Ahimsa Center K-12 Lesson Plan

Title: Looking at social justice and environmental issues from multiple perspectives.

Lesson By: Lauren Petzold

Grade Level/Subject Areas: Grade 6 Language Arts

Duration of Lesson: One month two 60-minute class periods per week. (8 class periods)

California Common Core Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.6.6 Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.1 Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.1a Introduce claim(s) and organize the reasons and evidence clearly.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.1b Support claim(s) with clear reasons and relevant evidence, using credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.1c Use words, phrases, and clauses to clarify the relationships among claim(s) and reasons.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.1d Establish and maintain a formal style.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.1e Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the argument presented.

Lesson Abstract:

Students will discover the background of *Hind Swaraj* to learn how Gandhi approaches Indian independence from British rule by sharing his own opinions through answering common questions from fellow Indians. Students will then select a local social justice or environmental issue to research. Finally, students will create a project or presentation that will explore and discuss multiple perspectives regarding action to be taken and ultimately convey their own opinion on appropriate action.

Guiding Questions:

1. How does perspective affect one’s opinion?
2. What is social justice?
3. When it comes to social justice issues, is there a definite “right” answer?
4. How does Gandhi strengthen her persuasive writing by incorporating multiple perspectives?
Violations of social justice manifest in numerous forms in our world. In order to take action to support those in need, one must first be aware of the issue at hand. Next, a person must be willing to consider multiple perspectives relating to the perceived problem. Gandhi’s *Hind Swaraj* is an example of doing just this. Gandhi is certainly aware of the injustices being committed against the Indian people under British rule. However, he takes this awareness one step further by considering the questions that come up regarding ways in which independence, or swaraj, should be attained. Gandhi writes from two perspectives: that of the reader, who takes on the role of unsure Indian nationalists, and the role of the editor, which is Gandhi himself responding to the questions at he generates as the reader. In this way, Gandhi takes a comprehensive look at the issue and addresses each facet of the issue that he is advocating for.

*Hind Swaraj* is considered, “Gandhi’s groundbreaking work,” (Sethia, 58). Gandhi completed this work in only ten days while aboard a ship carrying from London to South Africa. Gandhi expresses his fundamental views of Indian nationalism and ideas for attaining freedom from British rule. He wants Indians to take pride in their heritage and restore their country to its root culture before British occupation. Gandhi explains that the greatest threat to this rejuvenation is the modern civilization that Britain has brought to India. However, Gandhi does not blame the British for altering the traditional Indian ways. Rather, he blames the Indian people saying, “We brought the English, and we keep them,” (Gandhi, 72). Indians have adopted the English ways and continue to support their stay in India through purchase of British goods. Gandhi asserts that rather than accept modern advances that do not necessarily help all people, true civilization is, “that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty,” (Gandhi 65).

As Gandhi begins to denounce modern civilization in order to help the Indian nation achieve swaraj, which so many Indian citizens see as improvement to society, he recognizes that there will be counter arguments. Thus, he enlightens his audience by addressing these issues through the use of dialogue to share multiple perspectives. One aspect that Gandhi addresses in *Hind Swaraj* is that of modern machinery as well as the mentality of work and labor. In the past, Gandhi asserts that people made good use of their bodies for constructive purposes, but due to advances in technology, “men will not need use of their hands and feet. They will press a button and will have their clothing by their side,” (Gandhi 35). These technological advances, while seemingly beneficial, will serve to make people lazy and dependent. Gandhi also reminisces about a time when people worked only as much as they needed to in order to meet basic needs. In this modern era, “Now, thousands of workmen meet together and for the sake of maintenance work in factories and mines. Their condition is worse than that of beasts,” (Gandhi 35). Instead of working to fulfill one’s own needs, people now work to meet the demands of the wealthy by operating new, modern machines. Gandhi demonstrates how the Indians will never achieve swaraj as long as they are working to meet these English demands.

Another controversial aspect of attaining swaraj is the introduction of modern railways. While the reader asserts that the railways have benefited India, Gandhi points out that they have served to spread bubonic plague and contribute to famine. While the reader then draws Gandhi’s attention to the speed of the railway, his reply is:

Good travels at a snail’s pace- it can, therefore, have little to do with the Railways. Those who want to do good are not selfish, they are not in a hurry, they know that to impregnate people with good requires a long time. But evil has wings. To build a
The reader counters this argument by telling Gandhi that the railways have instilled a new spirit of nationalism. Gandhi, however, does not agree and explains that India was a nation long before the railway and has the ability to continue in that manner. Gandhi explains that, in order to achieve swaraj, people must get to know one another by traveling to different areas and learning about others. In this way, Indians will be able to know and appreciate one another’s differences and similarities. By using this discourse, Gandhi again allows his audience to see multiple perspectives and responds to common concerns. He illuminates his own viewpoints by looking through others’ lenses.

