

Why teach about conflict and conflict resolution?

Ask a group of students to brainstorm the ideas and feelings they associate with the word 'conflict'. Regardless of their age or nationality, the responses tend to centre around images of violence: bombs, killing, guns, war, enemies, fighting, hitting, screaming, anger, hatred.

For many adults, the associations are similar. Teachers who consider approaching issues of conflict with their students often think first of teaching about war and armed conflict.

Local and global news media focus heavily on reports of violent events. Even in media whose supposed aim is to entertain, violent images are just as prevalent. It is not surprising, then, that for many people, 'conflict' is synonymous with 'violence'. There is an urgent need for children and young people to understand that not all conflicts result in violence. It is *not* part of human nature to be violent. Violence is a *learned* response to conflict – and if violence can be learned, other responses are possible and can be learned as well.

Education can help students take a broader view of conflict, exploring not only situations of violence but the conflicts which inevitably occur between people over ideas, values, positions, and perspectives on a range of issues. These are the types of conflict that, when not dealt with constructively, often explode into violence.

It is unlikely that any educational initiatives can eliminate all such conflict, for conflict is a fact of life. But schools can help young people learn that they have choices in the ways they respond to conflict. Students can develop negotiation and problem-solving skills that will allow them to approach conflict not as a crisis, but as an opportunity for creative change. They can first learn to apply these to the conflicts that are part of their daily lives – conflicts with friends, family, and even teachers! They can then reflect on how those approaches to problem-solving might be applied to conflicts over ethnic and religious differences, resources, borders or varying political ideologies in their community, nation, or the wider world.

One effect of such education is corrective. Many children who have grown up in situations of actual or anticipated conflict struggle with anxiety, fear, feelings of hopelessness about the future, and a sense of powerlessness in the face of forces which seem beyond their control. For these children, learning conflict resolution skills can be part of a healing process, providing practical ways of coping and a sense of empowerment.

At the same time, education about conflict and its resolution is preventative. If the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of peace-making can be



learned, students have both the opportunity and the responsibility to take action that will bring a culture of peace to a conflict-ridden world.

Some key concepts

EDUCATION ABOUT PEACE

This tends to treat the topic as a subject area, and focuses on issues such as disarmament, international institutions, the nuclear question, and development, as well as case studies of war and peace, and the work of famous peacemakers.

EDUCATION FOR PEACE

This may explore the above content areas, but also addresses the skills and attitudes necessary for peace and cooperation to occur. These may include self-understanding and self-esteem, community building, communication, conflict management, the practice of non-violence, exploring diversity, and ways of taking action. Its aim is to change behaviours, ways of thinking, values, and ultimately the institutions which perpetuate conflict and violence.

NEGATIVE PEACE

This refers to the absence of war and the reduction of violent conflict.

POSITIVE PEACE

This encompasses the absence of war, but goes further to include the reduction of factors that harm the quality of life and thus promote a climate of conflict. Positive peace is not possible without economic and social justice, the elimination of poverty and discrimination, and ecological balance.

STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

This refers not to overt physical violence, but to the more insidious violence of poverty, racism, sexism, and human rights violations.

Whenever institutions or social systems put some people in positions of power while depriving others of their fundamental human rights, structural violence can be said to exist.

Teaching about conflict and conflict resolution: Aims and objectives

<i>Knowledge</i>	<i>Skills</i>	<i>Attitudes</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of the various types of conflict (e.g. over values, needs, resources), common causes of conflict and potential outcomes. • Understanding that conflict can have many possible solutions, of which violence is only one. • Knowing about the many conflict resolution techniques which exist (e.g. mediation, arbitration, negotiation, etc.). • Understanding that peace has many manifestations, and includes peace within oneself, the absence of those structures which cause conflict (e.g. injustice, inequality, poverty and deprivation), as well as the absence of armed conflict. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills of resolving conflicts peacefully, e.g. generating alternatives, ranking, compromising, decision-making, communicating effectively, working with others cooperatively. • Ability to see how these skills can be applied in one's own personal life and on a global scale. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to peace (in all its manifestations). • Willingness to take action on behalf of peace. • Awareness that conflict can provide opportunities for creative growth and positive change.



OBJECTIVES

To help students appreciate their own positive qualities and strengths, as well as those of their peers; to encourage an environment in which each student feels positively about herself as a way of laying the foundation for later work in conflict resolution.

MATERIALS

A copy of the **Discoveries** sheet (page 201) for each student.

PROCEDURE

Step 1

Each student receives a copy of the **Discoveries** sheet. The students move around the room and try to find a classmate who can answer one of the



Making discoveries about classmates

questions. That student's name is recorded on the sheet, along with any information about the particular skill or achievement. Each student's name may be used only once, to encourage students to speak to as many others as possible. Students may also use their own names, but only once. The activity continues until each student has found answers to as many questions as possible.

Step 2

After 15 to 20 minutes, the class comes together. It discusses the following questions:

- What new things did you learn?
- Did anything you discovered about your peers surprise you?
- Did you find you had anything in common with other students?

If time permits, the teacher can call out the name of each student in the class, one at a time, and ask for a volunteer to tell something new that she found out about that person.

VARIATION

Students work in pairs to complete the sheet.

FOLLOW-UP

- 1 Some of the questions can be further investigated and the information compiled into a graph showing, for example, what languages are spoken by students in the class.
- 2 Individual questions may be used as the basis for writing assignments, and turned into class books on, for example **People we care about**.

IN THE CURRICULUM

The activity involves communication skills such as questioning, listening and recording. It can be used in an English lesson, or at the beginning of a humanities topic exploring the local community and the people who live there. It is also usefully done at the beginning of the school year as a way of helping students get to know each other better.

