Title:
Inter-culturalism and Immigration: A Nonviolent Approach

Lesson By:
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Grade Level/ Subject Areas:
4th grade social studies/Spanish (appropriate for any elementary/middle level)

Duration of Lesson:
3-day conclusion to a larger unit on immigration, 30 minutes each lesson

Content Standards: (Wisconsin Model Academic Standards)
-Social Studies, Standard C: Political Science and Citizenship Performance Grade 4: Identify and explain the individual's responsibilities to family, peers, and the community, including the need for civility and respect for diversity
-Social Studies, Standard B: History Performance Grade 4: Describe examples of cooperation and interdependence among individuals, groups, and nations
-World Language, Comparisons Standard I.3 Characteristics of Culture: Students will understand the concept of culture as they compare other cultures to their own

Lesson Abstract:
Students will be introduced to different perspectives of immigration and cooperation among diverse populations. Students will understand the contrasting ideologies of the melting pot, salad bowl, mosaic, and orchestra. Students will see the advantages of a viewpoint that is based on respect and collaboration. Children’s literature, music, and teamwork will be used to demonstrate the differences between perspectives and make a case for inter-culturalism.

Guiding Questions:
How are individuals affected when people come together to work?
How do we view the diverse contributions of populations of people?
Why is it important to understand others in order to truly collaborate with them?

Content Essay:
Immigration and Perceptions of the Interaction between People in the United States
The demographics of the US population are in a constant state of change. Statistics from the US Census Bureau predict that the, “US population will grow from 281 million in 2000 to 397 million in 2050 with immigration, but only to 328 million with no immigration” (Williams 83). Some wonder if this population growth is sustainable. Others are concerned about the immigrant make-up of the population and the impact that it’s diversity will have. The Pew Research Center estimates that, “nearly one in five Americans (19%) will be an immigrant in 2050, compared with one in eight (12%) in 2005. By 2025, the immigrant, or foreign-born, share of the population will surpass the peak during the last great wave of immigration a century ago” (Passel, Cohn). How our society reacts to this change will critically affect our interactions on a personal level as well as at a national level.

There is no denying that the latest wave of immigrants is changing the makeup of the nation, just as the last ones have, but there is wide variation in the reactions to these shifts in demographics. Yet, as it has throughout history, a lack of information and misunderstandings
feed fears of difference. The fastest growing immigrant group within the United States is made up of people from Mexico. Some believe that, “profound differences exist between Mexican and American values and culture” (Orosco 16-17). Still others believe that immigrant populations are having a negative impact on the nation. Neonativists argue that, “Mexican immigration represents a major threat to the United States that is on par with the threat of terrorism posed by ‘religiously driven Islam’” (Orozco 16). Believing in this deficit model blinds people from the positive contributions that immigrants make to society every day and to the collaborative work that should happen among all. People’s perceptions of immigrant populations are affected by the characterizations of these groups. Some seem to have forgotten the history of immigration to America or even their own families’ story of immigration. People who are of non-indigenous decent often behave as though this country has always been ethnically homogenous. Yet when it comes to immigration, this country was built on ideas like E pluribus Unum, or out of many one, mentality. There are many different ways of looking at the make-up and interaction of the people within the United States. Some view the impact that people inherently have on other people negatively and others view this influence much more positively.

**Pluralism** is defined as, “A conviction that various religious, ethnic, racial, and political groups should be allowed to thrive in a single society.” This view does not remark on any cross-cultural cooperation, only about existing side-by-side. **Multiculturalism**, as a belief, further comments on the way that members of society should perceive and interact with each other. Multiculturalism is, “the view that the various cultures in a society merit equal respect and scholarly interest” (American Heritage New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy). Most recently, the idea of **inter-culturalism** has emerged. It, as explored by Dr. Orosco, embraces the new dynamics of the group, which has been made better by the combination of its different parts (Orosco *Cesar Chavez and a Culture of Peace*). It is this mentality that truly brings people together to accomplish change that constructively affects humanity.

