



Consider the following question as you read *Maggie and the Chocolate War*.  
**What could you and your friends do to improve the world around you?**

### Story

*Across the city again today, the broadcaster said, children raised placards against the eight-cent candy bar. Protests started three days ago in Ladysmith and are rapidly spreading across the country. Young protesters hope that their boycott will soon return the five-cent price tag to their favorite treat.*

Maggie has been saving her delivery-job money for weeks to buy her best friend, Jo, a chocolate bar for her birthday. It's 1947, and while the war is over and ration tickets are gone, food prices are going up. Then it is announced that the price of chocolate is going up too—now Maggie can never afford to buy a chocolate bar! And neither can the other kids. Maggie and her friends leap into action and wage a strike against the price hike. But what can a bunch of kids do? More than you think!

Inspired by real events, *Maggie and the Chocolate War* is filled with photographs and newspaper documents covering an amazing historical moment that united children from British Columbia to the Atlantic coast.

### Author

When she was growing up, **Michelle Mulder's** favorite spot was the library, so it's no surprise that she studied literature at university. After graduating, she cycled across Canada, taught creative writing in the Arctic and married the pen pal that she'd been writing to since she was fourteen. She lives in Victoria, British Columbia. For more information about Michelle and her books, please visit her website at [www.michellemulder.com](http://www.michellemulder.com)

## **Curricular Integration**

Themes: democracy, government, activism, post-war history and rationing, freedom of speech, kids making a difference.

## **Language Arts**

- Have students prepare a debate where they will decide whether or not the price of chocolate should go up from five cents to eight cents. Some students will represent children of 1947 and others will represent the government of the time. You may have students refer to the book for ideas in favor of each side.
- In chapter ten, Maggie is worried about losing Jo's friendship and about her father being angry about the protestors. Have students write an entry or two of Maggie's journal for that chapter.
- *Maggie and the Chocolate War* shows that a group of kids can gather together and make their voices heard by creating an organized, respectful front. Have students discuss causes about which they feel passionate enough to gather together and promote change.
- Slogans (like the those on the chocolate protest signs) are meant to persuade others. Have students come up with their own slogans, either for keeping down the price of chocolate, or for another cause of their own choosing.

## **Social Studies**

- What is the main ingredient of chocolate, and where does it come from? Find the main cocoa-producing countries and trace them on a map. Follow the journey of chocolate's various ingredients from their origins to the candy bar shelf.

- Many seniors who were children in Canada in 1947 might remember the chocolate protests, and they certainly have other fascinating stories to tell. Have students interview seniors about a special childhood memory. Encourage students to find a link between the adult's childhood experience and the student's own present-day experiences.

## **Art**

- Freedom of speech is a fundamental Canadian value. By speaking clearly and respectfully, people gather support for their cause and are often able to influence others. Have students create informational posters about the basic steps in speaking out in a persuasive way. Students may use a word-processing program and experiment with different fonts and styles.
- Have students create posters to persuade the viewer to either boycott 8¢ bars, or to join another cause of the students' choice. Those students working on the 8¢ bar posters might explore techniques to make the posters look "old," like something preserved in a museum.

## **Science**

- How is chocolate made? Have students create a flowchart listing all the main ingredients and how they're processed to make chocolate.
- A chocolate bar left in the sun, a pocket or a warm car soon becomes chocolate goop. Research why chocolate melts quickly, and brainstorm ways that manufacturers could make it more resistant to melting. Would chocolate be just as appealing if it didn't melt in your mouth?
- Chocolate, strawberry and vanilla are three popular flavors. How do candy makers and ice cream makers usually get those flavors into their products?

## **Drama**

- Have students rewrite one of the scenes of the book as a short play. They may perform with or without props and costumes. In the latter case, encourage them to explore language and student voice to shape the work.
- Have students write and perform a conversation between one of the chocolate protestors and a government representative. Ensure that students remember the importance of respectful dialogue in persuading the other party.

## **Further Study**

- The author wrote this story to highlight the power kids have to change society. Another aspect of any story involving chocolate, however, is the issue of how the cocoa is grown, who harvests it, and how much those people are paid. You might discuss with students some possible reasons why it could be *good* for the price of chocolate to go up, i.e., discuss the concept of fair trade and what it means on a global level. Please see the Suggested Resources for more information.