Discoveries



worksheet

Find someone who:

- 1 has a favourite story or book _____
What is it? _____
- 2 has an interesting or unusual hobby _____
What is it? _____
- 3 can name something she or he especially likes to do in school

What is it? _____
- 4 has learned how to do something new recently _____
What is it? _____
- 5 did something she or he is proud of recently _____
What was it? _____
- 6 helped someone recently _____
How? _____
- 7 knows what kind of work she or he wants to do as a grown-up

What is it? _____
- 8 knows some words in a language different from the one we
speak in school _____
Which language? _____
- 9 knows someone that she or he cares a lot about _____
Who is it, and why? _____
- 10 has ever helped someone stop fighting _____
How? _____

Step 2

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- Did anything you discovered about your peers surprise you?
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If time permits, the teacher can call out the name of each student in the class, one at a time, and ask for a volunteer to tell something new that she found out about that person.

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The activity involves communication skills such as questioning, listening and recording. It can be used in an English lesson, or at the beginning of a humanities topic exploring the local community and the people who live there. It is also usefully done at the beginning of the school year as a way of helping students get to know each other better.

Step 4

The class is then asked to list the behaviours that indicated *listening*. They may include facing the speaker, looking at the speaker, saying encouraging things such as 'Tell me more', staying on the topic, asking questions, or reflecting what the speaker has said.

Step 5

The teacher then explains that these behaviours are called 'active listening'. The sheet **Active listening is . . .** may be handed out at this point, or the students may use their own list to prepare an **Active listening is . . .** chart.

Step 6

The students form pairs to practise active listening; they decide who will be the speaker and who will be the listener. A topic is chosen, such as 'A time I felt proud of myself', 'Something I would like to be able to do when I grow older', 'Something about the world that I would like to change', etc. The topic can vary with the age and interests of the students.

Step 7

The listener practises as many of the guidelines for active listening as possible while the speaker talks on the topic for two to three minutes.

Step 8

They then switch roles within the pair, so that each student has the experience of being actively listened to.

Step 9

Finally, the class comes together to discuss these questions:

- How did it feel to listen actively to your partner?
- Was it different from the way you usually listen?
- How did it feel to be actively listened to?
- Did active listening help you to better understand your partner?

VARIATION

Steps 6 to 8 may be done in groups of three. One student can be the speaker, one the listener, and one the observer. The observer should have a copy of the sheet **Active listening is . . .**, and notice which behaviours the listener uses. When the speaker is finished, the observer lets the speaker know, in a positive way, what aspects of active listening she saw being used.

FOLLOW-UP

This skill takes time to develop, and is best practised at regular intervals.

IN THE CURRICULUM

The activity develops skills in observation, listening, speaking, memory and understanding another's point of view. While it can logically be used in an English lesson, active listening can be practised in other curriculum areas simply by varying the topic to be discussed.



Active listening is...

PAYING ATTENTION

- 1 Turn your body toward the person who is talking.
- 2 Look at the person who is talking.
- 3 Listen in a quiet place, so that you can really hear.

FOLLOWING

- 1 Say things like:

 'Can you say more about that?', or

 'Really?', or

 'Is that so?'
- 2 Ask questions, but not too many!

REFLECTING

- 1 Every now and then, repeat what the speaker has said in your own words.
- 2 Try to say in your own words what the speaker might be thinking: 'So you think that if you study hard, you could be a doctor when you grow up'.
- 3 Try to say in your own words what the speaker might be feeling: 'It sounds like you're really happy about the way you solved this problem'.

Defining peace and conflict



OBJECTIVES

To encourage students to come up with their own definitions of peace and conflict; and to help students see that conflict can take many forms that are less obvious than physical violence.

MATERIALS

A set of **Peace and conflict pictures** (pages 207–11) for each group of three students.

Age level 1:
7–11 years

PROCEDURE

Step 1

The word **Conflict** is written on the blackboard; the students are asked to brainstorm as many different words or phrases as they can that come to mind when they see this word. These are written on the board without comment or discussion at this stage.

Step 2

After all responses have been exhausted, the word **Peace** is written on the board. The class repeats the brainstorm of associated words or images.

Step 3

The class discusses the results of the two brainstorms.

Step 4

In groups of three, the students receive the **Peace and conflict pictures**, one complete set per small group. They discuss what is happening in each picture, and sort them into categories: **Pictures that show peace**, **Pictures that show conflict**, and if necessary, a category for **Other**, **Both**, or **Not sure**.

Step 5

Finally, the class comes together to discuss how they classified each picture and why. If they repeated the brainstorm on the words 'conflict' and 'peace', would their responses be different after classifying the pictures? If so, how?

VARIATIONS

- 1 Steps 1 and 2 can be done by drawing pictures of conflict and peace, rather than brainstorming.
- 2 Steps 1 to 3 may be carried out on one day, and the remainder of the activity on another.
- 3 Younger groups of students need not use all of the pictures.

FOLLOW-UP

Students start a collection of pictures from magazines and newspapers that show either peace or conflict; these can be used to create a bulletin board. Students' own drawings of peace and conflict situations that they are familiar with can also be included.

IN THE CURRICULUM

The activity requires skills of working cooperatively in a group and analysing images. It can be used in an English, humanities, or art class.

Peace and Conflict pictures (1)



worksheet



activity on another.

- 3 Younger groups of students need not use all of the pictures.

FOLLOW-UP

Students start a collection of pictures from magazines and newspapers that show either peace or conflict; these can be used to create a bulletin board. Students' own drawings of peace and conflict situations that they are familiar with can also be included.

IN THE CURRICULUM

The activity requires skills of working cooperatively in a group and analysing images. It can be used in an English, humanities, or art class.



Peace and Conflict pictures (3)



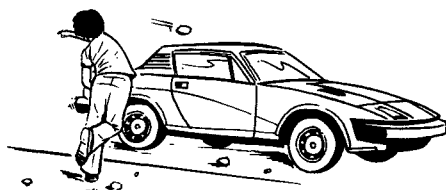
worksheet





Peace and Conflict pictures (4)

worksheet



Peace and Conflict pictures (5)



worksheet



Activity 39

Faces



Age level 1:
7–11 years

OBJECTIVES

To help students evaluate alternative solutions to conflict, and to see that sometimes solutions are possible that will satisfy both parties in a conflict.