Through Gandhi’s eyes, he also attributes India’s plight to lawyers and doctors. While the reader suggests that lawyers are helpful in settling disputes among citizens, Gandhi takes a different stance. He explains that lawyers take pleasure in the disagreements of others and often instigate the arguments for their own self-gain. Gandhi also claims that lawyers have worked together with the British to strengthen their rule. In a similar way, Gandhi addresses the reader’s positive outlook on doctors. Gandhi sees doctors as enablers rather than healers. He explains that, “I have indigestion, I go to the doctor, he gives medicine, I am cured, I overeat again, and I take his pills again. Had I not taken the pulls in the first instance, I would have suffered the punishment deserved by me, and I would not have overeaten again. The doctor intervened and helped me to indulge myself,” (Gandhi 61). In this illustration, doctors weaken the people by allowing them to indulge in poisonous habits. Thus, the people cannot advance towards freedom in this weakened state.

Gandhi’s method of using dialogue to express both sides of a pervasive issue is a key to persuasion. While he asserts his viewpoints, he also takes on the perspective of another role. In this way, he caters to the devil’s advocate. As people are reading his works, their own questions and concerns arises. One by one, Gandhi addresses these counterarguments and explains why his plan to attain swaraj is correct and just. He provides for a multi faceted argument rather than a tunneled perspective which would leave the readers more convicted in their own beliefs. In this way, Gandhi causes his audience to reflect upon their own thoughts and possibly see the enlightened nature of his view. This is the same route that must be taken when considering any social justice issue. It would not continue to be an “issue” if all were in agreement. So, people must consider all perspectives so that the argument can be made to effectively cause change.

Bibliography:


Teaching Activities:

Lesson Day 1:

1. State the lesson objective: Students will be able to analyze an issue from multiple perspectives and put research into writing.
2. Lead students through PowerPoint presentation regarding Gandhi and the history of *Hind Swaraj*.
3. Read Pages 5-28 of *Hind Swaraj*.
4. Whole group discussion around format and observations. How does Gandhi present both sides of the issue of India’s independence?

Lesson Day 2:

1. Review the lesson objective: Students will be able to analyze an issue from multiple perspectives and put research into writing.
2. In teacher made groups, Read Pages 34-61 of *Hind Swaraj*.
3. Each group will meet and discuss with another group.
4. Whole group discussion.

Lesson Day 3:

1. Review the lesson objective: Students will be able to analyze an issue from multiple perspectives and put research into writing.
2. Students select groups, and Read Pages 62-94 of *Hind Swaraj*.
3. As a whole group, create a “map” of the Reader’s questions and the editor’s responses. Focus on the various perspectives looking at these questions regarding India’s freedom.

Lesson Day 4:

1. Review the lesson objective: Students will be able to analyze an issue from multiple perspectives and put research into writing.
2. Teachers will read of *Hind Swaraj*.
3. Socratic Dialogue to respond to questions.

Lesson Day 5:

1. Review the lesson objective: Students will be able to analyze an issue from multiple perspectives and put research into writing.
2. Discuss social justice and what issues stem from infractions committed against social justice.
3. Students select a local social justice issue to advocate for action. In other words, should we promote or attempt to cease a certain action or legislation?
4. Begin to research both sides of the issue—both your position as well as the position against your own. There may also be other positions in between these two poles. Your topic would not be an “issue” if all parties agreed. It is multi-faceted.

5. Assignment: By Lesson 6 (next week) students will interview five different people regarding the issue that they have chosen to research.

Lesson Day 6:

1. Review the lesson objective: Students will be able to analyze an issue from multiple perspectives and put research into writing.
2. Students plan and draft their social justice issue essay to persuade their audience to take action for the cause that they have selected.

Lesson Day 7:

1. Review the lesson objective: Students will be able to analyze an issue from multiple perspectives and put research into writing.
2. Peer Editing Session: Students will meet in pairs. Each pair will swap essays, and they will read the other partner’s essay aloud to allow the author an opportunity to hear his or her own essay.
3. Work together to revise, edit, and clarify the draft.
4. Begin the published copy if time permits.

Lesson Day 8:

1. Review the lesson objective: Students will be able to analyze an issue from multiple perspectives and put research into writing.
2. Complete published copy.
3. If time remains, work to plan your presentation.

Lesson Day 9:

1. Students present their essays and presentations to classmates.

Materials Needed:

1. PowerPoint Presentation
2. Projector
3. Class set of *Hind Swaraj*
4. Butcher paper for conversation notes
5. Writing materials