Ahimsa Center K-12 Teacher Institute Lesson

**Title:** Negative Peace in *Chronicle of a Death Foretold: A Series of Lessons in Working towards Social Justice*

**Lesson By:** Kati Tilley, Lake Stevens High School, Lake Stevens, WA

**Grade Level/ Subject Areas:** 11-12 Grade, English Language Arts

**Duration of Lesson:** Five, 55 Minute Class Periods

**Content Standards:**
Common Core Standards
*Reading (11-12)*
#1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

#7. Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

*Writing (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.

*Speaking and Listening (11-12)*
#1. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

**Lesson Abstract:**
*Chronicle of a Death Foretold* illustrates how structural violence can lead to murder. To further complicate students’ understanding of violent structures that exist unseen in society and provide students with tools to challenge these norms, students read about Chavez who confronted agribusiness through active nonviolence; an excerpt by Orosco who further defines types of violence; and the pedagogy of service learning by Calderón who provides a framework to solve problems that plague our post-modern civilization.

**Guiding Questions:**
1. Why is understanding the differences between structural and direct violence, and negative and positive peace (as researched and discussed by José-Antonio Orosco) important?
2. What is perspective taking and why is it important in building a democratic society?
3. How can we use José Calderón’s pedagogy of service learning to work towards solving problems in our society that perpetuate structural violence?
Content Essay:

Introduction
Chronicle of a Death Foretold, by Gabriel García Márquez, illustrates how structural violence can lead to murder. However, after reading the novella, students are left with only a vague sense of the different types of violence that occur in the text (beyond the murder itself) and little sense of their own agency to change similar problems within their own communities. So, to further complicate students’ understanding of the nuances of violence and provide students with tools to challenge violent social norms, students read about Cesar Chavez who confronted agribusiness through active nonviolence; an excerpt by José-Antonio Orosco who further defines types of violence; and the pedagogy of service learning by José Calderón who provides a framework to solve the problems that plague our society. Overall, these lessons are sequenced to not only complicate students’ understanding of Chronicle, but also to empower students to identify and engage in active, nonviolent movements against the ills they perceive in their community.

Gabriel García Márquez
In the novella, Chronicle of a Death Foretold by Gabriel García Márquez, an unnamed narrator attempts to piece together what led to the murder of Santiago Nasar twenty-seven years earlier. Through a series of interviews with the townspeople, we learn that on the night of Angela Vicario’s wedding she was returned to her family home when her husband, Bayardo San Román, learns she is not a virgin. When pressed by her brothers for the name of her lover, “she looked for it in the shadows, she found it at first sight among the many, many easily confused names from this world and the other,” (47). Regardless of the truth (which is brought into question many times throughout the text), Angela’s brothers believe it is their duty to regain their family honor by taking Santiago’s life. The most tragic aspect of the story is that the Vicario brothers spend much of the next day making sure everyone in town knows of their plans; reluctant to actually execute someone, they know that if they’re stopped their family honor will still be vindicated. So, even though we know from the first page that Santiago Nasar is going to die, we don’t fully understand until the final pages of the novella that everyone in the small community is complicit in his murder; Santiago was the last to know and by then it was too late. To understand why no one acted, Márquez wants us to explore (along with the narrator) the cultural/structural norms that allowed each member of the community to justify their actions. Students are better able to define these communal traditions by first understanding the different types of violence that occur within a society, including our own.