MATERIALS

Paper and pencils.

PROCEDURE

Step 1

Two students are asked to briefly role play this situation in front of the class, *without* coming to a solution:

It is recess time, and the class is going to the playground. There is one soccer ball in the playground. Two students run to get it; they get there at the same time, and both grab it. The first one says, 'It's mine! I got here first!' The second says, 'I had it first, and now you're trying to take it from me! Give it back!' They struggle with the ball.

Step 2

As a class, the rest of the students brainstorm possible solutions to this conflict. These can be listed on chart paper. They should attempt to think of as many options as possible, without evaluating or judging them.







Step 3

Together, the students classify the solutions into three groups:

- solutions in which each person gets what she wants or needs; for example, one person uses it for 10 minutes, and then the other uses it for 10 minutes;
- solutions in which only one person gets what she wants or needs; for example, one person hurts the other and runs away with the ball;

- solutions in which neither person gets what she wants or needs; for example, the teacher takes the ball away and tells them both to find something else to do.

Each solution can be cut out and stuck or written directly onto the following chart:

The two smiling faces represent solutions in which each person gets what she wants or needs. The one smiling and one sad face represent solutions in which only one person gets what she wants or needs. The two sad faces represent solutions in which neither person gets what she wants or needs.

Step 4

As a class, students then discuss the types of solutions. Which ones seem to be the best? The activity can be repeated with different conflict situations: personal, local, and global. Students should consider:

- Are solutions in which both parties get their needs met always possible?
- Are they always preferable?
- Can violence ever result in a solution in which both parties get their needs met?

VARIATION

Older students can evaluate possible solutions by using a similar chart, but substituting a plus symbol (+) for the smiling face, and a minus symbol (-) for the sad face.

FOLLOW-UP

Students look for examples of conflict situations in the news. How often are the solutions ones in which both parties get their needs met? How do you account for this?

IN THE CURRICULUM

The activity develops skills in generating alternatives, evaluating, classifying and making decisions. It can be used in English or humanities, to consider solutions to conflicts in stories or in history.

Six-step problem-solving



OBJECTIVES

To introduce students to a structured way of resolving interpersonal conflicts that is applicable to a variety of situations.

MATERIALS

Copies of the **Six-step problem-solving** sheet (page 217).

PROCEDURE

Step 1

Two volunteers are chosen to role play a conflict, either from the list below, or one that the students suggest.

POSSIBLE ROLE PLAY SITUATIONS

- A student is trying to study at home; his sister wants to listen to the radio and has it turned up loudly.
- One student ridicules another who comes from a different country, by speaking with an exaggerated accent.
- A student has let her best friend borrow a book that was a special gift; when the friend returns the book, it is dirty and two pages are torn.
- A student wants to do volunteer work for an organisation that helps the poor, but her parents will not permit it.

The two volunteers proceed with the role play for a minute or two without reaching a solution.

Step 2

The teacher then introduces the **Six-step problem-solving** process using the sheet on page 217 as a handout.

Step 3

Once the students understand the process, the role play is repeated, with a third student helping the two students in conflict resolve their problem.

Step 4

The students form groups of four to practise **Six-step problem-solving** with a different role play situation. Two students act out the conflict, while the other two attempt to help them work through the process.

Step 5

Finally, the class comes together to discuss these questions:

- What conflicts did you role play and what solutions did you arrive at?
- Was the **Six-step problem-solving** process helpful in finding a solution? Why or why not?

VARIATION

The students use the problem-solving process in role plays of conflicts that they read about in books, newspapers, or see on television. The activity can be used with younger students by creating role play situations appropriate for their age group.

FOLLOW-UP

Once students have become familiar with the process through role playing, it can be applied to actual conflicts that occur in the class. When a third person helps two parties resolve a conflict through the use of the six steps described in this exercise, the process is sometimes referred to as *mediation*. Students may wish to set up a space for mediation in their classroom or school, so that students in conflict can come to work out a solution with the help of a mediator.

IN THE CURRICULUM

The activity develops skills in generating alternatives, anticipating consequences and decision-making. It may be applied to conflicts in students' literature as part of an English lesson; it may also be used in a humanities class to consider alternatives in historical conflicts.

Six-step problem-solving



1 IDENTIFY NEEDS

'What is it that you need (or want)?'

Each person in the conflict should answer this question, without blaming or accusing the other person.

2 DEFINE THE PROBLEM

'What do you think the problem is here?'

The whole class can help to come up with a response that includes both persons' needs, but does not blame. The persons in the conflict must agree to the definition.

3 BRAINSTORM LOTS OF SOLUTIONS

'Who can think of a way that we might solve this problem?'

Anyone in the class may offer a response. These should all be written down, without comment, judgement, or evaluation. The aim of this step is to come up with as many solutions as possible.

4 EVALUATE THE SOLUTIONS

'Would you be happy with this solution?'

Each party in the conflict goes through the list of alternatives and says which ones would or would not be acceptable to her/him.

5 DECIDE ON THE BEST SOLUTION

'Do you both agree to this solution? Is the problem solved?'

Make sure both parties agree, and acknowledge their efforts in working out the solution.

6 CHECK TO SEE HOW THE SOLUTION IS WORKING

'Let's talk to each other again soon to make sure the problem is really solved.'

A plan should be made of how to evaluate the solution. The evaluation may take place in a few minutes, or an hour, or the next day or week, depending on the nature of the conflict and the age of the people involved.

Activity 41

Classifying conflict



OBJECTIVES

To deepen students' understanding of the causes of conflict.

MATERIALS

Small pieces of blank card or paper; sets of **Peace and conflict pictures** from **Activity 38, Defining peace and conflict** on pages 207–11 (optional).

