Title: How do people become more human?

Lesson By:
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Grade Level/ Subject Areas:
7th Grade Accelerated Reading

Duration of Lesson:
50 minutes/day/ 5-7 days.

Nevada Content Standards:
7.1 Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
R-7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
R-8 Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
R-9 Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Lesson Abstract:
When students research historical figures and synthesize what they learn, often the end product fails to show an understanding of how core values influence these individuals and their impact on the world. This unit now aims to first study Gandhi and his life and then compare the values he lived by with those of the historical figure each student selects to research. By so doing, students will come to a greater understanding about nonviolence and its inherent ability to increase each individual’s humanity.

Guiding Questions:
What is required of someone to make a positive impact on the world?
How did Gandhi show his humanity in his everyday life?
Which figures in history have shown their humanity through their life’s work?
What values did Gandhi and other important historical figures have in common?

Content Essay:
Beyond the classroom, I also work with the Boy Scouts of America as an area director for summer camps. The scouting program seeks to instill ethical values within the hearts of our youth. The Scout Law states: A Scout is Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful, Friendly, Courteous, Kind, Obedient, Cheerful, Thrifty, Brave, Clean and Reverent. These are core values, and if applied in life can enable people to become more compassionate, nonviolent and begin to be self-reliant. Gandhi also lived by these values making his life a wonderful example for each of us to follow. He strove each day to live truthfully with compassion, exhibiting nonviolence and working for self-reliance. His dedication to service in the purest form was truly inspiring for all mankind.
“Nonviolence” points us to the positive values of civility, compassion, love, forgiveness, trust, truth and fearlessness. For Gandhi, the use of Satyagraha (firmness in a true cause) was a method to overcome social injustice through nonviolence and constructive work based on ethical values. (Sethia) Therefore, nonviolence begins at the level of the individual with trust, compassion, love, service and work or bread-labor. Swaraj or self-rule implies the ability of each individual to rule his or her self. With this in mind, self-control and responsibility is essential so everyone can attain Swaraj. Without each person embarking on his/her Ahimsa journey, there would be no real hope of Swaraj for everyone as a whole.

As we study the life of Gandhi, we come to understand what is required of our lives to make a positive impact on the world. That requirement in one word is Ahimsa. According to Gandhi, Ahimsa or nonviolence has two aspects. First, the ability to love the meanest of creations as oneself, and second, the rejection of violence and refraining from it, which may require self-suffering and self-control. (Sethia) In essence, Ahimsa is compassion, love and justice embodied in nonviolence.

Many great religious teachers and sages throughout history have taught their followers to love everyone including their enemies. This principle of “turning the other cheek” requires one to practice a high level of self-control. It is this self-control that is essential to nonviolence. Without self-control humans are reduced to the basest levels. Gandhi said, “The more we indulge our passions, the more unbridled they become.” (Sethia) Ordinary people become extraordinary when they learn to bridle their passions and exhibit self-control. For our students, this may seem difficult but it is a matter of approximating the goal. "When referring to his own struggles against the seemingly insoluble problem of South African apartheid, Bishop Tutu quoted a favorite riddle: 'How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time.'” (Colby and Damon)

While traveling from India to Africa, Gandhi was thrown off the train he was traveling on simply because of his race. He was a British trained Lawyer who had purchased a first class ticket. His education, correctness of speech, good manners, quality of character or even the fact he had purchased the ticket didn’t make a difference. He was called “cooie” and treated as if he were some type of disease. This treatment combined with the conditions of the Indian community and his study of Indian immigration in South Africa led Gandhi to immerse himself in community service with the end goal of social justice for all. (Sethia) Gandhi could have opted to become bitter, involving himself in any number of veneful activities. Instead, he selected to strike at the root of the problem through service. Through his humanity, he became more human.

