Ahimsa Center - K-12 Teacher Institute Lesson Plan

| Title of Lesson: An Introduction to the Season for Nonviolence |
| Lesson By: Mary Condron |
| Grade Level/ Subject Areas: Grade 4 / Social Studies |
| Class Size: 15 – 25 students |
| Time/ Duration of Lesson: Approximately 3 – 5 days; 60 minute sessions |

Goals/ Objectives of Lesson:
- Students will discuss information learned regarding Gandhi and King and consider the similarities between the two. Students will work collaboratively to complete a Venn diagram with at least ten statements correctly classified.
- Students will discuss information learned regarding Gandhi and King and consider how individuals and events can influence history. Students will work collaboratively to complete a cause/effect graphic organizer with at least three accurate events.
- Students will consider the meaning and power of nonviolence through small group and class discussion. Students will articulate personal understanding of nonviolence in writing in a journal reflection.

Lesson Abstract:
This lesson is designed to introduce fourth grade students to the Season for Nonviolence through media, reading, and class discussion. Students will gain basic background on Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. through two stories of encounters with prejudice and injustice on public transportation. Through lesson activities, students will gain a basic understanding of the time periods, the basic missions, and the characteristics of these two important leaders. To reach this understanding, students will use the skills of comparing/contrasting and identifying cause and effect. With this background students will consider the meaning of nonviolence and its relevance in their lives and their world.

Lesson Content:
In 1998, Dr. Arun Gandhi, grandson of M.K. Gandhi, observed that 1998 represented the 50th and 30th anniversaries of the assassinations of M.K. Gandhi (who died on January 30, 1948) and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (who died on April 4, 1968). He proposed observing the 64 days between January 30 and April 4 as a “Season for Nonviolence.” A Season for Nonviolence is now an annual educational, media, and grassroots campaign dedicated to demonstrating that nonviolence is a powerful way to heal, transform, and empower our lives and our communities. This international event honors the Gandhi and King and their vision for a nonviolent world.

It is important that children learn about Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. and understand the significance of these two historical leaders in today’s world. Their words and work provide important leadership for us today because Gandhi’s idea of satyagraha, an active pursuit of truth through love and nonviolence, is especially meaningful in its powerful potential for transforming our personal lives and resolving current world problems.

Gandhi led political and social movements first to change the laws of South Africa, and later to obtain independence from British rule for his native India. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a leader in a civil rights movement to change the laws of his native United States to provide greater equal opportunity for all, especially African Americans. Both men employed nonviolent means
to accomplish their goals, believing that positive change could only come from peaceful means. They successfully sought to change the opinions of others with courage and love rather than force. As astute politicians, they used the power of the courts and the media to further their causes, though the principal source of their power to create change came from their adherence to love, generosity, and unwavering dignity.

In the lives of both Gandhi and King, an event on public transportation inspired their nonviolent protests against injustice.

For Gandhi, this event occurred in 1893 on a train in South Africa. When Gandhi was asked to move to third class because non-whites were not allowed in first class, he refused and was thrown off the train. The unfairness of this and other accepted practices led to Gandhi’s decision to delay his return to India and to work to end the discrimination toward Indians in South Africa. Perhaps also important in making this decision is the fact that Gandhi had not been successful in establishing himself as a lawyer in India. By 1894 he was the leader of an organization he had helped to start called the Natal Indian Congress (NIC). Through this organization, Gandhi worked tirelessly to educate others about the inequities Indians suffered in South Africa and to obtain expanded rights for Indians. In addition, Gandhi successfully sought to include the goal of promoting harmony between Indians and Europeans in the NIC’s mission and to include all Indians, regardless of caste or social status, in the organization. Gandhi also worked to convince Indians that they should reform themselves by being clean and ethical and by seeing beyond caste and religious barriers. Gandhi was successful in mobilizing support for his ideas. He challenged laws in the courts, and he used the press to gain support for his ideas. Though Gandhi made little tangible progress in gaining fair treatment for Indians in South Africa, he found success in organizing and inspiring people. These experiences were essential to Gandhi’s future work in India.