PROCEDURE

Step 1

Students form groups of four, and are given a stack of blank cards or small pieces of paper. They are asked to write down at least five conflicts each; these can be conflicts that they have been involved in or ones that they know of. They can be conflicts that have occurred in school, in a youth group, at home, in the community, in their own country, or between countries.

Alternatively, the **Peace and conflict pictures** from **Activity 38, Defining peace and conflict**, can be used as a collection of different types of conflict.

Step 2

Once the small group has written down these situations, students read them aloud to each other and try to put together conflicts that seem to have something in common. The students try to come up with a name or category for each cluster of conflicts.

Step 3

The class then comes together to discuss the categories it devised, giving an example of each one.

Step 4

The words **things**, **feelings**, and **ideas** are written on the chalkboard. The teacher explains that these are categories which can be used to classify conflicts. The terms can be explained as follows:

*Age level 2:
12–15 years*

Conflicts over things – these occur when two or more persons or parties want the same object, material, or resource, and there is not enough to go around.

Conflicts over feelings – these have to do with people's needs for friendship, love, self-respect, power, status, attention or admiration. Every person has some of these needs; sometimes groups of people or countries have these needs as well. Conflict can arise when feelings are hurt, denied, or not taken into consideration.

Conflicts over ideas – these have to do with the beliefs and values that a person, a group of people, or even a country feels are most important and fundamental. They often come from religious beliefs, cultural traditions, and political systems. They may also be highly personal.

Step 5

Students can look again at the conflicts they wrote about, and, in small groups, classify them according to whether they are conflicts over things, feelings, or ideas. Some conflicts have different elements, and will seem to fit into two, or even all three categories. Some may not appear to fit into any of them.

Step 6

The class comes together to discuss the activity:

- How did this way of classifying conflicts compare to the one that the students themselves devised?
- Which system would be most useful in helping them find a solution to a conflict? Why?

VARIATION

The students explore other ways of classifying conflicts, such as the following:

- easy to resolve/difficult to resolve;
- violent/non-violent;
- important/not important;
- between people/within groups/between groups/between nations.

FOLLOW-UP

The students look for newspaper articles about local, national, or international conflicts and classify them according to whether they are about things, feelings, or ideas. Are there any patterns among these conflicts? Do most international conflicts seem to be about one or two of these categories in particular? What about interpersonal or intergroup conflicts?

IN THE CURRICULUM

The activity develops skills in classification and decision-making by consensus. If used to analyse conflicts in literature, the activity could be used in an English class. Current or historical conflicts could be analysed in a humanities lesson. In mathematics, the students' findings about the frequency of different types of conflict could be represented graphically.

**OBJECTIVES**

To encourage students to refine their notions of peace and conflict; to help them understand that not all conflict involves physical violence; to introduce the concepts of negative peace, positive peace, and structural violence.

MATERIALS

A copy of one of the **Conflict stories** (pages 224–7) for each group of three.

PROCEDURE*Step 1*

In groups of three, students read over one of the **Conflict stories** and devise a realistic ending.

Step 2

Students discuss the following questions for each story:

- Were there elements of peace in this story?
- Was the peace in this story based on the absence of violence or conflict?
- Was the peace in this story based on social, economic, and political justice?
- Were there elements of conflict in this story?
- Was there conflict of a physically violent nature?
- Was there conflict that did not involve physical violence?
- Was anyone being harmed by cultural or institutional attitudes, values, or ways of operating?

Step 3

Each group of three meets with another small group, describes its **Conflict story** and the ending they devised, and discusses the elements of peace and conflict that were present in each story.

*Age level 2:
12–15 years*

Conflict: All girls have to take home economics but Teresa wants to take carpentry. Since home economics are required and it's at the same time as carpentry, Teresa can't take carpentry.

Violence: On her way home Teresa's friend tries to console her but Teresa just shouts at her.

Peace: Teresa's friend suggests that a group of girls write a letter to the head of the school, to say that they feel the home economics requirement is not fair.

Conflict continues: We think that the school made at the same time home economics and carpentry, so that girls had to do home economics and not carpentry. Because they thought that a girl's place was at home cooking, cleaning and taking care of kids. And not with a career.

Student's reaction to a conflict story

Step 4

Students are then introduced to the terms 'negative peace', 'positive peace', and 'structural violence' (see **Key concepts**, page 197). They discuss whether these three states were reflected in the stories, and how.

Do they feel that negative peace or positive peace currently exists in their school, community, country? Has anyone ever felt her/himself to be the object of structural violence? How do issues of injustice or prejudice lead to conflict?

VARIATIONS

- 1 Students write two possible endings for each story, one that is peaceful, and one that is violent. Which ending is more likely to happen? Which is preferable?
- 2 Students create a time line based on their **Conflict story**. They may try to extend the time line beyond the ending they devised, to see if they can anticipate what the possible outcomes of situations involving structural

violence might be, as well as the outcomes of different approaches to resolving conflict.

- 3 After completing this activity, students come up with their own definitions of peace and conflict.

FOLLOW-UP

Students discuss instances of structural violence in their school, community, or country. What kinds of action could they appropriately take to address structural violence?

IN THE CURRICULUM

The activity involves reading for meaning and making inferences. It can be used in the context of an English or literature lesson, or in a history or economics class.



Conflict stories (1)

Rena is a 70-year-old woman who used to work as a school cleaner. She wants to work, and could use the money, but she had to stop because the school district does not allow people of her age to continue working.

She lives alone in an inner city neighbourhood. Because there is so much crime in her area, she is afraid to go out by herself. She would like to live in a safer part of the city, but she cannot afford a more expensive apartment.

She enjoys having visits in her apartment from friends, her children, and her grandchildren. But she wishes that she could get out more and be with other people as well.

She would like to go to meetings at the senior citizen centre in another part of the city, but there is no bus service to that area. So Rena decides to . . .

