PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY
The 4-corners strategy is a great way to get students interested and invested in the main themes of a book before actually starting the book. It helps students to recognize what their own beliefs are and to develop the ability to communicate and debate them with others. It also increases the understanding and appreciation of different viewpoints. Another benefit of this activity is that it encourages independent thinking, not just parroting what the teacher says, and allows for every student to have a voice and participate.

DIRECTIONS
Step 1: Set Up the Corners
Place four different signs in the corners of the room. The signs should read: 100% Agree, Pretty Much Agree, Pretty Much Disagree, 100% Disagree.

Step 2: Engage Students through Thinking, Writing, and Moving
Pass out the graphic organizer to students. Read the following 8 statements that relate to the overall unit question: What are the most important things in life? What brings true happiness?

Money is the root of all evil.
Money can’t buy happiness.
Rob from the rich to give to the poor.
Money makes the world go round.
Only a life lived for others is a life worthwhile. –Albert Einstein
I am my brother’s keeper. –Eugene V. Debs
Success is not the key to happiness. Happiness is the key to success. –Albert Schweitzer
Most people are about as happy as they make up their minds to be. –Abraham Lincoln

Students fill out their graphic organizers as the statements are read, deciding how much they subscribe to the statement, why, and experiences from their life that back this up. Once students have made their decisions, direct them to move to their corners for the first statement.
Step 3: Students Discuss in Pairs
Once students are in their corners, have them pair up and discuss the reasons they are in that specific corner. You can also have the pairs form groups of four and share again why they are in that corner.

Step 4: Class Discussion
To start the class discussion, call on a spokesperson from each corner to share their reasons for choosing the answer they did. Tell students that as they listen to each other they can switch corners as their opinion changes.

Step 5: Tie It to the Unit
After the class discussion on some of the statements, tie them into how they relate to the overarching question of the unit: What are the most important things in life? What brings true happiness? Also, bring in the text that they will be reading. Assign the first reading and begin reading it in class, telling students to see what themes from today they can already see building in this novel.

ASSESSMENT
The 4-corners strategy helps students make text-to-self connections before actually being introduced to the text. It gives students a chance to form or realize their own beliefs before being swayed by the teacher or the text. This activity can also be used again during or after the reading to track the changes in belief or perspective. The writing that students do on the graphic organizers can be evidence to the teacher of what the students are learning. The teacher can also monitor the pair discussions and help lead the group discussion, looking for understanding of key concepts.