

Lesson 1.2

Perspectives on Peace



Rationale

Conflict, when managed effectively, can result in a peaceful solution. However, peace is not static. People must work to build and maintain peace. Like conflict, there are many perspectives and interpretations of what peace is and what it looks like. In this lesson, students explore varying perspectives on peace and begin to develop their own definition of peace.

Objectives

1. To reflect on one's understanding of peace.
2. To begin to form one's own definition of peace.
3. To explore the relationship between conflict and peace.

Standards

- ◆ Culture
- ◆ Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- ◆ Civic Ideals and Practices

Time: 120 minutes

Materials

- Newspapers and Magazines
- Markers
- Construction Paper
- Glue
- Peace/Not Peace Signs
- Peace/Not Peace Scenarios* Teacher Resource

Preparation

1. Push desks to the edge of the room to create an open space.
2. Write "Peace" on a piece of paper and "Not Peace" on another. Hang the papers on opposite sides of the room.
3. Place magazines, newspapers, and collage supplies on one table.



60 minutes

Part 1

Procedures

Perceptions of Peace (60 minutes)

Note: USIP's Peace Terms defines peace as follows: The word "peace" evokes complex, sometimes contradictory, interpretations and reactions. For some, peace means the absence of conflict. For others it means the end of violence or the formal cessation of hostilities; for still others, the return to resolving conflict by political means. Some define peace as the attainment of justice and social stability; for others it is economic well-being and basic freedom. Peacemaking can be a dynamic process of ending conflict through negotiation or mediation. Peace is often unstable, as sources of conflict are seldom completely resolved or eliminated. Since conflict is inherent in the human condition, the striving for peace is particularly strong in times of violent conflict. That said, a willingness to accommodate perpetrators of violence without resolving the sources of conflict—sometimes called "peace at any price"—may lead to greater conflict later [glossary.usip.org](https://www.usip.org/glossary).

1. Explain that today students will explore the definition of peace. Ask students to write down three words that come to mind when they hear the word peace. Collect answers orally, and write the brainstorm on the board. Afterwards, ask students to write a definition of peace. Have them share this definition with a partner. After a brief discussion, ask a few of the students to define peace. Explain that today students will examine what peace means as a class community.
2. Explain the exercise. On one side of the room there is a sign that says PEACE and on the other, a sign that says NOT PEACE. You will read various scenarios and students will have to determine whether the scenario represents peace or not peace. Students will express their opinion by silently moving to one side of the room or the other. If the situation could be identified as both peace and not peace, then students can stand in the middle. You can also use Peace/Not Peace as a continuum along which students can stand.
3. Ask the students to begin moving around the room and mingling. It is fun to tell them different ways to walk between each scenario. For example, move like you are in a hurry, walk in slow motion, hop on one foot, etc. Simple additions like this can improve team building and group dynamics.
4. Once the students are moving around the room in a creative way, say "freeze," and state the scenario from the Peace/Not Peace activity. Students should then choose a side of the room and move to that side.
5. Ask a few students to explain why they chose where they are standing. Facilitate dialogue where needed.
6. Repeat until the list is finished.
7. After the activity, ask students to sit in a circle and discuss the following questions with a partner:
 - ◆ What are the essential ingredients for peace to exist? How would you define peace?
 - ◆ Is conflict necessary for there to be peace?
 - ◆ How did your perspectives of peace change during this activity?
 - ◆ What can we gain from learning about peace?
8. Have a class discussion around these questions, asking pairs to share what they discussed.

