Title of Lesson: The Violent vs. Nonviolent Soldier

Lesson By: Debbie Toran
Grade Level/Subject Areas: Middle School/Social Studies
Class Size: Can be modified for any class size
Time/Duration of Lesson: two 55 minute periods

Guiding Questions:
- What are Gandhi’s beliefs about nonviolence?
- How effective were the nonviolent protests of Gandhi and his followers?
- Can nonviolent protest be as powerful as, if not more powerful than violent protest?

Lesson Abstract:
This lesson focuses on Gandhi’s beliefs in nonviolence through thoughts, words, and deeds. Students will compare Gandhi’s philosophy of nonviolent resistance, known as satyagraha, to the violent war practices and training of medieval knights and Japanese samurai (taught earlier in the year and now as a review). They will be exposed to the mindset of a nonviolent warrior and understand the purpose, courage, training and outcomes associated with the Gandhian path of nonviolent action.

California Content Standards:
7.5.3 Describe the values, social customs, and traditions prescribed by the lord-vassal system consisting of shogun, daimyo, and samurai and the lasting influence of the warrior code in the twentieth century.

7.5.6 Analyze the rise of a military society in the late twelfth century and the role of the samurai in that society.

7.6.3 Understand the development of feudalism, its role in the medieval European economy, the way in which it was influenced by physical geography (the role of the manor and the growth of towns), and how feudal relationships provided the foundation of political order.

Lesson Content:
Mohandas K. Gandhi (1869-1948) was a political and spiritual leader who influenced millions worldwide through his philosophy of the power of nonviolent action in bringing about social change. His beliefs have had a significant effect on hundreds of influential leaders and their work around the world, including Nelson Mandela, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the Dalai Lama, and Cesar Chavez. Through marches, civil disobedience, fasting, striking, and other means, Gandhi and his followers made effective and lasting changes, resulting in the freedom of India from British rule.

In one of Gandhi’s most well known protests for economic and racial equality, the Salt March, drew national and international attention. On March 12, 1930, Gandhi, along with seventy-eight other members of his ashram, left from Gandhi’s home village to the sea at Dandi. Over the
course of 24 days, they marched for 241 miles, all along the way being joined by thousands of other believers. (Fischer 99) The Salt March was in protest over the law where it was considered a crime to possess salt that was not purchased from the British government. This law went strongly against Gandhi’s belief in an independent India, where they would be self-sufficient, such as in making their own salt, clothing, growing their own food, etc. The physical walking of the protest is what drew so much attention. It was arduous, it was powerful, and it was courageous. It was also nonviolent. Indians were arrested, beaten, and some were even killed. They remained nonviolent. As a result of the efforts of thousands taking part in such a monumental journey, a pact was signed releasing prisoners, ending civil disobedience, and allowing salt manufacturing on the coast.

While India’s independence didn’t come until seventeen years after the Salt March, the march showed the power of India’s nonviolent protesters. It showed the British government that the Indians weren’t going to sit motionless through acts of injustice.

Gandhi believed in ahimsa, nonviolence in thoughts, words, and actions. In order to protest acts of injustice and prejudice, Gandhi advocated passive resistance or satyagraha, an active pursuit of truth through love and nonviolence. A person following this must turn away from not only violence, but also revenge and hate in order to cause a transformation in the opponent. (Sethia, 1373)

Gandhi believed, “… the force of love and pity is infinitely greater than the force of arms.” (Parel, 84) What a profound thought, when historically soldiers from all around the world, including our modern day soldier, have been equipped with what would be considered the most protective armor. Defensively, a soldier wears protective clothing in order to avoid injury or death. Offensively, he also has multiple weapons in order to attack his opponent. Gandhi believed that the eye-for-an-eye mentality would result in making everyone blind.

In Hind Swaraj, Gandhi explains how although history has recorded the many wars and violent acts of various people throughout time, the world could not be based on the force of arms, but on the force of truth or love, otherwise we would have already destroyed ourselves and the world would no longer be living on. (Parel 89) He felt that the world continues on in spite of those wars.

Two of Gandhi’s guidelines to becoming passive resisters:

1. **Follow truth**
   Gandhi believed that the purpose of life is to know oneself. He felt that the only way that we can do this is if we identify ourselves with all living things. This collective truth, Gandhi believed is God. Gandhi stated not that “God is Truth”, but that Truth is God.” (Iyer)

   Gandhi believed in satyagraha, meaning truth force. This refers to truth’s power in bringing about social change. (Iyer NV Resistance…Pg.1) “Men of great physical strength are rare. Rarer still must be those who derive their strength from truth.” (Iyer NV Resis…pg 2)
Gandhi believed as much in the cause as in the action. If a campaign was led by hate or revenge for instance, Gandhi would end the campaign. Also, Gandhi not only felt that intentions needed to be pure, but that it wasn’t morally conscionable to exploit the opponent in his time of weakness. (Iyer NV Resis…2)

2. **Cultivate fearlessness**
   Gandhi believed nonviolence did not mean, “doing nothing” as some would mistakenly seem to believe. He felt that the nonviolent soldier fought even harder and had even more courage than a nonviolent soldier; he just used different methods to obtain his results. He said, “The force of arms is powerless when matched against the force of love or the soul.” (Parel 85)

   “A satyagrahi enjoys a degree of freedom not possible for others, for he becomes a truly fearless person.” (Iyer, NV Res. Pg 2)

   While a satyagrahi doesn’t want to die, he is ready to die if necessary. (Iyer, NV Res. 2)

   “Wherein is courage required- in blowing others to pieces from behind a cannon or with a smiling face to approach a cannon and to be blown to pieces? Who is the true warrior-he who keeps death always as a bosom-friend or he who controls the death of others?” (Parel, 93)

The following is general background information on the medieval knight and samurai. The information comes from the seventh grade history textbook, *World History: Medieval and Early Modern Times*: McDougal Littell, 2006.

**Background on Medieval Knights:**
The period of time in European history approximately between 500 and 1450 was known as the Middle Ages or Medieval Times. After the death of the powerful ruler, Charlemagne, division and disorganization spread across Europe. This lead to constant invasions and raids by the Vikings. This gave rise to feudalism, where a noble gave land to a lesser noble called a vassal, in return for his protection.

Many vassals were knights, warriors that were expected to live by the code of honor known as chivalry. Known for their protection and courage, knights needed to show loyalty to the Catholic church, protection of women and the weak, and willingness to fight against injustice.

Becoming a knight took many years of training at various levels. At an early age, a boy became a page, where he would learn the basics of knighthood, and would be introduced to using a sword and how to ride a horse. At approximately the age of 13, he became a squire. During this time period he trained much more extensively under an accomplished knight, further enhancing his skills of sword fighting and horse riding. During the late teens and early twenties, most squires were considered prepared to officially become knights.

Knights were considered heroic, courageous, and respectable defenders of property and people, leading to the well-known phrase, “knight in shining armor”. A knight knew that he could be
fighting to his death, so he was covered head-to-toe in armor. He wore full body armor made of steel, a covered helmet with air holes for breathing, and a steel mesh suit known as chain mail beneath his body armor for further protection. While the armor provided strong protection against sword attacks, it was heavy and limited a knight’s movements. After the introduction of advanced weaponry, the armor was no longer as efficient in providing protection for the knights.

**Background on Japanese Samurai:**
Between the twelfth through seventeenth centuries, Japan evolved into a military society. After 300 years of rule from the powerful and wealthy Fujiwara family, or clan, the central government began to lose money and control over the larger landowners, called daimyo. Without a strong central government, and a rise in the power of daimyo, small landowners wanted protection against raids and other crime. Similar to the situation in Medieval Europe, feudalism began.

The wealthy daimyo owned armies of samurai, trained warriors who followed a code of honor called bushido. This warrior code, in several ways similar to the knight’s code of chivalry, was an unwritten vow that a samurai would have honor, loyalty, courage, respect for the gods, and generosity for the poor. The samurai, who means, “one who serves” spent years in training. Some were even raised from birth to become samurai warriors, particularly if the family held generations of warriors.

The samurai trained diligently in many different ways. They practiced horse riding, shooting a bow, wrestling, martial arts, and sword fighting. The samurai also practiced meditation and strengthening the mind. This was a critical part of the samurai’s training, since a warrior always needed to be alert and prepared.

The samurai wore a vest covered with bamboo and plates of steel. He would also wear a mask, which would possibly frighten his opponent. The helmet would go over it. It was understood that the victor would decapitate his opponent upon victory. Therefore, upon dressing for battle, a samurai would place incense into his helmet, allowing a sweet smell to emanate upon his death.

**Analysis**
All three types of soldiers: nonviolent, knight, and samurai, needed training, courage, and armor. All soldiers needed to prepare and train if they were to be effective in their battles. The type of training for these three types of soldiers is what differed. The nonviolent soldier would train his mind like the other two soldiers, yet the others would also focus on the body. For the Gandhian nonviolent soldier, courage meant that you could face death without any physical weapons. The latter two would not leave for battle without their weapons. The knight and samurai also spent considerable care in wearing many layers of armor. The Gandhian nonviolent soldier just needed the internal, mental armor.

**Bibliography:**

**Suggested Teaching Activities:**
*Have students complete the following:

1. Compare and contrast the traditional soldier of war versus a soldier utilizing nonviolent means to accomplish his/her goal. What are the similarities? What are the differences?

2. From the philosophy of Mohandas Gandhi, what areas of training would you personally need to work on to become a nonviolent soldier?

3. How would you successfully train a nonviolent soldier from the perspective of Mohandas Gandhi?

4. What are the similarities and differences between the violent practices of medieval knights and Japanese samurai, and the nonviolent practices of Gandhi in respect to courage, power, armor, and training?

5. Is nonviolent protest used effectively today?

6. Sketch a picture of a knight and a samurai. Make a diagram describing the purpose of the various armor that each wears. Sketch a picture of a nonviolent soldier. Diagram the invisible/internal armor that he/she wears.

7. Research Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome and the effects of war upon soldiers and their loved ones. What conclusions can you make?

*Create a training manual for today’s nonviolent soldier. Explain the preparation necessary to be strong and effective in mind and body.

*In groups, have students write and perform recruitment commercials for 1. a knight or samurai 2. a nonviolent soldier.

**Materials Needed:**
- Textbook
- Paper
- Pencil/pen