Title of Lesson: A Journey to Paradigm Shifts Guided Through the Lives of Gandhi and King

Guided Through the Lives of Gandhi and King

Lesson By: Dina Piazza-Ramsey

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<th>Grade Level/ Subject Areas:</th>
<th>Class Size:</th>
<th>Time/Duration of Lesson:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sixth Grade</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Year long</td>
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Guiding Questions:
- How can we make paradigm shifts from being reactive to proactive that will lead us to achieving an automatic, nonviolent response when faced with controversy?
- How does a paradigm of nonviolence help to achieve synergy with self and others?
- How could we contribute to changing the world’s paradigm to nonviolence by simply changing our own?

Lesson Abstract: The students will be read and learn The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens. Through this study the students will learn what paradigms are, and how to distinguish whether the paradigms they have established in their lives are positive or negative. Once they have established a need for change we will focus on one specific principle, Habit #1 Be Proactive. This habit speaks to the theory of nonviolence that is exemplified through the stories of Gandhi and King’s life journeys.

Lesson Content:
The students will be read and learn The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens. The 7 Habits are: Habit 1-Be Proactive, Habit 2-Begin with the End in Mind, Habit 3-Put First Things First, Habit 4-Think Win-Win, Habit 5-Seek First to Understand Then to be Understood, Habit 6- Synergize, and Habit 7-Sharpen the Saw. (Covey, 2005) Through this study the students will learn what paradigms are, and how to distinguish whether the paradigms they have established in their lives are positive or negative. Once they have established a need for change we will focus on one specific principle that is implicitly modeled through the stories of Gandhi and King’s life journeys.

Habit #1 is Be Proactive. The students will study the life journey of Gandhi and King as models of human beings whose life journey’s modeled such paradigm shifts. Choosing to be nonviolent instead of violent is synonymous with being proactive rather then reactive. This is an important paradigm shift to make for the sake of humanity. Often times, children and adults react to situations negatively or violently and justify it by claiming that they are a product of their circumstances. In actuality, we are all a product of our choices. Therefore, being proactive about the choices we make can positively influence our life’s journey.

Mohandas Gandhi is considered an icon of peace and restraint. Through the study of his life it is revealed that Gandhi is equally as human as the anybody else and also had to take his own life journey to learn and practice non violent behavior. Gandhi was born on October 2, 1869, into a wealthy family in Porbandar, India. His father, Karamchand Gandhi, had no formal education, but was a learner of life. Karamchand earned a reputation for being political, yet incorruptible and achieved a position as a prime minister serving the many little areas.
surrounding Porbandar. Gandhi’s mother, Putlibai, was a young, devoutly, religious, Hindu girl. She attended temple services daily and often took part in fasting. Usually Putlibai would eat only one meal a day and one year chose to fast every other day. Clearly, Gandhi’s political interest and spiritual devotion were modeled after his parents.

As a child, Gandhi was a mediocre student who had a hard time memorizing his multiplication facts. He said about himself, “My intellect must have been sluggish, and my memory raw.” (Fischer, p. 9). Despite his academic struggles Gandhi prided himself on his punctuality. He was a painfully shy boy who had made books and studies his companions. Gandhi had low self-esteem and feared rejection and being made fun of. In fact he himself said, “I was even afraid lest anyone poke fun at me.” (Fischer, p. 10). Gandhi was not always the peaceful leader we now know him to be. As young as 12 years old Gandhi exhibited characteristics of a follower when he started smoking cigarettes and stealing money in order to feel a sense of belonging with other boys his age. Actually, Gandhi had a flair for drama and in an effort to be free of parental control he and a relative made a suicide pact. They had discovered that the seeds of a jungle plant, dhatura, were poisonous. With the seeds in their pockets they went to the shrine intending to swallow them and die in the temple. Fortunately, they were unable to muster enough courage to swallow all of the seeds. To save face, both boys swallowed two or three seeds each and returned home to the comfort and rule of their parents. It was experiences such as these that in Gandhi’s own retrospective thoughts, led him to seek a more peaceful way of living and existing.

Martin Luther King Jr. was born January 15, 1929 in Atlanta, Georgia. His father, Martin Luther King Sr., was a pastor at Ebenezer Baptist Church and earned a college degree from Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. Martin Luther King Jr. describes his father as, “Strong in his will and in his body. He has a dynamic personality…commands attention…very strong and self-confident.” (Carson, p. 4). King says that his father was never fearful of the white people and their hateful expressions. If white people were insulting to Martin Luther King Sr. he had no problem making it clear that he did not appreciate the insults. Never one to back down from a fight his father learned to strike back at injustice at an early age. However, his mother, Alberta Williams King was the ying to her husband’s yang. She was the daughter of a preacher, devoutly religious, college educated, and soft spoken. Although Alberta grew up in what would be considered a “middle class” household she never adjusted to or was accepting of segregation. As a mother she struggled with explaining segregation to her children. King says about his mother, “She taught me that I should feel a sense of ‘somebodiness’ but that on the other hand I had to go out and face a system that stared me in the face every day saying you are ‘less than,’ you are ‘not equal to.’ (Carson, p.3). His mother had tried to explain why even though slavery had ended with the Civil War there still existed a system of segregation. Black people did not have the same rights as white people, but it was her goal and role as a mother to educate Martin Jr and his siblings in hopes that they would never feel inferior to anyone.

