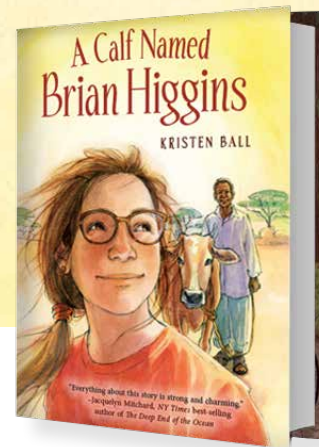


# A Calf Named Brian Higgins

by Kristen Ball



## Discussion Guide

1. Hannah thinks if everyone knew how to end global poverty, the world would be a better place. How would you complete this sentence?  
If everyone knew \_\_\_\_\_, the world would be a better place.
2. When you picture people living in poverty anywhere in the world, what do you see? Does poverty look different in different places? Is it the same everywhere? In what ways is it the same or different?
3. Throughout the book, Hannah learns that people in Sauri, Kenya follow a principle: Leave what you can. Take only what you need. This seemingly simple concept got the people living in Sauri, Kenya out of hunger. In what ways would it be easy for you to follow this rule? In what situations would it be most difficult?

Look at poverty both in the US and in various parts of the world.

Point out a corner in the room, “strongly agree” and the opposite corner, “strongly disagree”. Think about the statement I am about to read for a minute and then go stand anywhere along the line.

Read aloud the following statement:

**Individuals are responsible for living in poverty. They have no one to blame but themselves.**

Ask for a few volunteers to share their beliefs about who is responsible for poverty.

Then ask, “Who is responsible for poverty? Who is responsible for ending it?”

Then ask where they would stand if we changed it to:

**Individuals are responsible for living in poverty. People living in poverty in the US have no one to blame but themselves.**

Move to where they would stand and share ideas.

Then ask where they would stand if we changed it to:

**Individuals are responsible for living in poverty. People living in poverty outside the US have no one to blame but themselves.**

Move to where they would stand and share ideas.



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### Book Details

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272 pages, 51,690 words, Lexile: 630

## About Kristen Ball

Kristen Ball is a life-long advocate of service-learning and global studies. In 2005 she was awarded a scholastic grant and became the first Westerner to live in Sauri, Kenya where this story is set. As a pioneer in developing the School-to-School partnership through *Connect to Learn*, Kristen and her 5th grade students kept alive the cultural exchange with students and teachers in East Africa. The author's other adventures include hiking the Himalayas in Nepal and canoeing along the Mekong River in Cambodia on Where There Be Dragons educator scholarships. Kristen holds degrees from Teachers College, Columbia University and Boston College. She currently lives and works in her home-state of Connecticut.

## Synopsis of the Book

Thirteen-year-old Hannah Higgins is convinced her summer is ruined when she is forced to travel to Africa and work in a remote village in Kenya with her mom and uncle. Never having been to a developing country, she finds the food gross and the community filthy. She has to live without electricity or running water. Then she is told she must attend school. Just when she thinks nothing could make this trip any worse, she learns people there are dying of hunger and preventable disease. Hannah becomes frustrated and wants to help, but when poverty threatens the lives of people she loves, all she wants to do is go home.

## Praise for *A Calf Named Brian Higgins*

"A coming-of-age story that engages readers in Hannah's adventures while educating them about the stark conditions in much of the developing world."

—Publishers Weekly

"Readers will likely find Hannah a relatable character – no saint, but good-hearted, willing to learn, and poised to grow. [This is] a vivid account through American eyes of sub-Saharan poverty and sustainable ways to help."

—Kirkus Reviews

"The author has done it all: weaving a captivating story, describing extreme poverty, and most impressively, conveying the reality of progress across Africa."

—Jeffrey D. Sachs, senior advisor to the Secretary General of the UN

"I was raised in a small rural school in Uganda. This is a heartwarming story that is a true reflection of life in a village but a great reminder that it takes commitment, love, and kindness to make a change in lives. We need to take care of each other."