For King, the event was Rosa Parks’ famous refusal to give up her seat on a Montgomery city bus in 1955. When Parks refused to give up her seat to a white man, she was arrested. The unfairness of this practice and similar Jim Crow laws (laws designed to keep white and black races separate and to provide preferential treatment for whites) inspired local civil rights leaders to action. Parks’ arrest provided the leaders with a good case to publicize the injustice of Jim Crow laws. Her manner of dignified composure and her clean background were important factors in the decision to take action. The boycott was actually planned even before Parks’ arrest by E.D. Nixon, president of the local NAACP chapter. He had been waiting for the “right” person to be arrested. Local leaders chose a young minister, Martin Luther King, Jr., to lead a bus boycott throughout the city, and an organization called the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) was formed with King as its head. The MIA presented a list of demands to the city and publicized the boycott through churches. So many people supported the boycott that it was soon clear that city transit system would suffer economically. People worked together to carpool and help each other through the hardships that boycotting the buses brought. In retaliation many white people organized and sometimes resorted to violence, including firebombs at churches and at King’s home. A large number of protesters were arrested including King. He served two weeks in jail and later said, “I was proud of my crime. It was the crime of joining my people in a nonviolent protest against injustice.” The arrest led to national publicity that was helpful to the civil rights cause. The boycott did succeed in
creating substantial positive change. In June 1956, the federal district court ruled that Alabama’s racial segregation laws for buses were unconstitutional. Opposition filed an appeal, but in November 1956, nearly a year after Parks’ arrest, the United States Supreme Court upheld the ruling. This led to a new law for the city allowing blacks to sit anywhere, and the boycott ended after 381 days.

Both Gandhi and King were well suited for the work of leading and inspiring others. It is interesting that both leaders were inspired by injustice on public transportation early in their careers. In the activism that followed, each man found personal strengths that each built on in the years to come, and both eventually became leaders of important successful social movements for justice. Both men possessed a charisma and a passion for their ideas of justice that inspired others. Gandhi convinced Indians to change their deeply and long held beliefs regarding class and caste to include all, even the “untouchables”, in the Natal Indian Congress. King convinced many blacks to endure personal hardship in a long bus boycott. Both leaders successfully argued that nonviolence should be the method of fighting oppression. In addition, the two men employed similar methods of appealing to the courts and to the press to promote their political agendas. Both men used public marches and boycotts. Both were arrested for their non-cooperation with unjust laws. Certainly King traced many of his ideas and methods to Gandhi. It is principally through Dr. King that Gandhi’s message came to Americans.

It is important to realize that Gandhi’s well developed ideas of the importance and power of nonviolence are behind many other important events of the last hundred years. Though King and the American Civil Rights Movement is the example of nonviolence that most of today’s American students can most readily understand and identify with, there are many other significant examples. To name only four:

South Africa: Though Gandhi began developing his ideas of satyagraha in South Africa, it was a century later that the country finally became a democracy. Throughout the long struggle against apartheid, nonviolent means of protest were important in disabling the government.

United States – United Farm Workers Movement: Cesar Chavez was inspired by Gandhi’s autobiography and led a nonviolent campaign to end exploitation of migrant farm workers in 1960-1980.

Argentina – Desaparecidos Movement: Mothers in Buenos Aires walked wearing white scarves to bring attention to human rights violations in their country. Their protest marches, letter writing, petitions, and newspaper advertising significantly contributed to the downfall of the military government and the restoration of democratic government in 1983.

Europe – Nazi Resistance: One example of nonviolent resistance to Nazism was the thousands of Norwegian teachers who refused to accept membership in the mandatory teacher’s organization following the Nazi occupation of Norway although they were taken to concentration camps and tortured. Their suffering and the resulting public outcry inspired the resistance movement. The teachers were eventually released and the attempt to establish a fascist model of education in Norway failed.
Though they are much less in the public consciousness than war, history is full of examples of nonviolent movements, especially in the last century. A Season for Nonviolence can serve as a springboard for study leading to a more complete understanding of our past. Even more importantly, A Season for Nonviolence offers us hope for a more peaceful future.