Conflict stories (2)



Teresa is a 16-year-old secondary school student. She wants to learn carpentry, and signs up for a course at school. When she talks to the school counsellor, she is told that the carpentry course is scheduled at the same time as the home economics course, and home economics is required for girls. When she insists she wants to take carpentry, she is told that it will not be possible this year, and that she should wait until next year. She leaves school feeling angry.

On the way home, Teresa's best friend wants to walk with her, and asks her why she is looking so unhappy. Teresa shouts at her to go away and leave her alone; that she doesn't feel like talking. Her friend simply keeps walking with her. Finally Teresa starts to cry, and explains what the problem is. Her friend suggests that...

Conflict stories (3)



Paul is 14 years old and uses a wheelchair to get around his school. The building is all on one level and the doorways were built to be wide enough so that people with a range of physical disabilities would still be able to attend the school. Paul has many friends in his class; he often goes to visit them after school, or invites them to visit him at his home.

One day Paul's literature class takes a trip to a local theatre to see a drama performance. When they arrive at the theatre, they discover that there is a steep flight of steps leading to the entrance, and no ramp. The theatre manager says that he is sorry, and that if Paul's teacher had phoned ahead, he would have told her that the theatre is not one that handicapped people can easily go to. Two of Paul's friends decide to . . .

Conflict stories (4)



worksheet

Victor is a black student in a secondary school with students of many different races and nationalities. Many students in this school do not get along well with people of different cultures. The school has no programme to help students understand its different people and their ways of life.

One day as Victor is walking down the hall, two white students call him a racist name. Victor goes to the headteacher to report the incident. The headteacher says he is sorry about the name-calling, but since no one actually got into a fight, he feels it is best to ignore it for now. He tells Victor that if he has any other problems with these two students, to come and talk to him about it.

Victor leaves the office feeling angry that the headteacher doesn't care enough to do anything. He tells two friends about it at lunch time. The two friends decide to . . .



Age level 2:
12–15 years

OBJECTIVES

To sensitise students to the pervasiveness of conflict in the media, particularly conflict which is resolved violently; to encourage them to question stereotypes which are conveyed through the media; to enable them to consider alternatives to violence.

MATERIALS

Copies of **Conflict in the media – a worksheet** (page 230).

PROCEDURE

Step 1

Each student is given a copy of **Conflict in the media – a worksheet**. They are to select a television programme to watch at home which contains some sort of conflict, and answer the questions on the sheet. (A letter of explanation may need to be sent home to parents before beginning this activity.)

Step 2

Once each student has completed a sheet, the class discusses any patterns that they noted. The results of the survey may be clearer if presented in the form of a graph. Questions to consider might include:

- What types of conflicts were most common? (Refer to categories suggested in **Activity 41, Classifying conflict**, if necessary.)
- Were there more males or females involved in conflicts? What types of conflicts were males most commonly involved in? What types of conflicts were females most commonly involved in?
- Were persons of various racial/ethnic groups shown being involved in conflicts? Of what type? If any patterns emerge with regard to gender or ethnicity, why do you think this occurs in media presentations of conflict?
- What percentage of the conflicts shown had violent solutions?
- Why do think violence is so frequently shown on television?

VARIATION

If access to television is not widespread in the class, other media such as students' magazines or comics may be used. Ideally, portrayals of conflict in two different types of media should be compared.

FOLLOW-UP

Students may wish to write letters expressing their views on media violence to children's television producers or publishers of comics.

IN THE CURRICULUM

The activity develops skills in observation and recording, collating and presenting data, critical thinking, clarification of values, writing and taking action to effect change. It can be used in an English or media studies lesson. It can also be incorporated into a mathematics period, as analysing and graphing the data is necessary.



Conflict in the media – a worksheet

Name of television programme/comic/magazine _____

Date of programme _____ Channel/station _____

Who had the conflict? _____

What was the conflict about? _____

What did the first party want/need? _____

What did the second party want/need? _____

How did they try to solve their conflict? _____

Did the first party get what she or he wanted/needed? _____

Did the second party get what she or he wanted/needed? _____

How did you feel about the way they resolved their conflict? _____

Was it realistic? Why or why not? _____

What are some other ways they might have resolved their conflict? _____

If there was violence, were any special techniques used to highlight the violence? (music, lighting, different ways of filming) What effects did these have? _____

How did you feel about this programme/comic/magazine? _____

Considering positions



OBJECTIVES

To encourage young people to reflect on whether violence is ever justified; to encourage listening to other perspectives, and an understanding of what causes attitudes to change.

MATERIALS

An index card and a pencil for each participant.

Age level 3:
16–18 years

PROCEDURE

Step 1

Each student is given an index card and pencil. The following statement is read aloud to the class:

‘The use of violence is justified in order to bring about peace.’

Ask the students to consider the statement in silence for a minute. Five possible positions on the statement are written on a blackboard:

- strongly agree
- agree
- neutral/not sure
- disagree
- strongly disagree

Students choose one of these positions, which most closely represents their reaction to the statement, and write it on their card. Students should be told that at any point during the activity, they may cross out their original position and write in a new one if their point of view on the statement changes.

Step 2

Each person then finds another who is holding an index card with the same position written on it, and discusses his position with that person for two or three minutes.

Step 3

When the teacher calls time, each person moves on to someone who is holding a card one position removed from her own. They again discuss their points of view on the statement for two to three minutes.

Step 4

They then move on to someone whose card is two or three positions removed from their own, and discuss the statement again.



Considering another's position on a controversial issue

Step 5

Students return to the first person they talked to, and discuss whether they have changed their original position on the statement.

Step 6

The whole class comes together to discuss both the statement, and the process of the activity:

- Did any students find their position changing during the course of the activity?
- What factors influenced a change in position?
- What factors caused resistance to listening to others, or to change?
- What did they learn from others?

VARIATION

The activity can be repeated with any controversial statement as a way of encouraging sharing of perspectives. Other statements relevant to issues of peace and conflict include:

‘The world would be a better place if all conflict could be eliminated.’

‘It is only human nature to be violent.’