José-Antonio Orosco
Under the umbrella of “Refusing to Be a Macho,” José-Antonio Orosco explores the types of violence that can exist within our communities, explaining that, “contemporary Western societies appear peaceful and well-to-do on the surface but are in fact permeated by a kind of violence that… [he refers to (based on Jürgen Habermas’ research) as] ‘structural violence’” (73). At the root of structural violence is the inability to, “‘get where the other is coming from’” (73). It is a confluence of stereotypes, discrimination, and mistrusts that, “can lead to an explosion of hostilities and the kind of brutality that we normally associate with violent acts by one person upon another” (73). Examples of such explosions include anything from the 2011 London riots to the violence done to union members on strike (the United Farm Workers for example). Orosco goes on to further distinguish between direct violence, indirect violence, and cultural violence, as well as positive and negative peace.
Drawing on peace theorist Johan Galtung’s work, Orosco describes direct violence as one or more people brutalizing another physically, or even mentally in the form of threats, brainwashing, or manipulation (73). Structural or indirect violence, on the other hand, “occurs when social institutions unevenly distribute income, education, medical services, or access to the power to distribute these resources, in a way that arbitrarily and adversely affects the quality of life for numbers of people” (73). To further the distinction, the following illustration is provided: “‘When one husband beats his wife there is a clear case of personal violence, but when one million husbands keep one million wives in ignorance there is structural violence’” (Galtung qtd. in Orosco 73). In an example students might better be able to relate to - when one student punches another, that’s direct violence; when a student’s school can’t provide materials like textbooks or technology because it’s situated in a part of town that’s socioeconomically disadvantaged, that’s structural violence. One other type of violence that Orosco explores could express itself as either direct or indirect/structural: cultural violence. Cultural violence occurs when something in a person or a group culture is used to rationalize and excuse violence against them. For example, religious doctrine is used to justify maltreatment of gays and lesbians in our society, who face both direct and structural violence. The examples Orosco provides (again referencing the work of Johan Galtung) include, “state ideologies of extreme nationalism that legitimate the marginalization of foreigners or outsiders, and language or grammatical/logical structures that contain gendered pronouns and might be used to validate gender exclusion or portray one gender as a more irrational or illogical” (74). The distinction between these three types of violence is important because, in the case of structural and cultural violence, our communities can appear peaceful when in reality its members can be victims of violence even when there is no direct violence present. This is what’s known as “negative peace,” and understanding the difference between both negative peace and positive peace (the absence of direct, structural, and cultural violence) is important in grasping the peace that we often take for granted.

**Application to Chronicle of a Death Foretold**

When students apply the different types of violence (as defined by Orosco) to *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, they begin to see that the small, Columbian society lives in a negative peace. Structural violence is routinely perpetrated against women and the poor, while cultural violence harms everyone in the form of local religious and legal doctrine that reinforces the ideology of family honor and honor killings. The narrator makes it clear early on in the text that men (including himself) are free to visit brothels, describing on Angela’s wedding night that, “We’d been together at María Alejandrina Cervantes’s [owner of the brothel] until after three, when she herself sent the musicians away and turned out the lights in the dancing courtyard so that her pleasurable mulatto girls could go to bed by themselves and get some rest. They’d been working without cease for three days, first taking care of the guests of honor in secret, and then turned loose, the doors wide open for those of us still unsated by the wedding bash” (64). Women from honorable families, on the other hand, were expected to be virgins on the night of their marriage; they were expected to hang their wedding sheets in their courtyards the next morning for all to see. Virginity wasn’t the only double standard in the society portrayed by Márquez, but the very way in which the Vicario brothers and sisters were raised: “The brothers were brought up to be men. The girls were brought up to be married. […] my mother thought there were no better-reared daughters. ‘They’re perfect,’ she was frequently heard to say. ‘Any man will be happy with them because they’ve been raised to suffer’” (31). It is when Angela Vicario dares to step outside her accepted gender role, lose her virginity prior to marriage, and not fake otherwise (as
instructed by confidants), that she inadvertently unleashed a firestorm of direct violence against Santiago Nasar and everyone else that has to live with the guilt of his death.