**Florida State Content Standards**
- Social Studies - History 1.2.1: The student understands how individuals, ideas, decisions, and events can influence history.
- Social Studies - Civics and Government 2.2.2: The student understands why personal responsibility and civic responsibility are important.
- Language Arts - Listening/Viewing/Speaking 3.2.5: The student participates as a contributor and occasionally acts as a leader in group discussion.
- Language Arts - Literature 2.2.1: The student recognizes cause and effect relationships in literary text.

**Guiding Questions:**
- How can single events and individuals change history?
- Why do we celebrate the lives of Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King?
- What is nonviolence?
- What do the lives of Gandhi and King teach us about nonviolence?
- Is nonviolence important in my life?

**Materials Needed:**
- “A Season for Nonviolence” digital story
- Audio visual equipment for viewing digital story and films listed below
- Film *Gandhi* (Richard Attenborough, director; Sony Pictures (1982)
- Film *The Rosa Parks Story* (Julie Dash, director; Xenon Pictures (2002)
- Chart paper, pencils, markers
- Variety of books on Gandhi, King, Parks, many at student reading level
- Journal for each student (These may be already established journals or very simple folder journals created for this project.)

**Lesson Context:**
This lesson is designed to introduce students to the SEASON FOR NONVIOLENCE (January 30 – April 4), and therefore is best used in the month of January. It is likely that the students have some familiarity with Martin Luther King, Jr. and, perhaps, Mahatma Gandhi; but prior knowledge is not required.

It is expected that students have prior success with small group discussion. The more skilled the students are in active listening, showing respect for all voices, sharing leadership, and bringing out quiet voices, the more successful the small group discussion aspects of this lesson will be.

It is also expected that students have some experience with using nonfiction text to seek information. Familiarity with text features such as headings, table of contents, and index will aide students in their work.

This lesson supports the important thinking skills of comparing and contrasting as well as
identifying cause and effect relationships. Coordinating this lesson with reading instruction in
these skills may be beneficial.

The digital story accompanying this lesson is meant to introduce the lesson.

**Teaching Activities:**

1. **INTRODUCTION:**

   Teacher tells students that we will soon celebrate A Season for Nonviolence, a time for us to
   think about what nonviolence means to us and to our world. Explain that the Season begins
   January 30 and runs for 64 days. It was created in honor of two men. Ask students to identify
   or predict the two men in whose honor the season was created. Students then view digital story,
   “Introduction to Season for Nonviolence” to see who the “Season” honors.

   After viewing the digital story ask, “Why do we celebrate the lives of Gandhi and King?” As
   students share, lead them to consider that these two men offer us stunning examples of the
   power of nonviolence. Explain that the class will consider the meaning of nonviolence in the
   following activity:

   Students need paper, pencil. Display the following word list: love, power, hate, fight, weak,
   truth, conquer, active, passive, hurt. Ask students to make three columns on their papers
   titled: “Know Well”; “Know a Little”; and “Don’t Know”. Each student writes the 10 words
   from the list on their papers under the column title that best explains how well he or she knows
   the meaning of each word.

   These words are significant in an understanding of Gandhi’s vision of nonviolence. Check for
   basic understanding by briefly discussing words as a class and then play the following word
   game: Groups or pairs of students prepare a mini skit demonstrating one of the words. The
   word itself cannot be a part of the skit, and the other students attempt to guess the word based
   upon the skit.

   Students then review their word lists and move words to “Know Well” column. Now ask
   students to circle the words that they think are associated with NONVIOLENCE. In small
   groups of 3 – 5 children, students share their thinking with each other and agree upon which
   words GO WITH and which DO NOT GO WITH nonviolence.