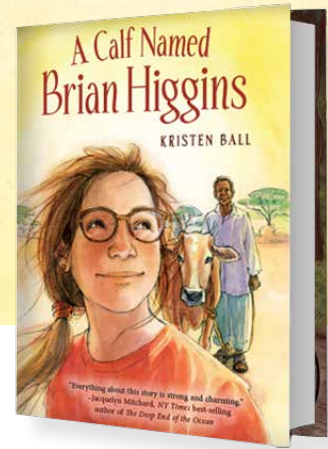
—Beatrice Biira, Community Engagement Coordinator,  
Heifer International



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## Activity Guide

### Making the World A Better Place

Students identify causes that are important to them and research organizations supporting those causes in order to access important world issues while focusing on empowerment and action. Throughout the project, they create an original symbol to visually express the needs of their cause and how their organization is helping. Together we learn about issues such as the importance of caring for endangered and homeless animals, having access to medical care, taking care of beaches and oceans, finding cures to cancers, ending global hunger, and achieving gender equality. All the kids are so proud of themselves and each other as they identify, explore, and share their passions for a better world. Lesson plans and handouts are available at [www.kristenball.com](http://www.kristenball.com)

### Working Toward Sustainability in Our World

Adopted by world leaders in September 2015, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—also called Global Goals—are working toward ending all forms of poverty, fighting inequalities, and protecting our planet.

Choose one of the 17 SDGs listed below and research it by visiting <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>

- Why is sustainable development important?
- Why is each of these goals necessary as we work toward sustainability in our world?
- How are all of these goals working together to make our world sustainable?



**Goal 1: No Poverty**

End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

**Goal 2: Zero Hunger**

End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.

**Goal 3: Good Health and Well-Being**

Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

**Goal 4: Quality Education**

Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning.

**Goal 5: Gender Equality**

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

**Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation**

Ensure access to water and sanitation for all.

**Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy**

Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.

**Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth**

Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all.

**Goal 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure**

Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.

**Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities**

Reduce inequality within and among countries.

**Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities**

Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

**Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production**

Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

**Goal 13: Climate Action**

Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

**Goal 14: Life Below Water**

Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources.

**Goal 15: Life on Land**

Sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss.

**Goal 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions**

Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies.

**Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals**

Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

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**Living Below the Line**

Watch the movie *Living on One Dollar*, <http://livingonone.org/livingonone/>

Make a menu to “Live Below the Line” for five days.

Figure out a plan to live on food that costs \$1.50 a day for five days. You can use \$7.50 to “purchase” food for the five days.

A few things to remember when using the peapod site: <https://www.peapod.com>

1. Click on the green CONTINUE SHOPPING button.
2. Go to the left hand column where it says “Start Shopping” (Look at the weekly specials!).
3. Use the green SEARCH button on the top left to find foods.
4. Think about QUANTITIES (how much you’d need for five days) and NUTRITION (you must eat a balanced diet to stay healthy).
5. You cannot spend more than \$7.50.
6. Tap water is considered “free”.

### Shopping List Example

Item	Quantity	Cost per unit	Total Cost
banana	3	.25 each	.75
Bumble Bee tuna solid white Albacore in water	1 can	\$2.19 per can	\$2.19
<b>TOTAL COST</b>			<b>\$2.94</b>

### Your Shopping List

Item	Quantity	Cost per unit	Total Cost
<b>TOTAL COST</b>			<b>\$7.50</b>

**The next step is to make sure you have enough food.**

Please complete the five-day menu below. If you don't have enough food, please go back and adjust your items and/or quantities.

**DAY 1**

<b>Breakfast:</b>	<b>Lunch:</b>
<b>Dinner:</b>	<b>Snacks:</b>

**DAY 2**

<b>Breakfast:</b>	<b>Lunch:</b>
<b>Dinner:</b>	<b>Snacks:</b>

**DAY 3**

<b>Breakfast:</b>	<b>Lunch:</b>
<b>Dinner:</b>	<b>Snacks:</b>

**DAY 4**

<b>Breakfast:</b>	<b>Lunch:</b>
<b>Dinner:</b>	<b>Snacks:</b>

**DAY 5**

<b>Breakfast:</b>	<b>Lunch:</b>
<b>Dinner:</b>	<b>Snacks:</b>