



Dorothy Day: Radical Devotion

GUIDE FOR MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Dorothy Day: Radical Devotion, written by Jeffry Odell Korgen and illustrated by Christopher Cardinale, is a graphic biography that introduces readers to the amazing life of Dorothy Day, reviews her impact on the Church and peace and justice movements, and provides an informative understanding of the process of canonization.

Spanning a variety of themes, *Dorothy Day: Radical Devotion* can be integrated into middle school classroom instruction in multiple subjects. This guide identifies opportunities for integration in courses in theology, history, geography, civics, and art.



Theology/Religion

Assign *Dorothy Day: Radical Devotion* as a reading in middle school theology/religion courses. Questions for reflection and/or discussion on *Dorothy Day: Radical Devotion* are suggested to support study of doctrinal elements related to the general categories below.

I. The Profession of Faith

- Read *The Hound of Heaven*, the poem discussed by Dorothy Day and Gene O'Neil. How was a thirst and desire for God experienced by Dorothy?

II. Celebration of the Christian Mystery (*Liturgy, sacraments*)

- Why was it important to Dorothy to have her daughter, Tamara, baptized, and to receive the sacraments herself? What difficult decision did Dorothy have to make related to this?
- Do you think there was a connection for Dorothy between care for the poor and her daily celebration of the Eucharist? If yes, what might that connection have been?

III. Life in Christ; Man's Vocation; Life in the Spirit

(*dignity of human person, moral life, conscience, vocation, ten commandments, love for God and neighbor, social justice*)

- What is an example of a time in Dorothy's life when she chose the good, even when it was difficult? Describe.
- How did Dorothy's conscience help her to live a life of holiness?
- Do you think Dorothy should be canonized as a saint? Why or why not?
- In what ways did Dorothy live her vocation?
- How did Dorothy live out the Two Great Commandments to love God and neighbor?
- In what ways was Dorothy's commitment to social justice (e.g., her support for workers and the poor, or her opposition to war) rooted in her faith?
- Reflect on the Catholic Workers' newspaper, houses of hospitality, or farms. How did this work live out Catholic Social Teaching?

IV. Christian Prayer

- Was Dorothy's ministry rooted in prayer? Back up your response with evidence from the text.



Social Studies (U.S. History, World History/Geography, Civics)

The following discussion or reflection questions make connections between *Dorothy Day: Radical Devotion* and areas of study in social studies, including U.S. History, World History, and Civics.

- What are the roles and responsibilities of a citizen in the democratic process? How did Dorothy Day exercise some of these responsibilities?
- With what branches of government (Legislative, Executive, Judicial) did Dorothy interact? Describe.
- Why is the freedom to express different points of view important? How did Dorothy exercise this freedom during her life?
- Describe Dorothy's involvement in the organized labor, women's suffrage, civil rights, or farmworkers movement.
- Given what you know about Dorothy's life, what perspectives might she have had about the capitalist and socialist economic systems? As part of your answer, compare and contrast the characteristics of these systems.
- When Dorothy Day is a young reporter, she interacts with people who have diverse perspectives about political and economic systems. Describe the characteristics of and analyze the different forms of systems mentioned. What are some of these and what is the difference between them? What aspects of these perspectives might Dorothy Day have agreed or disagreed with?
- Select a section of *Dorothy Day: Radical Devotion* related to Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker's stance on one of the following wars that occurred during her life: the Spanish Civil War, World War II, the Cold War, or the Vietnam War. Discuss what historical realities are being illustrated in word or image. Do you agree with Dorothy's perspective? Why or why not?
- What were the reasons for U.S. military involvement in World War II or in Vietnam? What perspective did Dorothy and the Catholic Worker have about this military involvement? Do you agree or disagree with her thinking?



Art

The following discussion or reflection questions can help engage art students with *Dorothy Day: Radical Devotion*.

- How did supporters of the Catholic Worker use art to depict the movement's values?
- How does the chosen genre of *Dorothy Day: Radical Devotion* (graphic biography) help tell Dorothy Day's story in ways that other artforms would not? What are the strengths and limitations of the graphic biography artform?
- Where do you observe "art within art" in the graphic biography? That is, do you notice other art forms used within the graphic biography to help communicate the story in a different way? How do all of these elements work together?
- How does the artist use picture storytelling to share Dorothy Day's life?
- What was your favorite panel in the story? Why was the artwork powerful?
- Analyze the use of various artistic properties (e.g., sensory, formal, technical, expressive, etc.) in *Dorothy Day: Radical Devotion*.
- Contemporary artists continue to use art to help tell Dorothy Day's story. The *Illuminator* is a newsletter about the arts and artists of the Catholic Worker movement. Read an [issue](#) and comment on the characteristics of the art you see there.
- Using whatever medium you choose, further break open an aspect of Dorothy's story that you feel compelled to reflect on through your own art.



Service

Dorothy Day: Radical Devotion can aid theological reflection around service projects and/or service learning. [View the Guide for Service Projects and Service Learning here.](#)