   Teams share their thinking with the class. Teacher then explains that the idea of nonviolence is
   as old as the history of man. Gandhi said it was “as old as the hills”. However Gandhi was the
   first person to take the idea and develop it into a clear plan for living and for changing the world
   into a better place. Teacher shares that he or she knows that Gandhi was very clear about what
   words would go with nonviolence: love, power, fight, truth, active. Explain that as we learn
   more about Gandhi and King and their ideas we will understand why Gandhi says that these
   words go with nonviolence and the words hate, weak, conquer, passive, hurt do not.

2. **TWO STORIES:**
Teacher tells students that the lives of both Gandhi and King were changed by a single incident on public transportation. Has your whole life ever been changed by one thing that happened? Teacher may ask students to share personal experience with a life changing event with the class, within small groups, or with a partner.

Explain that today we will see and hear two stories. One is a story of something that happened to a woman named Rosa Parks. Something happened to her on a very ordinary day that forever changed her life. What happened to her also changed the life of a man we have all heard about: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

View the video segment dramatizing Parks’ refusal to give up her seat on a city bus and her subsequent arrest in The Rosa Parks Story. Prior to viewing, explain to students that her arrest led to the Montgomery Bus Boycott, which King was to lead. Students share reactions to film in pairs, small groups, or class and then each independently records a reflection and at least one question in a journal. (Classes who do not have on-going journals may want to create small folders for taking notes, recording reflections, and journaling during the Season for Nonviolence.)

To introduce the second film clip ask, “How many of you know that something very similar happened to Mohandas Gandhi about fifty years before Rosa Parks was arrested?”

View the video segment from Gandhi dramatizing Gandhi’s refusal to move to third class on a South African train and being thrown off the train and the scenes immediately following. In these scenes Gandhi first discusses the injustice with other Indians and sympathetic whites. In this second scene, the teacher may want to pause and guide students in fully comprehending the conversation. It is helpful to pause just before Gandhi says, “Well, then, it must be fought,” to emphasize this statement, thereby helping students to see that nonviolence does not mean no fighting. It is also helpful to pause before Gandhi names the weapons he will use in this fight, the courts and the press, again to emphasize important nonviolence strategies. In the third scene Gandhi leads a protest in which government passes are burned and he is beaten by the police. (Note the film necessarily condenses time. Though it appears that the conversation leads right to this demonstration, this burning of passes in fact does not happen for several years. Also, gauge the maturity of your students before showing the violence in this scene which shows Gandhi’s commitment to take blows without retaliating in kind.) Again, students share reactions to film in pairs, small groups, or class and then record their reflection and at least one question in a journal.

3. RESEARCH:

Review information from films by asking student volunteers to share their reflections and their questions. As they do so record their questions onto a class list. Tell students we will look for answers to their questions. As we do so, we can use a timeline to help us see the order of events. Display for the students a timeline from 1850 to the present on which Rosa Park’s arrest (1955) and Gandhi’s eventful train ride (1893) are noted.

Provide students a collection of reference books and trade books about the two men and well as
computers for internet research. Challenge students to seek answers to their questions and learn more about the events in the lives of Gandhi and King by researching. Pairs of students work together. As they discover answers to the posted questions, they should write answers along with source notes identifying where the information was obtained onto sticky notes or index cards which are posted next to the question on the class chart. In addition, student pairs choose at least one event from the life of each man to add to the class timeline. On 4 x 6 index cards, students write a short description of the event and add a drawing to illustrate the event. Source notes at the bottom of each card should be added to tell where information was obtained. Student cards are then posted on the class timeline in the appropriate spot.

4. ANALYSIS:
Explain that students can use the skills of compare/contrast and sequencing cause/effect to better understand two champions of nonviolence, Gandhi and King. Review the use of a Venn diagram to illustrate relationships and a simple flow chart to illustrate cause/effect.

Working collaboratively in small groups students use their previously created timeline and available resources (classroom books, library, internet, journal notes) to create the described charts to illustrate what they know about Gandhi and King. Encourage students to add source notes to their charts to identify where they found the information. Students should minimally include 10 statements correctly placed on the Venn diagram, and they should minimally include three events on a cause/effect chart.

