Title of Lesson: Nonviolence and Satyagraha-Action and Truth

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level/ Subject Areas:</th>
<th>Class Size:</th>
<th>Time/Duration of Lesson:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7th Grade Social Studies</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>2-3 class periods 60 minutes each</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Guiding Questions:

How did Gandhi use Satyagraha to achieve social change?

Explain examples of Satyagraha Gandhi used and why they were effective.

Lesson Abstract: This lesson focuses on Satyagraha, Gandhi’s concept of nonviolence and truth. In order to create social change, Gandhi believed in nonviolence with active resistance to injustice and reliance on truth. Components of nonviolent practices will be discussed along with specific applications of nonviolence as exemplified by the satyagraha practices of Gandhi.

Lesson Content:

Gandhi coined and used the term Satyagraha or soul force which is active nonviolence combined with truth. For Gandhi, nonviolence is not just the opposite of violence, it is a positive, proactive, state of being which starts with the self, first. Satyagraha is a way of achieving peace, uniting with others, and using active nonviolence to disobey unjust laws. It is a powerful courageous, courteous voice. Gandhi used these principles of Satyagraha to promote peace and freedom in nonviolent ways.

Satyagraha starts with the self and then spreads to others. Gandhi said “Satyagraha is the vindication of truth not by infliction of suffering on the opponent but on one’s self.” (Fischer, 1982, p.35). He felt you could not help others or fight for a cause until you were right with yourself. To put it another way, when flying in a plane, passengers are told to put the oxygen mask on themselves first and then help others. Gandhi felt this was the same for truth and nonviolence. One has to be able to take care of oneself effectively before worrying about others. For Gandhi that meant fasting, restricting his diet, and using prayer and meditation daily. Satyagraha was not random either. People were trained individually and collectively not to fight back. Gandhi said those “who, having experienced the force of the soul within themselves, will not cower before brute force, and will not, on any account, desire to use brute force.” (Parel, 1997, p. 116) He demonstrated this power repeatedly and showed others this powerful approach to nonviolence.

Realizing the strength in small, repeated acts of Satyagraha, Gandhi actively defied the British, maintaining true to himself and his goals. When he went to court in South Africa as a young lawyer, Gandhi refused to take off his turban when the judge told him to. It was not so much out of disrespect for the court as it was respecting himself and his culture. In this simple act, Gandhi was true to himself and actively resisted a discriminatory law.
One of the first acts of **Satyagraha** Gandhi did on a large scale was in South Africa. He actively resisted the Asiatic Registration Act of 1907 which required only Indians to register and be fingerprinted. These laws also unfairly discriminated against Asians in South Africa by preventing Indians from entering a neighboring state, the Transvaal. Gandhi and others refused to register and were sent to jail. Indians purposefully burned their registration cards and crossed into the Transvaal state, knowing they would be jailed or beaten. Seven years later the laws were repealed due to these repeated acts of **Satyagraha**. These acts of civil disobedience helped the Indians in South Africa gain respect and brought them closer to freedom.

In Champaran and Kheda, the British landlords raised taxes on the Indian farmers. When the Indians refused to pay the tax, they were beaten and jailed. The farmers of Champaran asked Gandhi to help in 1917. Gandhi was told to leave the city or be jailed. When in jail, Gandhi refused to post bail, prolonging his interment but also promoting his cause. Eventually, the British landlords abolished the tax and began to treat the Indians better. Gandhi said “What I did was a very ordinary thing. I declared that the British could not order me around in my own country.” (Fischer, 1982, p. 59) Through persistence and practice of **Satyagraha**, India became free from the British, without violence.

Gandhi continuously practiced **Satyagraha** in small, powerful acts that helped to create the mosaic of nonviolence and get freedom from the colonizers. The simple act of spinning had dual purposes – it supported Indian workers in the textile sector, but also had the effect of boycotting British goods. In this mercantilist system, India supplied and cultivated the raw cotton for clothes. These materials were sent to England for manufacturing and then sent back to Indians who paid high prices for their own products. Spinning one's own clothes gave the Indians a sense of empowerment while subtly hurting the British economically. The Indians remained true to themselves, protested actively and nonviolently, helping to get freedom from their oppressors.

