

3. Reflection: What makes these conversations important or memorable to you?

Here are six rubrics aligned to the Ontario Grades 5–7 Curriculum, TDSB media/language/SEL frameworks, and the multi-day Echoes of October activity guide. Each rubric corresponds to one of the activities described in the teacher guide:

1. Four Voices, One Event— Perspective Writing

Curriculum Expectation: Oral Communication & Writing	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Point of View: Student demonstrates understanding of differing perspectives	Limited awareness	Basic representation of POV	Clear understanding of distinct character perspectives	Insightful, emotionally resonant portrayal of varied perspectives
Organization: Diary/comic entry structure	Disorganized or unclear	Some structure; ideas need linking	Well organized with logical flow	Creative structure with powerful impact
Voice/Tone: Writing reflects character emotion and tone	Vague or inaccurate tone	Tone attempts character voice	Appropriate tone for character's voice	Tone powerfully enhances character depth and message
Empathy Development: Reflection shows awareness of others' feelings	Minimal or absent	Surface-level emotional insight	Demonstrates empathy through language	Rich, nuanced understanding of others' emotional experiences

2. Map of Emotions— Emotional Geography Activity

Curriculum Expectation: Geography & Emotional Literacy	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4

Location Identification: Accurately identifies settings	1–2 locations, unclear links	2–3 places, general accuracy	3 places clearly referenced	Places selected show deep understanding of context
Emotion Matching: Links locations to character emotions	Emotions unclear or generic	Emotions linked with some justification	Emotions reflect story moments well	Emotional depth and variety strongly tied to story arcs
Explanation of Emotion: Why those emotions are felt	Minimal explanation	Basic reasoning provided	Reasoning clearly rooted in character experience	Sophisticated analysis with personal insight
Comparison of Feelings: How perspectives vary	No explanation	Some effort to compare experiences	Clearly compares multiple viewpoints	Insightfully contrasts perspectives, fostering empathy

3. Newsroom Challenge— Media Literacy and Bias Writing

Curriculum Expectation: Media Literacy & Writing	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Understanding Bias: Shows how media slant affects storytelling	Cannot identify bias	Bias suggested but vague	Bias identified with examples	Strong critical analysis of media angle
Headline Creation: Reflects assigned perspective	Off-topic or unclear	Attempts perspective	Matches bias and tone well	Clever and powerful representation of perspective
Article Clarity: 3-sentence article uses supporting facts	Unclear or missing facts	Includes facts, but lacks cohesion	Structured, clear, and relevant	Sharp, impactful, and persuasive short-form writing

Comparison/Discussion: Can reflect on differences across outlets	Minimal reflection	Surface-level comparison	Effective, thoughtful reflection	Rich, insightful comparison that reveals media power
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4. Bridge Builders— Creative Conflict Resolution

Curriculum Expectation: Social Studies & Citizenship	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Idea Generation: Develops creative solution to conflict	Idea unclear or unrealistic	Idea reflects general understanding	Idea connects clearly to story conflict	Innovative, empathetic, and feasible solution
Connection to Story: Links proposal to a moment in the book	Little or no link	Some connection made	Clear link to relevant event	Strong connection with emotional/political nuance
Presentation/Expression: Oral or written delivery	Unclear or incomplete	Reasonably clear with support	Effective delivery and structure	Engaging, persuasive, and well-structured
Empathy & Understanding: Respects all perspectives	Little empathy shown	Attempts to include all sides	Demonstrates balanced understanding	Deep respect for complexity of human conflict and trauma

5. The Local Lens — Bias Across News Sources

Curriculum Expectation: Language & Civics	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4

Media Analysis: Recognizes headline tone and language use	Incomplete or inaccurate	Partial identification	Accurately identifies tone and bias	Deep, contextualized bias analysis
Comparison of Articles: Detects patterns across sources	Minimal comparison	Some differences noted	Clear patterns identified	Sophisticated synthesis of perspectives
Chart/Presentation: Organizes findings visually or orally	Disorganized, hard to follow	Some structure	Organized, clear visuals	Highly effective, polished communication
Reflection: Explores how media influences perception	Vague or general thoughts	Basic insights provided	Thoughtful, relevant conclusions	Insightful, personally reflective, and globally aware

6. Between Parent and Child — Conversations and Art

Curriculum Expectation: SEL, Art, and Language	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Art Expression: Shows meaningful place or relationship	Sketch vague or off-topic	Image loosely shows connection	Clear place of dialogue depicted	Symbolic, layered, and emotionally rich visual
Conversation Topics: 5–10 items listed with thought	Topics absent or generic	Simple topics listed	Relevant and varied topics	Deep, honest, or complex conversation prompts
Reflection Paragraph: Explains the meaning behind image	Incomplete or unclear	Some personal reflection	Describes connection meaningfully	Powerful, self-aware, and emotionally engaging

Class Contribution: Participates in gallery/feedback	No or limited participation	Basic involvement	Active participant	Supports peer learning and shows pride in work
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