Title of Lesson: Journey to Synergy on the path of Gandhi and King

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<th>Grade Level/ Subject Areas:</th>
<th>Class Size: 34</th>
<th>Time/Duration of Lesson: Year Long</th>
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Guiding Questions:
- What is synergy and why do we need it?
- How can we achieve synergy?
- What are examples of synergy from Gandhi and King’s lives?

Lesson Abstract: The students will be read and learn *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*. Through this study the students will learn what synergy is and why it is an important principle to base their decisions on. Examples of how Gandhi’s Salt March and King’s Sit-Ins achieved synergy by implo ring nonviolent resistance and gaining feelings of pride empowerment. Habit #6 is Synergize. This habit values and celebrates differences. People are often threatened by differences of opinion, perspective, or backgrounds of other groups. By seeking out, identifying, and recognizing these differences allows individual or groups of people to create a common purpose that will benefit all parties involved.

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 synergy is and why it is an important principle to base their decisions on Habit #6-Synergize, the habit of creative cooperation. Gandhi and King modeled synergy through promoting and organizing nonviolent protests. What humans can achieve by working cooperatively without consideration to race, color, creed, gender, sexual preference, etc...can produce results that no one person could imagine or predict. Always based on the principles of Ahimsa; meaning nonviolence, and satyagraha; meaning soul force, Gandhi and King demonstrated the power of synergy in the many nonviolent protests that they organized.

Gandhi’s Salt March is a clear depiction of synergy. British rule exploited the Indians and kept them the impoverished majority. Gandhi was incensed with the British tax system that had the gall to tax the salt. The poor people, who slaved and sweat in the hot, sunny, fields daily, needed salt in their diet more than the wealthy people who did not manually labor. Yet the British system taxed the salt so heavily that it equated to three days wages annually. To add insult to the salt tax the British government also made it illegal to bring in or barter for salt from outside India. Due to this injustice, Gandhi wrote letters to the British Prime Minister outlining the discrepancy in the administrative salaries of government officials and the peasants and questioning why the most poor of the country should bear the burden of a tax on such a necessity as salt. Gandhi suggested that this tax be lifted, since the leaders of the British Administration could easily afford, themselves to cover this unnecessary tax. Gandhi did
explain that if they did not respond and agree to negotiate with him on behalf of the poor Indians he would have to organize a nonviolent protest. Synergy was the desired goal. However, you do need at least two willing parties in order to reach synergistic solutions. This protest would take the form of civil disobedience. “But, if you cannot see your way to deal with these evils and my letter makes no appeal to your heart, on the eleventh day of this month I shall proceed with such co-workers of the Ashram (a communal way of living based on the principles of ahimsa and satyagraha) as I can take, to disregard the provisions of the Salt Laws….It is, I know, open to you to frustrate my design by arresting me. I hope that there will be tens of thousands ready, in a disciplined manner, to take up the work after me.” (Fischer, p. 97)

Gandhi received no reply or even acknowledgement of receiving the letter. As the eleventh of March neared the excitement bubbled around India waiting to see what Gandhi would do. His colleagues had been trained in principles of nonviolence at the Ashram. So, on March 11 Gandhi, now sixty-one years old, and seventy-eight male members of the ashram began marching south. They continued to march for twenty-four days. Villagers would come out as the march passed their areas and many of them left behind work and families to take up with Gandhi and his plight for justice to be achieved through nonviolent protest. They were done passively sitting back and being abused. This two hundred forty-one mile journey provided them the opportunity to synergize as a people of common culture in an effort to bring about change.

