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## A Mensch

Aaron Feuerstein, Malden Mills/Polartec  
Lawrence, MA

### ☀ Values

- Generosity
- Loyalty
- Leadership
- Courage
- Religious Conviction
- Social Emotional Learning

### ☀ Reflection Questions

Why did Aaron Feuerstein believe what he did was “It was the right thing to do”?

What usually happens to a city when a large company goes out of business?

What is special about Polarfleece clothing? What other products use recycled material?

### ☀ Lessons Learned

Business people like Aaron Feuerstein set an example for corporate America.

It’s possible to make money even when putting the needs of workers and the community.

When people work together to rebuild after a disaster, it creates a sense of pride.

People who’ve been traditionally competitive can rally together to support each other.

Aaron Feuerstein is a factory owner who thinks of his workers as an asset, not an expense. He and his Malden Mills will go down in American history as one of the most courageous tales of corporate commitment our country has ever seen. When fire destroyed his factory in 1995, rather than collect an insurance settlement and rebuild somewhere where he could pay workers less, Feuerstein rebuilt the factory in Lawrence, MA and kept the town’s economy healthy and its people together. In return, his workers brought the company back into operation in record time. “There is a need to know that corporate America is interested in the welfare of the worker as well as the shareholder,” he says. Aaron started a kind of fire of his own, sparking a renewed collective faith in the American people. In Yiddish, there is a special word for a very decent human being: a mensch. When people ask him why he did what he did, Feuerstein’s answer is simple. “It was the right thing to do.”

### ☀ Language Arts: SEL & Diversity

Search local newspapers for stories about business leaders who have made a difference in your community. Send in stories to the editor and ask them to publish them. Keep asking.

### ☀ Social Studies: Diversity

Research how plastic bottles are transformed into Polartec and Polarfleece products. Conduct a study of the retail industry. Track the process for how Polartec and Polarfleece clothing is made sold and distributed to stores all over the world. Compare working conditions for garments workers in the U.S. and abroad

### ☀ Community Service: Service Learning

Purchase a few yards of Polarfleece material and make scarves for the Salvation Army. Organize a “fire sale” of slightly used clothes for the National Fallen Firefighters Association ([www.firehero.org](http://www.firehero.org)) When shopping for clothing, look for and buy “Made in America” labels to support our countries’ garment workers. Create posters with this message and post in the school lobby. This story is available on the Stone Soup for the World audio tape. Aaron Feuerstein is featured on the Stone Soup for the World educational video.