Part 2



60 minutes

Expressions of Peace (60 minutes)

1. Explain that now we will think critically about what peace looks like in a personal, local, national, and international context. Ask students to individually write down a real life example of how a conflict can lead to peace. As a prompt, ask them to think of examples where groups had to work to create peace. Provide a simple example: A mother doesn't let her daughter do as much as her son because she's over protective. This results in a conflict between the mother and daughter. They end up talking and the mother explains her concerns for safety. The daughter explains her feelings of unfairness, and they come up with a compromise that keeps the daughter aware and safe with equal privileges as her brother. A different example is the Seeds of Peace summer camp program in which Israeli and Palestinian youth come together to talk through their stereotypes of each other and to talk about the major issues that are a part of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. To listen to a Palestinian and an Israeli teen talk about their experience at the Seeds of Peace camp, show USIP's Witness video at www.buildingpeace.org
2. After students have written examples, have a group discussion where students share their answers. Use some or all of the following questions to debrief the exercise:
 - ◆ Can responding to conflict with violence result in peace?
 - ◆ Can peace happen on its own or does it always require effort?
 - ◆ Who is responsible for building peace in a society? Emphasize that all people can be peacebuilders, and positive peace requires all members of society to contribute.
 - ◆ How can you work to build peace?
 - ◆ What tools do you need to manage conflict in a way that prevents violence and builds peace?
3. Explain that now that we've talked about who can be a peacebuilder, and what it takes to build peace, we're going to explore art as a tool used to build peace. In small groups we will create multimedia collages.
4. Divide students into groups of three or four and assign each group a context (personal, local, national, or international). Using various images put on a table prior to the lesson, invite each group to develop collages expressing peacebuilding in different contexts. Depending on the size of your class, you may have more than one group working on each context. Encourage students to draw their own images and ideas along with the images provided.
5. While students are creating their collages, write the following questions on the board:
 - ◆ How does your collage represent peacebuilding?
 - ◆ Thinking about peace from a critical perspective, how is conflict related to peace?
 - ◆ Explain how the images on your collage relate to one another.

Note: Peacebuilding is not about being passive; rather, it involves active citizens managing conflict and building peace.

When groups appear to be finishing their collages, direct their attention to the questions on the board. Tell groups that they should begin thinking and formulating answers to the questions and prepare to present their answers to the whole class.

Extension Activity 1 Peace Symbols

Show students the logo for the United States Institute of Peace, available at www.usip.org. Have students research the origins of the dove and the olive tree as peace symbols. Ask them to research peace symbols in other parts of the world and have them design their own peace symbols in small groups.

Extension Activity 2 Peace Proverbs

Have students work in small groups to research proverbs around the world about peace and select one to present to the class. They can present the meaning of the proverb as a human statue, a drawing, a skit, or in some other way.

6. Have each group present their collage and explain what it means, using some or all of the questions on the board.
7. Have students select one of the following questions to address in a five minute journal writing exercise:
 - ◆ Reflect on what tools you have to be a peacebuilder.
 - ◆ Write about the power of imagination as a tool for peacebuilding and either draw or imagine the world you would like to help build.

Assessment:

Collages, presentations, small group work, and whole class discussions

Lesson 1.2 TEACHER RESOURCE: PEACE/NOT PEACE SCENARIOS

The situations below are grouped by personal, local, and international contexts. Please feel free to give the students examples in a scrambled order. You do not need to read all of the scenarios listed below. Choosing two to four from each category is sufficient.

Personal

1. You arrive at home and your mom has taken money off your dresser without asking. This frustrates you, but you don't say anything because you don't want to cause a fight.
2. Your teacher accuses you of cheating on a paper, but you did not. You schedule a time after class to work out the misunderstanding.
3. You pick up a piece of trash on the ground and put it in the recycling bin.
4. You are in a hurry and cut in line.
5. You and a friend get in a fight, and your brother sits you both down to talk it out.

Local

1. Youth in a high crime area participate in a local antiviolence program.
2. A school holds a charity event to raise money to build schools in an area affected by a natural disaster.
3. A high school hires armed security guards to manage school violence.

International

1. There are 300,000 child soldiers involved in conflicts around the world.
2. A group of Muslim and Christian leaders meet to dialogue about interfaith peacebuilding.
3. Humanitarian aid with medical supplies and fresh water reaches a community affected by conflict.
4. Children in an IDP (internally displaced persons) camp are not able to go to school for fear of violence if they leave the camp.
5. Young leaders from around the world participate in a conference to learn about how they can contribute to local and global peace.