Poverty also played a role in the outcome of the story because Angela did not choose to marry Bayardo, but was rather forced into the marriage. Angela’s lack of interest in Bayardo is clear when she states, “I detested conceited men, and I’d never seen one so stuck-up,” (29). However, her family insisted that she go through with the marriage because the match was advantageous stating that, “a family dignified by modest means had no right to disdain that prize of destiny” (34). Basically, Bayardo was rich and, “was going to marry whomever he chose” (34). Here we see how, Bayardo’s wealth made it easy for him to endear himself to Angela’s family who, because of their humble social class, could not conceive of turning him down. In fact, because of this class consciousness, many would later question whether or not the Vicario brothers would actually dare to kill Santiago Nasar because of how much wealthier he was comparatively.

Finally, the honor killing of Santiago Nasar was condoned by both the Catholic priest, Father Amador, and the very justice system that later tried the Vicario brothers for murder. After the brothers had butchered Santiago, they ran to the church to surrender. Father Amador remembered, “the surrender as an act of great dignity. ‘We killed him openly,’ Pedro Vicario said, ‘but we’re innocent.’ ‘Perhaps before God,’ said Father Amador” (49). The parish priest openly admits here that God condones what the twins have done, and once on trial so does the justice system that only makes them serve the three years they waited in prison for trial. Their defense lawyer’s case was, “homicide in legitimate defense of honor, which was upheld by the court in good faith, and the twins declared at the end of the trial that they would have done it again a thousand times over for the same reasons” (48). So, not only does the town’s spiritual leader condone the murder, but so does its system of law and justice. Overall, these are just a few examples of how a town that suffers from underlying structural and cultural violence can seem peaceful and yet be the cause of a violent act of murder.

**Cesar Chavez**

Márquez uses Chronicle as a vehicle to point out the different systems that led to a senseless death, but provides few solutions in how to change these violent structures. So, once students have a firm sense of how to identify different types of violence within a society, it’s time to turn our attention to how to deal with such violence within our own community without engaging in or promoting more violence in the process. Since the overarching purpose of this sequence of lessons is to guide students to recognize their own ability to be agents of change, it is essential to provide them with not only an example of someone who’s done just that but also a road map that promotes active nonviolence as well. To that end, students will study the life of Cesar Chavez who recognized the violence perpetuated by agribusiness on farm workers and set out to change those norms through active nonviolence. Furthermore, students will study the pedagogy of service learning by José Calderón, analyze Chavez’s work within Calderón’s model, and use that model for their own service learning projects.

Cesar Chavez was, “the first man in the history of the United States to organize a successful union for farm workers” (Ingram 98). Chavez not only created the United Farm Workers, but led the union to some of the most successful, active, nonviolent bargaining in our country’s history. One would expect that to do this he must have been well-educated (in the traditional sense) and come from a background that prepared him for his eventual success; the answer to this is yes and
no. The Chavez family owned a farm in Yuma, Arizona until, at the height of the great depression, Cesar’s father couldn’t afford to pay his taxes and the land was auctioned off. At ten years of age, Cesar traveled with his family to find work as migrant laborers. The conditions they found on farms in California were, “shocking to the family. In a surplus labor market, agribusiness thrived, and competition among field workers created poverty-level wages. Child labor, though illegal, was standard practice and expected by labor contractors, middlemen who hired field hands and took a cut of their pay” (Ingram 98). So, the family lived in poverty, often in one room shacks, and Cesar was forced by necessity to quit school after the seventh grade to work in the fields. That didn’t stop Cesar from being a life-long learner, though. At some point, “Chavez began to study in his spare time; he spent hours in libraries, devouring books such as *The Grapes of Wrath*, Jack London’s *People of the Abyss*, and the poetry of Walt Whitman. But the most influential book for Chavez was Mohandas K. Gandhi’s autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*” (Ingram 100). Through his voracious reading, Chavez came to understand the power of active nonviolence (as explained by Gandhi) that he would later use to organize his own nonviolent protests. Also, whether reading about migrant workers in *The Grapes of Wrath*, or working alongside them, he came to understand that, “‘Some have different skin colors, some speak different languages; some are old, some young. But they have one thing in common-poverty’” (Ingram 98). For Chavez, the dehumanizing nature of poverty through low wages and working conditions was not just a Latino/a issue, but one that affected all farm workers.