Just as Gandhi, all people are members of the human race and have some level of humanity. The humanity of an individual is viewed in how each member treats his or her family, friends and enemies. What makes people more human is the ability to be humane with anyone good or evil. The more humane people think/talk/act – even with enemies – the more human each person becomes. It is this sentiment that this lesson/unit is striving to convey to students through their study of Gandhi and comparing his life to other historical figures. In the process of research, questioning, discussion and reflection the students begin to understand that truly inspiring historical figures who had positive impacts on our world, strived to live-up to some level of ethical values in their daily lives.
Responsibility and duty go hand-in-hand with Ahimsa. When thoughts are turned toward others, our duty is clear. When thoughts are centered on the self or “I”, our course of action becomes confused. Speaking of this, Gandhi wrote in 1947:

> Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to swaraj for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you fill find your doubts and yourself melting away. (Sethia)

In comparing other historical figures to Gandhi, one of the “measuring sticks” students should strive to apply is that of selfless service. Gandhi exemplified this and patiently encouraged people to serve each other. I am reminded of the golden rule ‘Do unto other’s as you would have them do unto you.’ This “rule” is stated similarly in all religious creeds. Truth is truth no matter who states it – I am sure Gandhi would agree.

Important to remember is the fact that most historical figures were not given the title “Mahatma” as Gandhi was. Most historical figures have good things they have done that have made positive impacts on the world. Gandhi is an exception. He worked tirelessly improving his strength of character through sacrifice and service. Few if any historical figures can live-up to Gandhi’s example. However, there will be similarities to some degree or another with any historical figure who was truly concerned about humanity.

Gandhi said, “I claim to be no more than an average man with less than average ability… I have not the shadow of a doubt that any man or woman can achieve what I have, if he or she would make the same effort and cultivate the same hope and faith.” (Sethia) This simple statement illustrates his belief that everyone can achieve personal swaraj and exhibit greater heights of humanity as we continue to trust, show compassion and love and actively engage in service and work.

Finally, speaking of liberty in the 1920’s Gandhi said, “…I want to tell you that the man who has not received education for freedom… cannot be taken to be a free man.” (Hind Swaraj) The work we do as teachers in educating our youth in the area of ethical values is the primary education they need in order to embark on their own roads to swaraj.

**Bibliography:**


**Teaching Activities/ Materials Needed:**

**Reserve a computer lab or lap-top cart for this activity.**

Working in pairs, review all of the following sites:
- [http://www.mkgandhi.org/biography/index.htm](http://www.mkgandhi.org/biography/index.htm)
- [http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/southasia/History/Gandhi/gandhi.html](http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/southasia/History/Gandhi/gandhi.html)
- [http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,988159,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,988159,00.html)

With Gandhi as your subject, complete the historical figure research questions with your partner.

Watch the film: “The Making of the Mahatma” 1996 – 144min. **This activity should take 2 or 3 class periods.**

**Small group Discussion:**

Split the class into 5-7 groups. Each group is given one of the following questions along with some markers and poster paper to illustrate their answer for the class. Students should have their research questions they completed with their partners with them. Also – the classroom computers will be available for any last-minute needs.

1. What were some things and/or events from Gandhi’s childhood that made an impact on his adult life?
2. What were some “core values” Gandhi lived by and how did they shape his associations with other people?
3. What are some important lessons you learned from the way Gandhi lived?
4. Who were his “enemies” and what values did they subscribe to?
5. What code of beliefs did Gandhi strive to live by? (Name and describe them.)
6. Did Gandhi have any mentors? Who were they and how did they influence him?
7. Why do people think of Gandhi as a hero? (Describe his “hero” qualities.)

**Table-top Blog:**

- Students leave their poster paper on the desks in their groups.
- Each student has a marker to write with.
- Absolutely NO talking… must be silent.
- Students rotate with their groups to other tables, making comments on the other posters with their markers. (2 minutes/rotation)
- When they arrive back to their own table, they read the comments of others. (2min)
- Debrief… students can now talk & discuss their feelings.