## **Suggested Resources**

### **Fiction**

Matas, Carol. *Rosie in New York City : gotcha!* (children involved in a labor strike)

Schwartz, Ellen. *Yossi's Goal*. (parents involved in a labor strike)

## Non-fiction

(Dewey Decimal Classification Numbers appear in parentheses where applicable.)

Brown, Don. *Kid Blink Beats the World*. (331.318)

Burleigh, Richard. *Chocolate: Riches from the Rainforest*. (641.3374)

Busenberg, Bonnie. *Vanilla, Chocolate & Strawberry: the story of your favorite flavors*. (664.5)

Cooper, Adrian. *Fair Trade*. (382.104)

Dineen, Jacqueline. *Chocolate*. (641.3374)

Hearn, Michael Patrick. *The Chocolate Book: a sampler for boys and girls*. (808.8)

Hoose, Phillip. *It's Our World, Too! : Stories of Young People Who Are Making a Difference*. (302.14)

Hoose, Phillip. *It's Our World, Too! : Young People Who Are Making a Difference: How They Do It - How YOU Can, Too!* (361.37)

Jones, Carol. *Chocolate*. (641.3374)

Kessler, Paula. *Amazing Kids!* (305.23)

Kielburger, Marc and Craig. *Take Action! : a Guide to Active Citizenship*. (323.042)

Rajan, Bilaal. *Making Change: Tips from an Underage Overachiever*. (361.70681)

Rickard, Graham. *Focus on Cocoa*. (641.3374)

Shoveller, Herb. *Ryan and Jimmy: and the Well in Africa that Brought Them Together*. (361.70492)

Wilson, Janet. *One Peace: True Stories of Young Activists*. (327.172)

## Online

1000 Classrooms (a great example of kids making a difference)  
<http://www.1000classrooms.org/>

Fair Trade Chocolate

<http://www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/fairtrade/cocoa/fairtradeintheclassroom.html>

History of Chocolate

[http://www.exploratorium.edu/exploring/exploring\\_chocolate/index.html](http://www.exploratorium.edu/exploring/exploring_chocolate/index.html)

Ladybug Foundation (another great example of kids making a difference)

<http://www.ladybugfoundation.ca/>

Ryan's Well Foundation (a third great example of kids making a difference)

[www.ryanswell.ca](http://www.ryanswell.ca)

Video of Making Chocolate

<http://www.hersheys.com/discover/chocolate.asp>

We Generation: Youth Hub for Global Change

<http://we.freethechildren.com/>

## **Film**

*The Five Cent War*. Travesty Productions; written and directed by Phillip Daniels; produced by S. Wyeth Clarkson & Phillip Daniels.

## **A Few Words from the Author**

Dear Readers,

I first heard the story of the chocolate strike on CBC radio. I loved the idea of kids working together for something that was important to them (especially for something delicious like chocolate), and I wanted to learn more. At the library, I read everything I could about the chocolate strike. I wrote to the National Archives of Canada to get copies of newspapers from 1947 saved on something called microfilm. I looked for children's books on the topic, and when I found none, I decided to write one myself.

Ever since I was a kid, I've loved reading novels, so that's what I wrote. My favorite part of writing *Maggie and the Chocolate War* was telling an invented story full of details of things that actually happened. Maggie and Jo came to life for me almost instantly, from the way they dressed to the things they liked to do together. I wanted the price of chocolate to be particularly important to Maggie, and so I whispered in her ear about Jo's birthday coming up soon, and the story started moving along. I included as many historic details as possible, like the slogans on the protest signs and the words used in radio broadcasts and

newspapers of the time. When I came across a newspaper article from 1947 about the protest in front of (and inside) the Legislature, I included that, too.

I was just about finished my first draft when I got a call from my godmother. I told her about my story, and there was a long silence at her end of the phone. “The chocolate strikes spread across the whole country?” she asked. “I thought I was the only one!” Then she told me about how, when she was 12, she’d pedaled back and forth across her hometown in Alberta with a big sign strapped to the handlebars of her bike: *We want our 5¢ bars!* She couldn’t believe I was writing a story about that, and I couldn’t believe my own godmother had been involved in the strike, and I didn’t even know! She told me as many details as she could remember, and I added them to my story.

I hope you enjoy reading *Maggie and the Chocolate War* as much as I enjoyed writing it.

Sincerely,

Michelle.