Cesar Chavez’s parents also provided him with a strong moral foundation that would later inform many of the decisions that put him on the path of service to his community. When Chavez was thirteen years old, his father organized a strike in protest of the low wages and inhuman conditions experienced on the farm he was working at. While they were not successful, the example set by his father must have made a lasting impression. Chavez’s mother, on the other hand, taught Chavez the importance of aiding others. Reflecting on his mother’s lessons, Chavez explained that, “when we were growing up we were very poor, and yet my mother would send my brother and me—we were just small boys—to look for hobos or for people who were hungry and bring them home to eat with us, even though we had barely enough food for our own family. Those are very strong impressions, lasting impressions, to see people willing to do that” (Ingram 107). With such strong role models, it is no surprise that Chavez chose to volunteer his time with (and later work for) the Community Service Organization, where he met hundreds of people, heard their stories, and came to realize that what farm workers needed was a union. The CSO was committed to, “developing service projects for inner-city Mexican-Americans […] to provide a catalyst for the workers to help themselves in securing better living and working conditions” (Ingram 99). Even though CSO’s goals revolved around making life better for farm workers, and even engaged in helping Latinos/as register to vote, and organize sit-ins and informational picketing, the governing board was unwilling to form a union. So, Chavez quit his position with the CSO to further explore his vision of creating a union that would challenge agribusiness.

In 1962, Cesar Chavez created the National Farm Workers’ Association with the help of trusted family and friends; within a year of forming, almost 1000 farm workers and their families joined the union (Ingram 101). Committed to active nonviolence as advocated by Gandhi, while infusing his own Catholic heritage and traditions, Chavez used strikes, boycotts, marches, and fasts to gain the support of the nation while putting pressure on farm owners and agribusiness to sign contracts with their employees.
One example of the United Farm Workers struggle and success through active nonviolence is the grape boycott that began in solidarity with Filipino grape-pickers (who started the strike to fight for equal pay). The strike lasted three years and almost failed when workers began to suggest violent means to achieve their goals. Chavez engaged in a fast that created momentum, and led to their eventual success. The fast itself was, “a reminder to the workers of their commitment to nonviolence. The fast lasted twenty-five days, during which time Chavez saw groups of farm workers from all over the state for twelve hours each day. […] The fast infused the movement with determination and pride” (Ingram 101). Chavez knew that community support and moral truth was key to the UFW’s success, and that any violent actions would lose them that support. Ultimately, the UFW met with growers and negotiated contracts that, “insured better wages, improved working conditions, and recognition of the union” (Ingram 102). Through active nonviolence Chavez was able to achieve what no one else had before in the United States: a thriving farm workers’ union that succeeded in negotiating with growers. He wasn’t any different than the students sitting in our classrooms; in fact he was far more disadvantaged than many of them. Through his example, students can begin to explore their own potential to change those structures that harm members of our society.

José Calderón
In the article, “Perspective-Taking as a Tool for Building Democratic Societies,” José Calderón explores the importance of not only, “respecting each other’s perspectives,” but also first listening to them (7). For Calderón, who moved to the US when he was seven, it wasn’t until a teacher, “reached out to get to know me,” that someone finally realized that his lack of success in school was due to a language barrier (5). Calderón learned a great deal from his teacher, Mrs. Elder, and she learned Spanish from him; they engaged in mutual perspective-taking, building trust and bridging their differences. The experience had a lasting impact on Calderón who sees dialogue as central to promoting equality among all individuals and groups. If segments of our society are unable to share their stories or their views because of structural or cultural violence (for example: language discrimination, poverty, and/or gender inequality), then they lack the ability to participate in the democratic process.