One of the best examples of **Satyagraha** was the Salt March in 1930. The British had a monopoly on the salt in India. The British processed the salt and then sold it back to the Indians for a high profit, not allowing the Indians to produce their own salt. In a sense it was a tax on salt. After telling the British exactly what he was going to do, Gandhi set out to walk 240 miles to the sea to dramatize and get support for the Indians’ oppression. When Gandhi got to the sea he and the others picked up the salt in a deliberate act of defiance done in the name of truth. The British violently started hitting the Indians to make them stop. The Indians, trained in nonviolent methods did not fight back but stoically took the blows. This was exactly what Gandhi wanted. The media covered the event showing the world the contrasting forms of power: courage and determination by the Indians and violence by the British, much like the media coverage of the Birmingham campaign in the US. Fischer said “The Salt March and it aftermath did two things: it gave the Indians the conviction that they could lift the foreign yoke from their shoulders; it made the British aware that they were subjugating India.” (Fischer, 1982, p. 102)

Gandhi transformed the world with his revolution based on truth and nonviolence, **Satyagraha**. He said nonviolence “is always moral, never cruel; any activity, mental or otherwise, which fails in this test in undoubtedly not passive resistance.” (Parel, 1997, p. 146) He used
Satyagraha in many ways with subtle and overt forms of resistance, always focusing on the self as a first mode of change and then the larger community. He argued that the truth and self should be the same. He began the change he wanted to see in the world.

State Content Standards:
Georgia SS7H3 The student will analyze continuity and change in Southern and Eastern Asia leading to the 21st century.
B. Describe the impact of Mohandas Gandhi’s belief in non-violent protest.

Materials Needed:
- blank paper and colored pencils or markers
- the book Mufaro’s Daughters by John Steptoe
- “A force More Powerful” the movie, the section that focuses on India.

Suggested Teaching Activities:
1. Warning – this activity involves the teacher giving up some control and looks a little chaotic at first. Have a volunteer come to the front of the room to work with you. It is a good idea to get a “tough” kid or maybe one who is even a bully. Whisper to the student that he/she can act like a bully to you and that you are going to push him and he can push you back. Demonstrate this with the whole class. Ask the class, when will this type of activity end? How does it end? Then whisper to the student that this second time he is not allowed to do anything but smile, no matter what I do to him. Then proceed to push the kid around (within reason). Ask the student volunteer which way was harder to do and have him explain. Then ask the student which one was more powerful – the 1st way or the second way. Discuss as a class. Ask students if they have ever practiced nonviolence in the second way.
2. Define satyagraha for the class, making sure they understand that satyagraha is not just non-violence, but nonviolence with truth.
3. Give some examples of satyagraha that Gandhi used.
4. Think-pair-share, have students write down other people who have used these principles and how they used them.

Day 2
1. Review material from previous day’s class. There are many ways to do this. One way could be to have the students do a 3-2-1 review. Have them write down 3 things they remembered from the previous lesson, 2 questions they have and 1 thing they can relate to. Discuss as a class.
2. Watch and discuss the film “ A Force More Powerful (section on India which is 30 minutes long.) This is a documentary on Gandhi’s Salt March. Discuss film and why nonviolence is more powerful. Ask what was Gandhi’s “truth” in the film?
3. Read Mufaro’s Daughters which is a story set in Africa about 2 daughters – a mean one and a nice one. Ask how did Nyasha, the nice one practice non-violence? How can you practice this in your life?
4. Have students write an essay on how they can use the practice of satyagraha in their own lives. Remind them it can be simple things like Gandhi and Nyasha (from Mufaro’s Daughters) did.
Bibliography:

