TITLE: How would Mr. Gandhi have behaved at the Hullabaloo?

Name, School Affiliation, Location: Cynthia Suttles, Kolter Elementary School, Houston, Texas

Grade Level / Subject Area(s): Grades K-2 English Language Arts and Reading; Grades K-2 Health Education

Duration of Lesson: 45 minutes, 2 lessons

Relevant Texas State / National Standards:

110.13. English Language Arts and reading, Grade K-2

(8) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Poetry. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of poetry and evidence from text to support their understanding.

(9) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Fiction. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of fiction and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to:

A) Describe the plot (problem and solution) and retell a story’s beginning, middle, and end with attention to the sequence of events; and

Lesson Abstract:

In this lesson, students will be read the essay about Mohandas Gandhi’s response to the unfair treatment of untouchables in Indian society. After a discussion session and listing descriptive words about Gandhi’s behavior on the board, they will be introduced to the story: Crocodile and Ghost Bat have a Hullabaloo. The students will compare Gandhi’s behavior and actions in the face of intolerance towards the untouchables to the intolerant behaviors of the animals and others at the hullabaloo.

Guiding Questions:

1. How did Gandhi feel about people being intolerant of others?

2. What is the meaning of nonviolence? What nonviolent actions did Gandhi take to stop the intolerant treatment of the untouchables?

3. How do you think Mr. Gandhi would behave in other situations where intolerant behavior is present?
Content Essay:

Mohandas Gandhi stood for tolerance of all creeds and religions. His life was guided by a desire to achieve truthfulness in thought, word and deed. The highest virtue, Ahimsa (nonviolence), was the foundation of his life’s work. The meaning of nonviolence is not only the absence of violence, but also showing loving concern for all forms of life. Because of his respect for all forms of life, Gandhi did not eat food or wear clothes that were made from living things. Nonviolence teaches us that we can only find “truth” for ourselves through sincere tolerance and genuine concern for others.

Born on October 2, 1869, Mahatma Gandhi was the youngest of six children. His family was considered fairly well-to-do and his father, Karamchand, was the diwan (prime minister) of their princely state. His mother, Putlibai, was very religious and committed to self discipline and restraint.

Gandhi’s early school years were spent in India. After graduating from High School, he decided to go to England to study law. He arrived in England at the age of 18 and felt a sense of isolation almost immediately because of the different speech patterns being spoken. However, things gradually improved. He spent most of his time studying many different religious texts but, he also took advantage of many of the different cultural and intellectual experiences that London had to offer. He made sure that he never broke the vows he had made to his mother before leaving India: that he would not indulge in wine, women and meat.

Gandhi returned to India to begin his law career in 1891. He found little career success there, so he accepted a position as a legal counsel in South Africa in 1893. Upon his arrival, he almost immediately became a victim of racial hatred, verbal abuse and physical assaults. It is important to note that it was not the unfair treatment that Gandhi received in South Africa that initiated the wondrous change he was to bring to society; but how he chose to react to the treatment he received. While this was the first time that Gandhi himself had personally experienced intolerance and lack of empathy because he was different, it was not the first time he had viewed it up close.

Gandhi was raised in a household that was tolerant of many different religions practiced in India. However, tolerance and empathy was not extended to servants in their home who were untouchables. Even as a child Gandhi, was conflicted by the treatment of the untouchables in his society. In, Gandhi: Pioneer of Nonviolent Social Change, Tara Sethia writes,

Although he adored his mother, Gandhi challenged her when she asked him not to play with Uka, the untouchable boy who cleaned the latrines in
the Gandhi house. She would make him take a bath if she found out that he had touched an untouchable. (Pg. 167)

In Indian society, untouchables were born into institutionalized inequality. They performed lowly services that no other social group would perform. They worked in service occupations that required them to clean up for others and dealt with human wastes or any matter that was considered unclean. The tasks they performed were considered polluting and they, as people, were considered to also be polluted. The untouchables had no rights in society and were segregated from other groups. They were prohibited from entering Hindu Temples or drawing water from the same wells as high caste Hindus.

Gandhi’s response to the lack of tolerance and empathy aimed at untouchables in Indian society was to stand up and denounce all unfair treatment of them. “None can be born untouchable, as all are sparks of one and the same Fire.” (from Yeravda Mandir, p. 31) Gandhi not only exhibited tolerance and empathy in his thoughts and words but also in his actions. In Gandhi: Pioneer of Nonviolent Social change, Tara Sethia writes:

In South Africa, lodging an untouchable client in his house led him to conflict with his wife. Later, admitting an untouchable couple into the Sabarmati ashram not only caused conflict with some of the ashram residents and relatives, but also led to the suspension of funding for the ashram. One morning, he shocked the people in the ashram when he announced he was adopting Lakshmi, an untouchable child, as his daughter. Since the 1920s, removal of untouchability and uplift of the untouchables—whom Gandhi called “Harijans” (children of god)—became one of his life missions.