At California Polytechnic University, Pomona, Calderón gave a speech entitled, The Making of Transformative Pedagogy. In his presentation, Calderón shared with his audience a four step process he referred to as, “the pedagogy of service learning.” These four steps include: diagnose the problem, prescribe a solution, implement the plan, and evaluate your success. While this may seem very straightforward, Calderón stresses the importance of perspective-taking within the process. When his students identify a problem, they first read materials relevant to the issue (material provided by Calderón and/or researched by the students) and then they go out and talk with the people who are directly affected by the issue at hand. By collecting these stories, Calderón explains that, “The readings and our class discussions become ‘real’” (“Perspective-Taking…” 7). Students are able to prescribe a solution that they know will benefit those affected by the problem and in the process students learn, “to respect each other’s perspectives” (“Perspective-Taking…” 7). Essentially, students not only work to serve their community, but learn to engage in the profoundly democratic process of imagining yourself in another’s shoes.

As a side-note, it’s important for students to realize that perspective-taking occurs in Chronicle of a Death Foretold. The narrative is constructed by the narrator in the form of interviews that
allow the audience to understand the perspectives of each member of the community, thereby illuminating not just the individual biases but the cultural and structural system influencing each person as well. Perspective-taking is only fully realized, though, when it goes both ways, when both parties can learn from and understand one another.

**Viewing Cesar Chavez through the Lens of Service Learning**
The purpose of reading Catherine Ingram’s brief biography and interview with Cesar Chavez is not only to learn about how he identified structural violence in his society (poverty and dehumanization in the agribusiness industry) and how he (an individual against all of agribusiness) fought and won against long engraved systems. It also points to Chavez’s life as a analytical model for José Calderón’s steps for service learning. For example, realizing that there were problems that needed to be addressed within agribusiness was a fairly straightforward process for Chavez considering his own personal experiences; Chavez grew up as a farm worker and experienced the degradations he would later protest against. He saw and understood that it was inhuman to spray people with DDT, not provide bathrooms or drinking water to workers, pit different races against one another by paying them different wages, and to keep wages low through control of the immigration system (*diagnosis*). To further understand his situation and those of all workers, he spent his free time reading and, “holding small house meetings to ‘really talk to the poor,’” (*perspective-taking*) (Ingram 100). What he came to realize was that the farm workers needed a union (*prescription*). The United Farm Worker union was born out of that realization and out of Chavez’s personal experience and extensive reading. Chavez realized from Gandhi’s example that he wanted to be of service to his community and to change the structural and cultural violence that was being perpetuated against farm workers across the United States. The United Farm Workers used nonviolent protest to fight for their health, safety, and livable wages (*implementation*). Chavez also continuously assessed the means he and the UFW used to achieve their ends, switching between strikes, marches, boycotts, fasts, and whatever nonviolent means seemed appropriate for the given situation (*evaluation*). So, through Chavez’s example and the steps laid out by Calderón, students are invited to realize their own personal ability to challenge and change violence systems in our society and engage in service learning.

**Conclusion**
While complex, there were three main goals I had in mind as I began creating this sequence of lessons. First, to help my students better understand the culture and community that Márquez seeks to critique. Second, I want them to better understand the structural and cultural violence that goes on all around them, even when we seem to live in a peaceful community. And thirdly, to begin considering ways in which each and every one of us can impact our community and push for positive peace. Through a series of readings, discussions, and activities, students are (by the end) required to research a problem they see in their community and interview members of the community directly affected by the problem. Finally, students are encouraged to make a tangible commitment to active, nonviolent service in the community for the good of all.

**Bibliography:**

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**Teaching Activities/ Materials Needed:**
This series of lessons is imbedded within a larger 3 week unit on *Chronicle of a Death Foretold.* While the focus on violence, active nonviolence, and working towards positive peace could be included anywhere in the discussion of the text, I would suggest using them towards the beginning of any in depth analysis (after the students have completed the novella). That way, students have a rich foundation and a high set of expectations for the exploration of further motifs, and thematic subjects such as: class issues, gender inequality, honor, tradition, and magical realism. Also, I’ve designed the following sequence with my AP English Literature class in mind, so I would slow down the pace of these lessons if I were to adapt it to a main stream class (not to mention adding more before, during, and after reading activities). Finally, the purpose of group work (as I reference it in my lesson plans) is to provide a safe place to share ideas and push each student past their zone of proximal development; however each student is expected to do their own work.