**Class discussion:**

How was the film different from the research you did?
Was the film or the research more valuable to you?
What makes a historical figure worth-while to research? 
Are there values that make us more human?

**Need to schedule a day at the School Library for this activity.**

Choose a historical figure to research (other than Gandhi). Our library has over 900 biographies!

You CAN find a GREAT historical figure to research!

You MUST get your historical figure approved through the teacher. :o)

*Some sites can be found at:*
http://www.delicious.com/slippery_rock/historicalfigures

Use the following 2 documents for your research – Historical Figure Research questions – AND – basic citation/bibliography guidelines.

HISTORICAL FIGURE RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

  Synthesizing is like moving puzzle pieces about until a picture emerges. Instead of cardboard pieces, you are moving ideas and facts.
  Once you have collected many good pieces of information about your person, the next step is to combine those pieces in such a way as to cast light upon the following questions.

**Questions:**

1. In what ways was the life remarkable/admirable?
2. In what ways was the life despicable?
3. To what extent was nonviolence a part of their life?
4. How did your character exhibit the value of compassion?
6. What was his/her childhood like and who influenced him/her for good or bad?
7. What human qualities were most influential in shaping the way this person lived and influenced his or her times?
8. Which quality or character trait proved most troubling and difficult?
9. Which quality or character trait was most beneficial?
10. Did this person make any major mistakes or bad decisions? If so, what were they and how would you have chosen and acted differently if you were in their shoes?
11. What are the two or three most important lessons you or any other young person might learn from the way this person lived?
12. Some people say you can judge the quality of a person’s life by the enemies they make. Do you think this is true of your person’s life? Explain why or why not.
13. An older person or mentor is often very important in shaping the lives of gifted people by providing guidance and encouragement. To what extent was this true of your person? Explain.
14. Many people act out of a “code” or a set of beliefs, which dictate choices. It may be religion or politics or a personal philosophy. To what extent did your person act by a code or act independently of any set of beliefs? Were there times when the code was challenged and impossible to follow?
15. What do you think it means to be a hero? Was your person a “hero?” Why? Why not? How is a hero different from a celebrity?

**Your assignment:**
1. When you have fully answered (in writing) all of the questions above, turn them in for credit. ***(2 – 5 sentences per question for full credit.)***
2. Show your note cards you have been taking as you have read & studied about your person.
3. Turn in a bibliography of your sources.

**BASIC BIBLIOGRAPHY-CITATION HELP:**
A bibliography is a list, either indicative or comprehensive, of writings sharing a common factor: this may be a topic, a language, a period, or some other theme. One particular instance of this is the list of sources used or considered in preparing a work, sometimes called a reference list.

Citation formats vary, but an entry for a book in a bibliography usually contains the following information:
- author(s)
- title
- publisher
- date of publication

An entry for a journal or periodical article usually contains:
- author(s)
- article title
- journal title
- volume
- pages
- date of publication

An entry for a web page usually contains:
- author(s)
- article title
- site name
- site address (http://www.xxxxxx)

*** Be sure to create a 3X5 citation card for each of your sources with the appropriate information. That way, you can sort your citation cards alphabetically, then easily write up your bibliography page.

*The “research paper” will be completed in each student’s English class – complete with a “bio bag” to be used at the Living Museum Night.
Reading Class Essay:
How does your character’s life compare to Gandhi’s life?
Were they nonviolent? How?
Did they show compassion for their fellow men? How?
In what way(s) was your character self-reliant?

SPEECH WRITING PPT.
*Show the power point on speech writing.
Students write basic guidelines for writing a 1 minute – first person – speech. They will be giving their speeches to each other in small groups, then to the class, then at the living museum. This way we will be able to practice, polish, and feel confident in front of our peers and parents!

Culminating Activity:
LIVING MUSEUM NIGHT
Students dress as if they are the character they studied. As parents stop at their station in the Gym, they “come to life” and give their 1 – minute speech.