Some view society through a perspective referred to as the **Melting Pot**, “a term expressing the view that immigrants to the United States have been fused or melted into a single people” (American Heritage New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy). It should be noted that in the process, one’s individual identity is seen as lost; the new identity of the mixed groups cannot be separated as a result. Another view is that of the **Salad Bowl, Mosaic, or Orchestra**. These ideas emphasize the fact that the individuals maintain their unique qualities and thus add value to the group. For example, in an orchestra, each instrument adds to the performance as a whole. There are times that the instruments have solos and times when they play together to achieve harmony. Individually the musicians have value, but together their music is more powerful. When this perspective is applied to immigrants’ coexistence and collaboration with others in the United States there can be a healthy sense of mutual respect and growth. In fact, it can promote nonviolence. When people take the time to learn about each other, they come to understand other points of view. They find commonalities and learn about what makes people unique and valuable. When one recognizes the humanity in another they are more likely to work together than to be destructive.

**Chávez’ Ideas about Diversity and Collaboration**

César Chávez appears to share the inter-cultural view when he states that, “[…] ethnic diversity within the union is a resource, rather than an obstacle or limitation.” While Chávez is discussing differences within the labor union setting, he is expressing the idea that a variety of experiences, perspectives, and areas of expertise have a positive impact beyond the individual. Chávez believed that, “If it were nothing but farm workers in the union now, just Mexican farm workers, we’d only have about 30 percent of all the ideas that we have. There would be no cross-fertilization, no growing. It’s beautiful to work with other groups, other ideas, and other
customs” (Orosco 83). We cultivate new ways to make progress when we work in partnership with others, especially others who bring different perspectives to the conversation.

**Gandhi’s Ideas about Diversity and Nationality**

The reader in *Hind Swaraj* asks, “Has the introduction of Mahomedanism not unmade the nation?” This idea of the influence of immigrant populations being destructive shows a lack of awareness and a common trend of divisiveness. There is also a frightening resemblance to the current discussion around immigration in the U.S. However, there is hope in Gandhi’s reply: India cannot cease to be one nation because people belonging to different religions live in it. The introduction of foreigners does not necessarily destroy the nation, they merge in it. [...] That country must have a faculty for assimilation. [...] In reality there are as many religions as there are individuals, but those who are conscious of the spirit of nationality do not interfere with one another’s religion. If they do, they are not fit to be considered a nation. (Gandhi, 50)

Gandhi’s words hold true today and carry a powerful message of acceptance of diversity. Within religious groups, races, and geographic boundaries people are vastly different. His teachings could also help to redefine what it means to be a nation. The Sanskrit word “samas” is a category of compound words that maintains the two words as they are merged into one, yet the new word also has its own new meaning. When this idea is compared to Gandhi’s view of nationality and assimilation, it can be seen that his views emphasize the retention of individual and cultural identities, while forming shared principles as a nation. (Parel 50) The goal must be to work towards a more open-minded outlook because, “The more we advance in true knowledge, the better we shall understand that we need not be at war with those whose religion we may not follow” (Gandhi, 52). One way to move towards true knowledge is to be exposed and open to a variety of people and thoughts. It is important not to discount an idea based on its source. The more diverse the field of thoughts, the more potential there is for development of innovative ideas in problem solving.

**Nonviolence as a Way of Thinking and Acting in an Inter-cultural Society:**

When the individuals within a nation can come together to achieve a common goal it is powerful. However, organizing for a common cause is a challenge because it requires, “that elusive and difficult task of getting people together- to act together and to produce something” according to Chávez. When some think of power they refer to the strength of one individual. Hannah Arendt provides an alternate definition of power. She asserts that it is instead, “the ability generated by a group or community to set events in motion as a result of their agreements- to act together and to produce something” (Orosco 39). Yet, there can be challenges to collaborating with large groups of people. When facing issues of need for social change the task can seem insurmountable. While discussing the removal of untouchability in Hinduism, Gandhi acknowledged that, “there are many slippery ascents and many deep chasms. They have all to be negotiated with unaltering step before we can reach the summit and breathe the fresh air of freedom” (Gandhi, 171). This should not be looked at as an objective to be accomplished, but rather a constant search, a mentality, a way of being. Together humanity has a new chance each day to work towards individual and collective goals to improve not only our own lives, but those of others.