By April 5, as the group approached the sea they had grown from a small cluster of seventy-eight had grown to a powerfully, non-violent army of several thousand. The next morning Gandhi followed through on his vow to be an advocate of the impoverished and help to change the laws by walking to the water’s end and picked up a lump of salt. In essence, breaking the law because he had now stolen salt from the British by not directly purchasing salt and paying taxes on it. Following suit, the impoverished Indians who had completed this part of the journey with Gandhi, started peacefully protesting by collecting salt illegally from the ocean. The police began making mass arrests. The synergy in this movement occurs because not only was the Salt Tax lifted, but this movement provided pride and a feeling of power to the Indian people who had felt oppressed. Many political figures were arrested and many Indians were beaten and killed following the Salt March which continued to demonstrate the synergy of people from varied backgrounds cooperating in a creative way to improve society in ways that they could not have imagined. They continued with their vow of ahimsa (nonviolent) protests because they were finally making progress and they knew that if they implored violence at any point Gandhi would pull his support.

Similarly, Martin Luther King Jr. who as a preacher had been leading his followers to gain equal rights for all through his Christian based principles. Along with his own vision, King imparted the principles of ahimsa and satyagraha to the many people who followed his lead to fight segregation in America. After returning from a trip to India Dr. King’s movement for equality achieved more synergy in a new way as the nonviolent, sit-in, protests were organized and executed. In 1960, across the South a movement of black college students energized campuses and communities by raising awareness and refusing to accept the unjust Jim Crow laws that were in effect and imposed racial segregation. Because it was widely known that
King had honed his theory of nonviolent resistance from Gandhian principles, Martin Luther
King Jr., was asked to guide the already assembled teams of leaders and black college students
along with some of their white friends.

The first step for this soon to be synergistic movement was to train the students and community
members on the theories of ahimsa, nonviolence. These students would be entering and
occupying lunch counters that were for white patrons only and respectfully sit on stools and
expect to be served. In order to successfully complete a nonviolent protest the students were
trained to endure severe physical and verbal abuse that was sure to ensue from their white
oppressors. In addition, it was a requirement that the protesters be dressed in their Sunday best
dress clothes to portray the dignity they deserved. (Carson, lecture July, 2009) Dr. King urged,
“Students to continue the struggle on the highest level of dignity. They had rightly chosen to
follow the path of nonviolence. Our ultimate aim was not to defeat or humiliate the white man
but to remind him that segregation is wrong. We protested with the ultimate aim of being
reconciled with our white brothers.” (Carson, p. 139). All participants heeded the words and
sentiments of Dr. King. The students successfully executed the lunch counter sit-ins, the white
people closed down the lunch counters because they preferred to loose money rather than serve
black people, and this continued over a period of several weeks. The well dressed, dignified
college students showed up every week, with their college books in hand so as not to waste any
educable time sitting at the counters without being served. This indeed infuriated the whites
and as predicted the students did endure beatings and being taken to jail. The movement chose
not to accept the option of bail, instead they continued peacefully resisting. These sit-ins were
synergistic because they not only brought awareness to the unjust laws, but the unexpected
outcome of developing pride, power and dignity in an entire nation of black students.

Gandhi and King understood that in order to achieve synergy one must be willing to search for
a solution that has not yet been imagined. Correspondingly, when people from different
races, colors, creeds, or preferences work together with synergy powerful, unimagined results
can occur. In addition, and most importantly, understanding the opponent’s viewpoint and
remaining open to discussion and new learning is essential. The Salt March and The Sit-Ins
both achieved such criteria. These protests could be considered victorious on a very generic
level, because surface rights were granted to those being oppressed. Unfortunately, these
“victories” would be considered more of a negative peace. It appears that all rights have been
restored but they are in no way considered equal by the oppressors. Consequently, negative
peace can be overcome by bringing together and educating groups that are oppressed and
groups that do oppress in order to achieve a sense of empathy, pride and power. Discussions
and work between the varied groups will propel people to the next purposeful action and then
synergy has occurred.

California State Content Standards: Historical Interpretation

Students understand and distinguish cause, effect, sequence, and correlation in historical events,
including the long-and short-term causal relations.

Materials Needed: Each student will need a copy of 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens.
Bibliography:


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


