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### Student Reading 3.5: I have to Eat What???

Kamiah was standing at the bus stop just like every other day of the school week. She looked up and saw her bus coming down the street. She opened her book bag one last time to take a quick inventory of her school supplies.

“Homework...check. Gym clothes... check. Pencil bag... check. Lunch box, lunch box, lunch box???” she cried. She had forgotten her lunch!!! There was no time to run home and get it, the bus pulled up to take her to school.

All the way to school Kamiah was panicked. What was she going to eat for lunch? She had never eaten a cafeteria lunch before. A couple of her friends did, but they never seemed to like what they were eating and the food on their trays never looked appealing to her. She knew her mom had placed \$2.00 in the hidden pocket of her book bag for just an occasion. Was she actually going to have to eat a school cafeteria lunch?

Kamiah’s morning classes flew by. The bell for lunch rang and she swallowed hard. ‘Here goes nothing,’ she thought. She got in line behind her



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friend Jenó. He turned around and looked at her. “What are you doing here?” he asked. “I forgot my lunch at home this morning. What do you recommend?” She asked. He took a minute to answer. “I guess I would recommend the grilled cheese. But honestly, I would say, go home and get your lunch,” he said with a chuckle. “Why do you eat here every day?” she asked with a funny look on her face.

He looked down and admitted that his mom could not afford to make him lunches every day and the school would give him a free lunch. He did not like it, but he knew it helped his mom out. Kamiah took Jenó’s recommendation and put a grilled cheese sandwich on her plate. She then grabbed a fruit cup and chocolate milk and headed to her table to talk with her friends.

Kamiah sat down and looked at her tray. The bread looked burnt and cheese was not what the cheese she ate at home looked like. The fruit cup was still partially frozen. She decided it was going to be just chocolate milk for lunch today. As she sat there, she could help but look across the room at Jenó, eating the sandwich and fruit cup. It was not his fault that his mom could not afford to



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pack him a lunch every day. He still deserved a meal that tasted good and had nutritional value. All of the sudden her friend Trinity tapped her arm.

“Hey, are you okay? You have been in space since you sat down,” Trinity joked. “Yeah, I forgot my lunch this morning so I had to buy a lunch from the cafeteria. This is not what students should have to eat! I need to do something about this!” she said with passion. “What can you do? You are just a kid,” Aries asked curiously.

Kamiah thought for a minute, what could she do? Maybe Aries was right, she was just one kid. When Kamiah got home from school, she ran straight to the kitchen and made herself a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Her stomach was growling so loudly, her mom thought she heard a monster in the kitchen. Mrs. Frey, Kamiah’s mom, came into the kitchen. “Boy, aren’t you a hungry little girl! How was school today?” her mom asked.

Kamiah proceeded to tell her mom about forgetting her lunch, her conversation with Jenó, and how bad the food was. She explained how she



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wished she could do something about it. Mrs. Frey looked at Kamiah for a minute with her head tilted to the side a little bit.

“Well of course there is something you can do! You can petition against something you feel is wrong in your school.” Kamiah looked confused, “where would I begin?” Mrs. Frey went on to explain to Kamiah about talking with her Social Studies teacher in the morning more about the Bill of Rights and what responsibilities we have as citizens.

The next day, Kamiah went into Social Studies class ready to talk to her teacher Mr. Williams. She presented the situation to him and asked his opinion about what her first step should be in order to correct this situation. Mr. Williams was impressed with Kamiah and her wanting to help the common good of the school. He agreed that the school lunches could be improved. He wanted the class to understand that it was not the cafeteria workers’ fault that the food was not the best. The lunches were paid by taxes collected from the citizens of the community and grants that the school district was given. This was not anything that the cafeteria workers could control. In order to make a change, “we can



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write a petition to the Cincinnati Board of Education and also to our local government officers appealing to them. We can explain the problem and also try to propose a solution,” Mr. Williams explained.

He wanted his students to understand that just complaining does not help any situation, the best way to approach something, is with a positive compromise and solution. Kamiah left Social Studies class feeling excited. She went to lunch ready to talk and make a plan with her friends. The first step she took was to stop in and talk to the cafeteria workers. She explained to them that she was not very happy with the food they were serving and she understood that they had no control of the situation. She then told them about the petition they were going to write and asked if they would be willing to sign and support the cause. All of the workers liked the idea and supported her whole heartedly.

Next, Kamiah went to her lunch table and started discussing the petition with her friends. They wanted to write the petition in a way like Mr. Williams discussed, they needed a solution. Aries wondered if there were other grants available that could be written to provide different food possibilities. Kamiah



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offered for anyone interested to come to her house that night to help write the petition at 6:00pm.

That night several friends came over to write the petition. There was a lot of good discussion. The group decided to take the petition around school the next couple of days to get as many signatures as possible. At the next Cincinnati Public Schools Board of Education meeting, the students (along with their teachers, principal, and cafeteria workers) would present the petition to the school board to share their solutions and show that this was a cause that would help the common good.