‘In the interests of peace, ethnic-identity movements should be limited.’

‘There should be an international ban on all war toys.’

FOLLOW-UP

The activity could be used to introduce an exploration of ways in which attitude change occurs, especially ways in which popular media create or influence attitudes on current events and conditions.

IN THE CURRICULUM

The activity involves clarifying one’s own position, active listening and considering other points of view. It can be used with a variety of controversial statements in different subject areas such as history, economics, or religious education.



Considering another's position on a controversial issue

Step 5

Students return to the first person they talked to, and discuss whether they have changed their original position on the statement.

Step 6

The whole class comes together to discuss both the statement, and the process of the activity:

- Did any students find their position changing during the course of the activity?
- What factors influenced a change in position?
- What factors caused resistance to listening to others, or to change position?
- What did they learn from others?

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...prevailing stereotypes about certain localities or groups of people.

Step 2

Once a collection of articles has been established, pairs work together to select one conflict. They complete the questions on the sheet **A local conflict**. (This may require writing to one or both of the parties in the conflict to get additional information.)

Step 3

When all the pairs have completed the sheet, they present the results to the

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class. As each situation is presented, the alternative solutions are discussed, and other possibilities added.

Step 4

The class then votes on whether this conflict is one that they, as young people, could take some form of constructive action on. Two lists can be made on the chalkboard as this is done: **Conflicts we can do something about** and **Conflicts we can't do anything about**. What patterns exist in the types of conflicts to be found on each list?

Step 5

Finally, the class can decide on one conflict that they can reasonably have an impact on, and devise a realistic action project to be carried out. The teacher should help the young people clarify whether the project they carry out is addressing the cause of the conflict, or the effects of the conflict.

Projects that address the causes of conflict might include writing letters to local authorities, conducting surveys to gather more information, circulating petitions, designing a presentation for younger students about a local ethnic or cultural group, planning a playground for an unused area, etc.

Projects that address the effects of conflict might include picking up litter, cleaning up graffiti, raising funds to help an individual or a cause, forming a 'buddy system' to escort younger students to and from school, etc.

The actual nature of projects will vary greatly depending on local conditions.

VARIATION

Rather than use newspapers, the survey can be conducted by taking the class on a walk in the local area, and having students record evidence of conflict. If this is done, it is essential to first ensure that the local area is safe enough for the class to do this sort of work; it is also advisable to notify parents of the nature of the project.

FOLLOW-UP

- 1 It is useful to keep a record of the action project, possibly in the form of a book, photos, or a video, depending on the resources available. It may also be appropriate for the class to communicate its action project to the wider community in the form of a presentation to other classes in the school, an article in the local newspaper, a display at a community festival, a poster on a bulletin board in the town, etc.

- 2 Students may invite community members who are involved in some way in peacemaking or dealing with conflict to visit them and speak about their work.

IN THE CURRICULUM

The activity builds skills in reading, analysing, mapping, anticipating consequences, decision-making, planning and taking action. It could be included in a humanities unit focusing on the local community. The mapping aspect could be done within a geography lesson.

A local conflict



What is the conflict you looked at? _____

Who are the parties in the conflict? _____

What does party A want or need? _____

What does party B want or need? _____

What do you think the causes of this conflict are? _____

Does this conflict benefit party A in any way? _____

Does it harm party A? _____

Does this conflict benefit party B in any way? _____

Does it harm party B? _____

Does this conflict benefit or harm anyone else in the community? _____

What are some things that could be done to resolve this conflict? _____

What do you think is the best way to resolve this conflict? _____

Is there anything that you could do to improve this situation? If not, why not? _____



Age level 3:
16–18 years

OBJECTIVES

To help young people examine assumptions about violence and human nature; to practise peer teaching and consensus-building.

MATERIALS

Copies of the four excerpts from **The Seville Statement on Violence** for each group of four (pages 240–1; the complete text of the *Seville Statement* is also reproduced following this activity, for teachers who wish to refer to it); 20 blank cards or slips of paper for each small group.

PROCEDURE

Step 1

Young people form groups of four, and each person in the small group is given a *different* excerpt from **The Seville Statement on Violence**. It can be explained that the *Seville Statement* is a statement on violence and human nature. It was written by a group of twenty scholars – biologists, psychologists, neurophysiologists, anthropologists, geneticists – from 12 different countries.

Step 2

Everyone who has Excerpt 1 then joins together to form a new group. Everyone with Excerpt 2 forms another group, and so on. In these groups, participants carefully read their excerpt, making sure that they fully understand it; dictionaries or encyclopedias may be consulted if necessary.

Step 3

Students then return to their original groups of four. They take turns explaining to the members of the original group in their own words what their portion of the Statement says. They are responsible for answering questions from the small group and for making sure everyone fully understands that excerpt.

Step 4

Each student takes five blank cards or slips of paper. In silence, they write

five different reactions they had to the *Seville Statement*, each one on a different piece of paper. A reaction may be simply a word ('sceptical'), a phrase ('Interesting – I'd like to know more'), a question ('Why don't more people know about this paper?'), or a more involved thought requiring a sentence or two ('If violence is not biological, then it should be possible to do something about it. Schools should find a way to address social violence.').

Step 5

All the reactions are collected by one person in the small group, and dealt out at random as if they are playing cards. Students look at their cards. They place any cards that they themselves wrote, or any with which they disagree, face down in the centre of the table. They can pick up any of the discarded reactions to add to those they are holding. The aim is to end up holding three reaction cards that they themselves did not write, but with which they can agree.

Step 6

Once this is done, they report to each other in the small group on the three reactions they are holding, and why they have chosen them.

Step 7

Finally, the class comes together to discuss any further thoughts on the *Seville Statement* and its implications.

VARIATION

During Step 6, students attempt to write a composite reaction to the *Seville Statement* that all four can agree on.

FOLLOW-UP

Students may wish to interview others in school, in a youth group, parents, or community members to see how widespread is the notion that violence is simply part of human nature. What may be appropriate ways of changing this attitude?

