



Lessons for Upper Elementary School

Lesson 2: Understanding the Levels of Conflict

Adapted from the *Peacebuilding Toolkit for Educators – Middle School Edition*, United States Institute of Peace, <https://www.usip.org/public-education/peacebuilding-toolkit-educators>

Grade: 3rd – 5th grades

Objectives:

1. To recognize that there are different levels of conflict
2. To identify why it is important to understand these levels
3. To reflect on conflict's role in our lives and around the world

Common Core State Standards:

- Informational Text Standards – Craft and Structure: Grades 3-5 Standard 4
- Literature Standards – Key Ideas and Details: Grades 3-5 Standard 1

Materials:

Blackboard or whiteboard, chalk or markers, dictionaries, blank paper, pencils, glue, *Conflict Scenarios* handout (cut into strips and placed in an envelope, with enough for each pair of students to receive one envelope), *Exit Pass* worksheet

Time: 45 minutes

Procedures

I. Essential Questions

1. Does conflict affect everyone?
2. What are the different levels of conflict?
3. Does understanding the different levels of conflict help us learn how to resolve conflict better?

II. Motivation/Introduction (10 minutes)

Teacher note: You should have the words describing conflict displayed from the last lesson for students to reference.

1. Tell students that they are going to brainstorm and write down a list of conflicts they are familiar with. These can be examples from their own lives, something they have learned about in school, or an example from the news.

- Remind them of some of the examples they came up with in the previous lesson.
2. Give students a little time to think of and write down some examples. Then ask for students to share. Write the examples they give you on the board.
 3. Ask:
 - What are some of the things you notice about these examples? Who is involved? Where do they take place?
 4. Explain that conflicts take place everywhere. Tell students that today you will be looking at different kinds, or levels, of conflict.

III. Teacher Directed (15 minutes)

1. Write the four levels of conflict (personal, local, national, international) on the board, with space below each for a definition and to list student examples. You can also draw this as a picture, a map, or concentric circles. Select the most effective visualization for your students.
2. In small groups (3-4 students), have students use a dictionary to look up the definitions for the words personal, local, national, and international. Each group is assigned one word to research. They should choose the definition that they think applies to conflict and put it in their own words on paper.
3. Have students share their definition with another group that had their same word. They can adjust their definition as needed.
4. When finished, ask one group representing each word to share their definition. Write each definition on the board underneath the appropriate level.

Examples of definitions: Personal—something that directly involved you;
Local—something that happened in your community, school, state;
National—something that happened in your country; or International—something that happened in the world

5. Return to the student examples of conflict that you wrote on the board at the beginning of the lesson. Ask students where each example would go. Start by placing a few examples in the correct columns, and then have students share which level they think each fits under. Students can hold up their fingers (1-4) to vote.

IV. Guided Practice (10 minutes)

1. Break the class into partner groups, and distribute one envelope of *Conflict Scenario* strips to each partner group. Have them sort the strips into the four different levels of conflict. You can provide them with paper or chart paper onto which they can glue the strips.
2. Once they are done, ask for volunteers to share how they have organized their Conflict Scenario strips. As they do, ask:
 - Why did you choose this category? Did anyone else put this example somewhere else? Why?

V. Discussion (5 minutes)

1. Lead students in a discussion using any or all of the following questions:
 - Was it easy or hard to sort the conflicts into different levels? Why?
 - What happens at the different levels of conflict? Who is affected at each level?
 - Does knowing what level a conflict is make it easier to handle or resolve that conflict? Why or why not?
 - What might happen if you don't try to handle or resolve a conflict?
2. Explain to students that even though conflict happens everywhere, action can be taken at each level to address and resolve it. It helps to know the level of a conflict because the more information you have about the conflict, the better prepared you are you can handle or resolve it.

VI. Closure/Exit Pass (5 minutes)

Distribute the *Exit Pass* worksheet. Ask students to answer the question in complete questions: "What are the three most important things you learned about conflict today?"

Conflict Scenarios

Teacher instructions: Cut the scenarios into strips. Place the strips into an envelope. Give each partner group one envelope.

Your friend ate your cookies at lunch without asking.

Your city wants to make parking more expensive to help pay for other things in the community. Some people agree with this, but others do not.

Two candidates for president participate in a debate on television, and everyone is trying to decide who to vote for.

Several countries are trying to be the first to get people to Mars.

When Abraham Lincoln was President, the U.S.A. fought in a war called the American Civil War.

The city wants to tear down a playground to make more parking, but many kids and families want the park to stay.

Your sister wants to play one game, but you want to play a different one.

Parents and students across the United States are angry because several states want to limit recess to 15 minutes.

Your mom wants you to do your homework as soon as you get home from school, but you want to play first after sitting at your desk all day.

People in your city are protesting because their drinking water is dirty and often runs out.

A new island is discovered, and several countries want to own it.

Countries are trying to decide what steps to take to reduce pollution across the globe.

People in one country are protesting that they are not being paid enough at their jobs.

There is fighting between people of two different religious groups in another country.

Your city wants to make students go to school year-round, and many kids and parents dislike this idea.

Exit Pass

Directions: What are the three most important things you learned about conflict today? Use complete sentences.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

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