Title: The Value of the Talisman

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K-12 ESOL & Elementary Education

Grade Level/ Subject Areas: K-12

Duration of Lesson:
Understanding Gandhi- 1 week/45 mins/day
Analyze Talisman-3 days/ 60 mins/day
Choose topic, research, and present 3 weeks/45-60 mins/day

Content Standards:
CCR: W.9-10.7 & W.11-12.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.8 Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.8 Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.8 Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text
selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.

Lesson Abstract:
Students will learn about the significance of the Talisman by using Gandhi’s note. Students will analyze the primary resource through guided discussions. Students will demonstrate their understanding by becoming an advocate for a local or global concern, of their choice, and reflecting from the elements learned in the Talisman throughout their journey.

Guiding Questions:
What’s the significance of the Talisman to you and what do you think it is for others? How can the Talisman guide you in making decisions?

Content Essay:

Who was Gandhi?
Most people can recognize the name of Gandhi and generalize his contributions as peaceful ways of life. He grew up in a family being the last son of two parents. He observed and learned from his experiences that shaped who he became throughout his life. He learned from his father that truth and generosity were attributes to be respected but also commitment and mindfulness were just as important learned from his mother (Sethia 11). However, neither parents were perfect nor was Gandhi.

In his early years, he learned the combination of values instilled in him from both his parents of truth and service only after making poor choices then feeling the deep regret of his actions. In particular, a time that he most notably regretted was the time he lied to his mother about not eating meat (Sethia 13). He writes: “I was trembling as I handed the confession to my father” (SWMG-V1:38-39) and expressed the amount of guilt he felt. His father reacts by tearing up and throwing the letter away.

The father demonstrated the power of forgiveness and unconditional love. He realized being honest and admitting you are wrong redeems yourself only if one agrees not to do it again. The process of Gandhi learning powerful and life-long lessons happened during his formative years (Sethia 22). From the lessons, he developed a new way of thinking that was simply to live thoughtfully through nonviolence. Gandhi acknowledges this experience being his first life lesson in ahimsa.

After his many experiences during his formative years in Western and Indian customs, he was able to realize what he wanted. He started his ideas of developing into the man we know him as today throughout his transformative years. In 1901, he came to a point in his life of “self-realization” (Sethia 37). Self-realization is the moment a person realizes their purpose in life and does everything they can to nobly fulfill their duty through service. Also, having the courage and stamina to stay on track to carry the purpose in a meaningful way were important characteristics of self-realization.

What was his philosophy of ahimsa?
The next step towards ahimsa and Gandhi’s transformation process is the way in which you serve the people and the cause. He used “truth and nonviolence to devise a living of philosophy
of satyagraha for resisting oppression and injustice” (Sethia 57). He believed that one must create a plan that accounts for both truth and nonviolence because there will be resistance. To overcome resistance in the most peaceful way is to use knowledge and critical thoughts. By doing so, you foresee possible obstacles and develop other means of nonviolence terms. The journey of transformation is a long journey for most. Self-realization can be attained with constant and deliberate reflection.

What has he left for us?

Gandhi after many years of his self-realization leaves everyone something very special called the Talisman:

“427. A NOTE
August 1947
I will give you a talisman. 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 the weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself of the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it? Will it store 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 will find your doubts and yourself melting away. “
M.K. Gandhi

He gives us many powerful messages in this one little note.

Before we analyze the Talisman, let’s first just discuss what is a talisman. For many, a talisman is an object with magical signs and believed to confer on its bearer supernatural powers or protection (Definition 1975). One example is giving a child a stuffed teddy before surgery. The stuffed teddy serves as the “talisman” and if you tell the child to whisper his worries into his stuffed pal’s ear then his worries will disappear.

Unlike the teddy bear, Gandhi gives us his powerful words in the note to critically think about and hold on to while making decisions for the greater good (Davy 2). He wrote this after his transformation and during a time when people of power needed to hear and understand the implications before they made decisions that would affect millions of people. Most people believe that if they rationalize their decision they are thinking about the pros and cons of an issue.

However, the problem with rationalization is the room for bias, as seen by politicians in New Delhi (Davy 2). Gandhi sees that rationalization is harmful when is goes against the greater good. For example, the Salt tax was imposed because Britain rationalized to pay for goods, the Indians would pay a small fee on the salt. The tax was not fair because salt is vital to all human life. The tax was not for the greater good. The tax was more of a way for the politicians to avoid increasing their own taxes.

Why should the study of the Talisman be in instruction?

The study of the Talisman is crucial to teach colleagues and students because of the message. The Talisman incorporates many ideas people encounter in their everyday life. The discussions formed from studying the Talisman will
help engage students to invest in what they are learning. The study of meaningful words will help students to connect ideas and think before making decisions. Analyzing this type of text will not only each them the value of critical thinking, but the follow-up activity will enable them to apply what they learned.

**Bibliography:**


**Teaching Activities**

**Understanding Gandhi- 1 week/45 mins/day**

Provide authentic learning experience through quotes, primary resources, and video clips to provide background information to students. Once they have an understanding of Gandhi, we will begin to learn about the Talisman.

**Analyze Talisman-3days/ 60mins/day**

Read and discuss the Talisman through free writes, think pair shares, and having the student make their own connections.

**Choose topic, research, and present 3 weeks/45-60mins/day**

Once students understand Gandhi and the significance of the Talisman, we will begin to brainstorm issues they think should be addressed. They will choose their own topic and carry out research. Once they research, they will become invested into their cause and want to take action. They will provide evidence to show the steps they have taken to address the issue. They can choose to spread awareness, write letters to appropriate people, etc. The goal is for the students to do action research and help make a difference.

**Materials Needed**

Copy of the Talisman
Gandhi PowerPoint/video clips/quotes
Laptops