IN THE CURRICULUM

The activity develops skills in reading comprehension, paraphrasing, making summaries, presenting information clearly, examining other perspectives and building consensus. It can be used in a biology class on inherited traits, or in a psychology class.



The Seville Statement on Violence (1)



EXCERPT 1

It is scientifically incorrect to say that we have inherited a tendency to make war from our animal ancestors. Although fighting occurs widely throughout animal species, only a few cases of destructive intra-species fighting between organised groups have ever been reported . . . and none of these involve the use of tools designed to be weapons. Normal predatory feeding upon other species cannot be equated with intra-species violence. Warfare is a peculiarly human phenomenon and does not occur in other animals.

SUMMARY 1

It is untrue to say that we have inherited the tendency to make war from the animals we evolved from. Very few species fight among themselves, and none use weapons. Only humans make war.

EXCERPT 2

It is scientifically incorrect to say that war or any other violent behaviour is genetically programmed into our human nature. While genes are involved at all levels of nervous system function, they provide a developmental potential that can be actualised only in conjunction with the ecological and social environment. While individuals vary in their predispositions to be affected by their experience, it is the interaction between their genetic endowment and conditions of nurturance that determines their personalities. Except for rare pathologies, the genes do not produce individuals necessarily predisposed to violence. Neither do they determine the opposite. While genes are co-involved in establishing our behavioural capacities, they do not by themselves specify the outcome.

SUMMARY 2

It is untrue to say that human genes produce violent behaviour. Genes do not cause people to be either violent or peaceful. They provide the potential for behaviour; but how a person actually acts is shaped by their environment and the way that they are raised.

The Seville Statement on Violence (2)



EXCERPT 3

It is scientifically incorrect to say that humans have a 'violent brain'. While we do have the neural apparatus to act violently, it is not automatically activated by internal or external stimuli. Like higher primates and unlike other animals, our higher neural processes filter such stimuli before they can be acted upon. How we act is shaped by how we have been conditioned and socialised. There is nothing in our neurophysiology that compels us to react violently.

SUMMARY 3

It is not true to say that there is something in the human brain that causes people to act violently. We have the potential to act violently, but whether we do or not depends on how we have been brought up, and what kind of society we live in.

EXCERPT 4

It is scientifically incorrect to say that war is caused by 'instinct' or any single motivation . . . Modern war involves institutional use of personal characteristics such as obedience, suggestibility, and idealism; social skills such as language; and rational considerations such as cost-calculation, planning, and information processing. The technology of modern war has exaggerated traits associated with violence both in the training of actual combatants and in the preparation of support for war in the general population. As a result of this exaggeration, such traits are often mistaken to be the causes rather than the consequences of the process.

SUMMARY 4

War is not caused by some instinct. The violent behaviours of people in war situations are something they have learned through training; they are not in-born. Such behaviours are a result of war, not the cause.



The Seville Statement on Violence

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The Seville Statement on Violence* was drafted by an international committee of 20 scholars at the 6th International Colloquium on Brain and Aggression held at the University of Seville, Spain, in May 1986, with support from the Spanish Commission for UNESCO. The Statement's purpose is to dispel the widespread belief that human beings are inevitably disposed to war as a result of innate, biologically determined aggressive traits.

UNESCO adopted the *Seville Statement* at its 25th General Conference Session in Paris, October 17–November 16, 1989. The Statement has been formally endorsed by scientific organisations and published in journals around the world. UNESCO is preparing a brochure to be used in teaching young people about the Statement.

In August 1987 the Council of Representatives of the American Psychological Association voted to endorse the *Seville Statement*. The Board of Scientific Affairs emphasised that this is not a scientific statement on the issue of specific inherited behavioural traits. It is, rather, a social statement designed to eliminate unfounded stereotypic thinking on the inevitability of war.

Believing that it is our responsibility to address from our particular disciplines the most dangerous and destructive activities of our species, violence and war; recognising that science is a human cultural product which cannot be definitive or all-encompassing; and gratefully acknowledging the support of the authorities of Seville and representatives of Spanish UNESCO; we, the undersigned scholars from around the world and from relevant sciences, have met and arrived at the following Statement on Violence. In it, we challenge a number of alleged biological findings that have been used, even by some in our disciplines, to justify violence and war. Because the alleged findings have contributed to an atmosphere of pessimism in our time, we submit that the open, considered rejection of these mis-statements can contribute significantly to the International Year of Peace.

Misuse of scientific theories and data to justify violence and war is not new but has been made since the advent of modern science. For example, the theory of evolution has been used to justify not only war, but also genocide, colonialism and suppression of the weak.

We state our position in the form of five propositions. We are aware that there are many other issues about violence and war that could be fruitfully addressed from the standpoint of our disciplines, but we restrict ourselves here to what we consider a most important first step.

It is scientifically incorrect to say that we have inherited a tendency to make war from our animal ancestors. Although fighting occurs widely throughout animal species, only a few cases of destructive intra-species fighting between organised groups have ever been reported among naturally living species, and none of these involve the use of tools designed to be weapons. Normal predatory feeding upon other species cannot be equated with intra-species violence. Warfare is a peculiarly human phenomenon and does not occur in other animals.

The fact that warfare has changed so radically over time indicates that it is a product of culture. Its biological connection is primarily through language which makes possible the coordination of groups, the transmission of technology, and the use of tools. War is biologically possible, but it is not inevitable, as evidenced by its variation in occurrence and nature over time and space. There are cultures which have not engaged in war for centuries, and there are cultures which have engaged in war frequently at some times and not at others.

It is scientifically incorrect to say that war or any other violent behaviour is genetically programmed into our human nature. While genes are involved at all levels of nervous system function, they provide a developmental potential that can be actualised only in conjunction with the ecological and social environment. While individuals vary in their predispositions to be affected by their experience, it is the interaction between their genetic endowment and conditions of nurturance that determines their personalities. Except for rare pathologies, the genes do not produce individuals necessarily predisposed to violence. Neither do they determine the opposite. While genes are co-involved in establishing our behavioural capacities, they do not by themselves specify the outcome.