**Day One**
1. Students read, annotate, and answer questions on *Handout #1*, which includes an excerpt from Jose-Antonio Orosco’s book, “Cesar Chavez and the Common Sense of Nonviolence” (72-75). If needed, read the work out loud as a group first, and offer to let students work in pairs on the following questions after first annotating the text: How is direct violence different from structural violence? What is cultural violence? What is the difference between negative and positive peace?
2. When students are finished, use the think, pair, share method to hold a class discussion on the main ideas in the text (including but not limited to what they annotated and their answers to the questions).
3. Homework: Students find an example from *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* (including quotes with page numbers) for each of the following: direct violence, structural violence, and cultural violence.

**Day Two**
1. Students share their homework (examples of direct, structural, and cultural violence in *Chronicle*) with a partner, and are instructed to add their partner’s examples to their own if they are certain they fit the definition of each type of violence.
2. As a whole class, students share their examples and field questions from one another.
3. Next, students are instructed to get into groups of four and (using butcher paper and markers) brainstorm specific examples of problems from our society/community that fit into the categories of direct, structural, and cultural violence. When each group is finished, they present their findings to the class and field questions.
4. Homework: Students read and annotate *Handout #2*, an article by José Calderón entitled, “Perspective-Taking as a tool for Building Democratic Societies.”
Day Three
1. Students begin class by quietly reflecting and responding to the following question: How do we solve the problems of structural and cultural violence without causing more violence?
2. When finished, students are invited to share their ideas with a partner and with the class.
3. Next, with a partner, students share their annotations on Handout #2 with one another and work on the following questions: What is perspective-taking? Why is perspective-taking important in a democratic society? What are three specific examples of perspective-taking in the text? How does perspective-taking seek to prevent structural and/or cultural violence?
4. When students are finished, they share their answers with the class and field questions.
5. Homework: Students read and annotate Handout #3, a chapter from Catherine Ingram’s book, In the Footsteps of Gandhi, which includes both a short biography of and an interview with Cesar Chavez.

Day Four
1. At the start of class, students take a brief set of notes on Calderón’s pedagogy of service learning (what it is, what the steps are, and how perspective-taking fits into the process).
2. In groups of 3-4, students take a piece of butcher paper and markers and create a poster that identifies the following: What problems did Chavez diagnose in agribusiness? How does he engage in perspective-taking? What is his prescription for the problem(s)? What is his plan to solve the problem(s) and how does he implement it? How does he evaluate his success?
3. When each group finishes their poster, they present their findings to the class and field questions.
4. Students watch a 4 minute video on both Chavez and Calderón (created by their instructor) that seeks to answer the questions they tackled on their posters.

Day Five
1. Students are instructed to quietly reflect and write on the following question: What is a specific problem facing our community that you would be interested in and willing to research (both in finding information/articles, and by conducting interviews)?
2. When students have had enough time to reflect, share Handout #4, an assignment that requires each student to diagnose a problem in their community, research and summarize a minimum of four resources (websites, articles, books), conduct at least two interviews with affected individuals, formulate a diagnoses, and propose a plan of action. The final product (both handout and oral presentation) will be due in four weeks.
* Since students in my school district are required to do 15 hours of community service each year as a graduation requirement, Handout #4 will also give them the opportunity to sign a commitment statement (that they can turn in with their assignment in four weeks) that offers them the opportunity to turn their ideas into action (implementation). The idea here is that students are encouraged to take their plan of action and implement it in the community (in a way that meets their community service requirements). Those students who make this commitment will have the opportunity to evaluate their success and present their experiences to the class before the end of the school year.

Note: For .pdf copies of the handouts I put together for students, feel free to e-mail me at: kati_tilley@lkstevens.wednet.edu