Inferiority did not seem to be the sentiment felt either by Gandhi nor King as they were consistently and continually discriminated against. The natural human reaction would be to feel inferiority and anger. It is clear that throughout their lives each of these men took the opportunity to create paradigm shifts through focusing on positive practices and trying to see situations through the eyes of their assailant. Taking each experience and applying Habit #5,
Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood was admirably their motto and catalyst shifting the natural paradigm of violent retaliation.

“Non Violence requires restraint on the instinct of violence.” (Parel, lecture 7/09) This choice of being Proactive and coming from a place of understanding rather than Reactive with physical or verbal violence (an-eye-for-an-eye-mentality), is modeled again and again. Gandhi referred to Satyagraha as the force that guided him. “Satya means truth, the equivalent of love, and both are attributes of the soul; agraha is firmness of force. “Satyagraha” is therefore translated Soul Force. Satyagraha then reverses the an-eye-for-an-eye-mentality (Fischer, p. 35). Gandhi best demonstrates this proactive not reactive, satyagraha when, as a lawyer, he was on his way to South Africa to represent a client. Gandhi’s client had purchased a coach class ticket on the train for his travel from India to South Africa. Unfortunately, when Gandhi was observed by the train workers to be in a section of the train where Indians and Blacks were not allowed due to segregation he was brutally thrown off of the train. He had been directed to go to the back of the train where all of the other “undesirables” were to travel. Gandhi held a valid ticket for travel in the coach class section, he was a professional, well dressed and respectful yet due to his skin color was not afforded the dignity he deserved. Rather than acquiescing to the segregated laws and going to the back of the train with a sense of humiliation and degradation Gandhi picked himself up, dusted his pants off, and without retaliating, and fighting waited for the next train to come. Make no mistake, Gandhi was not at peace with this and as a human who had just been humiliated he had to focus on the values of ahimsa and satyagraha in order to plan his next move. Because Gandhi had to get to his destination in order to complete his work he decided that he would abide by the current laws and systems that existed in South Africa. He waited for the next train to get to the station and then obediently took a seat in the section reserved for “blacks.” Once he had completed his assignment he would work on changing the unjust laws of segregation for the next twenty some years. 

Similarly, Martin Luther King Jr., who had admired and studied Gandhi and his principles of ahimsa and satyagraha, imparted these principles to the many people who followed his lead to fight segregation in America. Like Gandhi, this did not come naturally to King. From the time King was only six years old and he first realized the implications of racism because his best friend, who was white, was no longer allowed to play with him. King was determined to hate every white person from this point on, but his parents continually reminded him that as a Christian he should not hate the white man. “How could I love a race of people who hated me?” (Carson, p. 6) This was the paradigm shift that King was faced with making. This was his life’s journey to eventually learn about and practice the Gandhian principles. This opportunity is clearly modeled in The Sit-In Movement that Dr. King helped to organize. Segregation was an unacceptable practice and many black and white people, mostly college students, came together to force the integration of blacks at lunch counters in the South. He and his colleagues knew that the sit-ins would trigger hateful acts and words directed at the protesters from white people who were not ready for such a change. In an effort to be proactive not reactive the protesters completed intense trainings to prepare them for the abuse they would surely be subjected to. These trainings taught the protesters nonviolent action. They learned not to react to physical or verbal attacks, to stay focused, and to represent their plight with dignity. Again, the principles of ahimsa and satyagraha being channeled. The Sit-In protests did entice cruelty and violence from the white racists, but they were executed successfully
because the participants were educated, dedicated, and principle based.

These stories are used to offer proof that even those revered as most Holy have had to undergo serious and sincere paradigm shifts in their lives.

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<th>California State Content Standards: Historical Interpretation</th>
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<td>Students understand and distinguish cause, effect, sequence, and correlation in historical events, including the long-and short-term causal relations.</td>
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**Materials Needed:** Each student will need a copy of *7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*

**Suggested Teaching Activities:**

Throughout the year the students will read the *7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*. The students will learn the definition of a paradigm. They will then identify paradigms that have established in their lives both positive and negative. Once the negative paradigms are clear to each student they will chose one to focus on. S.M.A.R.T. goals will be written to guide and organize the student for their journey to creating positive paradigms.

The students will view the digital short story, “Paradigm Shifts a Journey to Nonviolence.”

To learn Habit #1 Be Proactive the students will learn to “Push the pause button” before they react to situations. In order to further exemplify the Habit #1, stories of Gandhi and King will be read and shared with the students to their theories of Nonviolence as opposed to violence.

The students will learn the vocabulary of Ahimsa and Satyagraha. They will look to find examples in their daily lives. We will collect these examples on a bulletin board.

The students will learn deep breathing and focused meditation in order to center their thoughts and behavior.

The whole class, in small collaborative work groups, will read the local newspaper weekly looking to identify stories related to Nonviolent behaviors or concepts and stories related to Violent behaviors and concepts. The students will graph the percentage of each on a classroom bulletin board (math) in order to have a clear visual of which behaviors are executed and glamorized the most. As the students look for examples of nonviolent reactions within the community we will write either an article for, or a letter to, the editor depicting the ahimsa or satyagraha witnessed. The hope would be that if people are exposed to the ideas of nonviolent reactions, being proactive, ahimsa or satyagraha and each of these behaviors is recognized and celebrated, more people will catch on to the journey and join the march, so to speak.

By year end the students will make their own digital short story about their individual journey to nonviolence.
Bibliography:


Covey, Stephen. *7 Habits of Highly Effective People.* China: Franklin Covey, 2005.