It is scientifically incorrect to say that in the course of human evolution there has been a selection for aggressive behaviour more than for other kinds of behaviour. In all well-studied species, status within the group is achieved by the ability to cooperate and to fulfil social functions relevant to





the structure of that group. 'Dominance' involves social bondings and affiliations; it is not simply a matter of the possession and use of superior physical power, although it does involve aggressive behaviours. Where genetic selection for aggressive behaviour has been artificially instituted in animals, it has rapidly succeeded in producing hyper-aggressive individuals; this indicates that aggression was not maximally selected under natural conditions. When such experimentally-created hyper-aggressive animals are present in a social group, they either disrupt its social structure or are driven out. Violence is neither in our evolutionary legacy nor in our genes.

It is scientifically incorrect to say that humans have a 'violent brain'. While we do have the neural apparatus to act violently, it is not automatically activated by internal or external stimuli. Like higher primates and unlike other animals, our higher neural processes filter such stimuli before they can be acted upon. How we act is shaped by how we have been conditioned and socialised. There is nothing in our neurophysiology that compels us to react violently.

It is scientifically incorrect to say that war is caused by 'instinct' or any single motivation. The emergence of modern warfare has been a journey from the primacy of emotional and motivational factors, sometimes called 'instincts', to the primacy of cognitive factors. Modern war involves institutional use of personal characteristics such as obedience, suggestibility, and idealism; social skills such as language; and rational considerations such as cost-calculation, planning, and information processing. The technology of modern war has exaggerated traits associated with violence both in the training of actual combatants and in the preparation of support for war in the general population. As a result of this exaggeration, such traits are often mistaken to be the causes rather than the consequences of the process.

We conclude that biology does not condemn humanity to war, and that humanity can be freed from the bondage of biological pessimism and empowered with confidence to undertake the transformative tasks needed in this International Year of Peace and in the years to come. Although these tasks are mainly institutional and collective, they also rest upon the consciousness of individual participants for whom pessimism and optimism are crucial factors. Just as 'wars begin in the minds of men', peace also begins in our minds. The same species who invented war is capable of inventing peace. The responsibility lies with each of us.

Seville, May 16, 1986

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*Age level 3:
16–18 years*

OBJECTIVES

To expose young people to ideas on peace from thinkers around the world; to help them see the commonalities in the ways people from many cultures view peace; to encourage them to reflect on their own definition of peace.

MATERIALS

A set of quotes from the **Thoughts on peace** sheets (pages 248–9) cut into individual sections for each group of four; sugar paper, glue, felt pens.

PROCEDURE

Step 1

In groups of four, the students read over the quotes. They then decide on a way to arrange them on a large sheet of sugar paper that will show something about how the various perspectives on peace relate to each other. They may choose to cluster them, make a linear sequence, a pattern or a flow diagram using lines and arrows to connect the different quotes.

Step 2

When the small group has decided on a final arrangement, they stick the slips of paper down with glue, adding diagrams or comments if they wish.

Step 3

With the various quotes in mind, each small group comes up with its own definition of peace.

Step 4

Small groups walk around the room and view each others' charts. One person from each group should remain with the chart to explain or answer questions. As a class, they discuss insights gained from this activity.

VARIATION

Small groups may wish to add quotes that they have come across, or additional thoughts. They may add further sheets to their display if they need more space for this.

FOLLOW-UP

As a follow-up to the activity, young people interpret quotes which had particular significance for them through other media. Various statements would lend themselves to expression through drawing, painting, or collage. Others might be the subject of a role play or short story. These projects could be presented to the class, school, or community.

IN THE CURRICULUM

The activity develops skills in reading comprehension, interpreting inferences and seeing relationships. It can be used in a literature class after reading material relevant to the theme of peace and conflict. It can be used in a history class after studying a war or other conflict. The follow-up activity could also involve art, music, drama, and creative writing.



Thoughts on peace (1)



'If there is right in the soul,
There will be beauty in the
person;
If there is beauty in the person,
There will be harmony in the
home;
If there is harmony in the home,
There will be order in the nation;
If there is order in the nation,
There will be peace in the world.'

Lao Tzu, China

'Every gun that is made, every
warship launched, every rocket
fired, signifies in the final sense a
theft from those who hunger and
are not fed, those who are cold
and are not clothed.'

Dwight Eisenhower, USA

'If you want peace, prepare for
peace.'

motto of University for Peace,
Costa Rica

'There is no way to peace. Peace
is the way.'

Mahatma Gandhi, India

'Since wars began in the minds
of men, it is in the minds of men
that the defences of peace must
be constructed.'

Preamble to the Constitution of
UNESCO

'Violence damages its own
perpetrators as much as it harms
its victims.'

Bishop C B Daly, Belfast,
Northern Ireland

'Non-violence is the weapon of
the strong.'

Mahatma Gandhi, India

'Without justice, peace is nothing
but a nice-sounding word.'

Dom Helder Camara, Brazil

Thoughts on peace (2)



'The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything except our ways of thinking.'

Albert Einstein, USA

'You will never understand violence or non-violence until you understand the violence to the spirit that happens from watching your children die of malnutrition.'

Food First

'I object to violence because when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary – the evil it does is permanent.'

Mahatma Gandhi, India

'I wondered why somebody didn't do something, for peace . . . Then I realised that I am somebody.'

Anonymous

'Peace is development, development is peace.'

Johan Galtung, Norway

'Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed – it's the only thing that ever has.'

Margaret Mead, USA

'Who is the greatest of heroes? he who converts his enemy into his friend.'

Avot D'Rabbi Nathan 23, Israel

'If we are to reach real peace in this world . . . we shall have to begin with the children.'

Mahatma Gandhi, India