The inter-cultural view of society insists that, as a nation, we become better because of our diversity. Dr. Orosco suggests that immigration can, “Bolster what it means to be an American, rather than detract from it. [...] We can investigate and learn” from each other’s way of life, (Orosco *Cesar Chavez and a Culture of Peace*) rather than use our differences to devalue members of our communities. Imagine the potential that students who have internalized this view can reach as a part of a collective nation, and beyond that, as citizens of the world. Day by day, we can instill in the children that we work with the seeds of, “a culture of peace” as we
embody nonviolence in thought and action (Orosco 22). After all, “Nonviolence is premised in unity, while violence is premised in separation and division” (Sethia PowerPoint). The inter-cultural way of thought can lead us to ensure that our interactions with others bring us together to create a more peaceful and just society for ourselves and for the future.

Bibliography:


Teaching Activities/ Materials Needed:
**Day 1: Melting Pot Perspective**

Materials:
-English book: *Little Blue and Little Yellow* by Leo Lionni
(Spanish Book: *Pequeño azul y pequeño amarillo*)
-Visuals of colors mixing

Teaching Activities:
-Visually show the idea of mixing together to create something new. Possibly use paint.
-Note that in the process one’s individual identity is lost in order to create the new. The new can’t be separated.
-Discuss that when people mix they influence each other. They may do so positively or negatively.
-Ask for examples of ways that friends or family influence one another.
(They may: learn new skills or information, act in a new way, etc.)
-Read story Pequeño azul y pequeño amarillo: It has several layers of meaning from a story of friendship to the study of color to feelings of difference. In the book, when Little Blue and Little Yellow are separated and then reunited, they hug each other and turn green. They are rejected and unrecognized. They cry blue and yellow tears until they reform separate shapes again.
-After the book ask students to discuss how this story might relate to immigrants who become part of a new neighborhood, school, and community.
-Discuss the melting pot perspective and its drawbacks of loss of individual identity.

Day 2: Salad Bowl/ Mosaic/ Orchestra Perspective

Materials:
-Song: Stand by Me or One Love from PlayingForChange.com

Teaching Activities:
-Pass out instruments from different parts of the world to a few students. As they are passed out, name the country of origin and demonstrate what it sounds like when played on its own. For example: maracas from Mexico, gong from China, den den drum from Japan, pan flute from Peru, etc.
-One-by-one ask the students to join in to a simple rhythm. Allow for a few free-style solos.
-Ask what students notice about how different the instruments sounded alone and together. Can you still hear the individual instruments?
-Call on a few students to play their instrument to see if it now sounds different.
-Ask what might be different about the way the instruments could be played after practicing together with different instruments. Might the musicians learn from each other?
-Introduce a second perspective of immigrants in society: the band or orchestra.
-Ask how this might be the same or different from the melting pot idea.
-Other examples of a similar perspective are: mosaic and salad bowl. How are these representative of immigrants and society?
-Emphasize that while the melting pot causes a loss of individual identity, the others create something new while maintaining unique traits and traditions.
-In closing, play the Playing for Change song with video. (They have a mission to connect the world through music. They have compiled many montages of musicians contributing from around the world.) Artist by artist instrument by instrument the songs are built. This shows an example of people bringing diverse talents together to do positive things.

Day 3: Collaboration and Identity

Materials:
-Examples of compound words with visuals
-Poster paper, markers

Teaching Activities:
-Review melting pot, orchestra, mosaic and salad bowl perspectives.
-Discuss the fact that compound words are made up of more than one word to form a new one.
-Create a new “compound word” to name your table group. The new name should maintain its members’ individuality, yet makes a new “compound word” with new meaning for the whole table. (This could be based on first or last names, nationalities of ancestors, or interests and traditions: Gina-Laura-Kim-Susan Table, German-African-Indian-English Table, or Tortilla-Naan-Pita-Challah Table)
Next the table groups work together to make a table crest visual that represents their collective identity. It could include information that they collected during their family interview about traditions that stem from their ancestors or talents and interests of their own. (They will have conducted an interview to collect information for the immigration unit about students’ immigrant or indigenous stories.) Students will brainstorm individually about what they’d like to include on the poster. They’ll then share their ideas looking for ways to represent commonalities and ways to highlight unique characteristics of each member.

-Groups share their work with the class.

-In conclusion ask how their table groups are like an orchestra, mosaic, or salad bowl. How did they find ways to work together? Is it easier to work with others when you have taken the time to get to know them?

-Close with a discussion of the importance of giving all people, immigrants and decedents of immigrants of long ago, a chance to be known and understood.