Gandhi wrote:

This observance is not fulfilled merely by making friends with ‘untouchables’, but by loving all life as our own selves. Removal of untouchability means love for and service of the whole world. (From Yeravda Mandir, p. 33).

In 1932, Gandhi initiated a nonviolent resistance campaign in protest of the British government’s intent to create a separate electorate for untouchables. The British government viewed this as a positive step for the untouchables, Gandhi did not. The legal creation of a “separate but somewhat equal” electorate for the depressed classes was not in keeping with Gandhi’s conception of “swaraj” (self rule, self government, freedom) for India. If “swaraj” was to be possible for India, he must stand for justice and fair treatment of all Indians. In keeping with his policy of transparency in his actions, he notified the British prime minister that he was prepared to begin a “fast unto death” on September 20, 1932. Mohandas Gandhi willingly placed his life on the line to reform Hinduism by seeking the
abolishment of untouchability. He wanted to remove the lack of tolerance and empathy for *untouchables* from the hearts and minds of Indian society.

The people of India were very concerned for Gandhi’s life, prominent Hindu’s immediately gathered with British authorities to begin talks to extend more rights and equality to the *untouchables*. On the sixth day of the fast an agreement was reached and Gandhi ended his fast. Not only had he initiated legal changes that bettered the standings of *untouchables*, his nonviolent actions did seem to make people more tolerant and empathetic. Tara Sethia writes in *Gandhi: Pioneer of Nonviolent Social Change*:

> Temples were opened to Harijans in many cities including Allahabad, Benares, Bombay and Calcutta. In other places, temple discrimination was stopped. In Delhi, the capital of the country, Hindus and Harijans visibly mixed with one another on the streets. At the Benares Hindu University, the university officials dined with street cleaners, cobbblers, and scavengers. Village headmen allowed Harijans to use water from the common village wells. In villages and towns throughout India thousands of organizations adopted resolutions to end discrimination against the Harijans.

Mohandas Gandhi maintained that all human beings are open and accepting of moral persuasion. Creating the space to teach tolerance and empathy within our daily curriculum helps to build a strong sense of caring and community in our schools.

**Bibliography:**


**Select Web sites**

Teaching Activities:

Lesson 1

1. Read the above essay about Mohandas Gandhi to the class.
2. Discuss as a class, how the untouchables must have felt to be treated in this manner.
3. Ask the students to help you make a list of words on the board that described Gandhi’s actions and behaviors in seeking tolerance and empathy for the untouchables.
4. Introduce the story: Crocodile and Ghost Bat Have a Hullabaloo. Tell them that while you are reading the story, you want them to think, “What would Gandhi think about the way they are behaving?”
5. After reading the story, ask the students to help you make another list of words on the board that describe each animal’s or other characters’ behavior in the story. Were they showing tolerance and empathy?

Lesson 2

1. Review the list of words from the previous day, detailing words that described Gandhi’s actions and behaviors and those of the animals and characters in the story: Crocodile and Ghost Bat Have a Hullabaloo.
2. Ask the following discussion questions: (Write answers on board during discussion)
   a. Why do you think some people call other people names?
   b. Do you think people called the untouchables names?
   c. Do you think Gandhi called the untouchables names?
   d. Walu, the sun hid behind a cloud during the fight, while Namarrkun made thunder and lightening. Which one of them responded to intolerance in the same way that Gandhi would have responded?
   e. What is similar about Gandhi’s response to the intolerant treatment of the untouchables and Namarrkun’s response to the intolerant manner in which the animals were treating each other?
   f. If you were one of the animals, what would you have done to stop the name-calling?
   g. If Gandhi were one of the animals, what do you think he would have done to stop the name-calling?
   h. Think of a time when someone called you a name. What nonviolent action could you have taken so the person would know how you felt? Do you think it would have helped that person learn not to call names?
   i. If Gandhi were here today and someone called him a name, What nonviolent action do you think he would take so the person would know how he felt? Do you think it would have helped that person learn not to call names?
Additional enrichment activity:

1. ask the students to help develop a No name-Calling contract, something everyone in class can sign
2. Post the contract in the classroom, and refer back to it as needed throughout the year.
3. Have the students perform the story, as a reader's theater. Include the character of Gandhi in the role play. The students can make the ears and the nose of their animal, then wear a sign that names the animal. Take the show on the road to other classes.

Materials:
Mohandas Gandhi essay as background material
Copy of story or book: “Crocodile and Ghost Bat Have a Hullabaloo”

Additional enrichment activity materials:
Name calling contract
Materials and script for reader's theater