Depending on the students’ interests and abilities as well as time available, these charts can lead to deeper research and discussion. As Gandhi influenced King, students might try putting both men onto the same cause/effect flow chart. With research, the Venn diagram can include many more than ten statements. The intention of this activity is not to arrive at identical charts, but to encourage research and discussion on the topic.

As charts are completed, they should be posted for review. As a class discuss and try using research to resolve any differences of opinion. Students then record a reflection in a journal: 
How would you explain the importance of Gandhi and King to someone who did not know of them?

5. FOLLOW UP:
As a class, review completed and corrected charts. Teacher then posts word lists from the introductory activity and asks students to look for examples of the words that Gandhi might have used to explain nonviolence: love, power, fight, truth, active. Each student should choose at least one of the words, write it on a sticky note, sticker, or paper that can in some way be attached to the charts. Ask students to add their words where they believe they have found an example of their chosen words in action and to explain their thinking. For example, when Rosa Parks refused to leave her seat, this could be an example of fight (standing up to injustice through non-cooperation), truth (the truth is that she deserved the seat as much as anyone), or active (being arrested and going to court rather than the easier path of passively going along with unjust demands). There are no real right and wrong answers, but students should be able to explain the choices they make.
Ask students to reflect in their journals “Tell about a time when you experienced love, power, fight, or truth, or were active instead of passive. What did that teach you about nonviolence?”

Ask for volunteers to read journal entries aloud and help students to see how nonviolence is important in their own lives, even when they are not fighting injustice and oppression. Help them to see the rich meaning of nonviolence which is much more than “no violence” or “no hurting”. Gandhi explained nonviolence as goodwill towards all life. This goodwill has the power to transform our personal lives. As personal stories are shared, from the teacher as well as the students, highlight examples of the power of goodwill.

In small groups students then discuss how they might explain nonviolence to someone. This talking will help students articulate their thoughts as well as learn from the thinking of others. This will inform the students’ writing for the final assessment to follow.

**Assessment/ Evaluation:**

Students may revise their diagrams and charts in light of discussions or new information. These will be scored as “complete” or “not complete”. All inaccuracies must be corrected to earn a “complete”.

Students will write in journals: “*How would you explain nonviolence to someone? Why is it important? Give examples to help explain your thinking.*” Student writing should be evaluated on content rather than writing skill or conventions. Students who have difficulty writing could use a scribe or give an oral response. Students are scored as “complete” (answered both questions and provided at least one example) or “not complete” (did not answer both questions or give an example).

Teacher will informally assess the success of the activities by the sincerity and depth of thinking regarding the topic as shown in class discussion and journal writing.

**Extension Activities/ Enrichment**

Students should continue journals using the statements provided as a part of the Season for Nonviolence campaign as writing prompts. (There are 64 statements or suggestions, one for each day of the Season.) [www.agnt.org/snv02.htm](http://www.agnt.org/snv02.htm)

*Other Season for Nonviolence activities:*

Research AHIMSA and SATYAGRAHA. Learn their meanings and devise a way to explain them to a kindergarten class, and then do so!

Find a creative way to tell the school more information about Gandhi and King. Research and then create a poster, a movie, a play, a story, a report, a song, a poem, or . . . you decide!

Find examples of other leaders who have used nonviolence in their lives and work. Share your learning with the class.

Write an imaginary conversation between Gandhi and King in which they discover how much
they have in common or in which King explains to Gandhi how he has used Gandhi’s ideas in America.

Bibliography:


Gandhi & King: A Season for Nonviolence, Compassionate Activism for Global Healing. [www.agnt.org/snv02.htm](http://www.agnt.org/snv02.htm)

Mahatma Gandhi. [www.mkgandhi.org](http://www.mkgandhi.org)

Martin Luther King, Jr., Research and Education Institute. [www.stanford.edu/group/King](http://www.stanford.edu/group/King)

