Ahimsa Center- K-12 Teacher Institute Lesson Plan

**Title of Lesson:** Applying Ahimsa to the Traditional Stories We Know and Love to Read

**Lesson By:** Dawna Tully

| Grade Level/ Subject Areas: K-8 (geared toward grades K-3 with Grade 2 emphasized) | Class Size: 20-38 | Time/ Duration of Lesson: 15-45 minutes per lesson over 2-7 days |

**Goals/ Objectives of Lesson:**
- Students will learn Gandhi’s philosophy that humans strive for: peace, harmony and stability.
- Students will brainstorm definitions of soft and hard violence and soft and hard nonviolence.
- Students will explore the definition of the word: Ahimsa
- Students will learn how Gandhi experimented with Ahimsa to bring about the change of a negative story of British rule over India to a positive story of Indian rule over India.
- Students will read two stories and discuss the characters, plot, setting, problem and solution of each.
- Students will use a Compare/Contrast organizer to discover differences and similarities of the two stories.
- Students will read an additional story and explore in small groups creating a poster with an alternate ending that demonstrates success for all persons in the story.

**Lesson Abstract:**
Students will read, discuss and compare and contrast two similar stories (with different endings) with the goal to discover how one of them relates to Gandhi’s philosophy of Ahimsa. Also, students will read an additional story and consider an alternate ending that includes the transformation of all the characters with Ahimsa: non-violence through truth and love.

**Lesson Content:**
A major content of this lesson is geared toward the practical application of Gandhi’s philosophy of Ahimsa in our everyday life which includes viewing traditional fairy tales and other stories and the moral lessons they teach from a new perspective.

For example, in the Aesop’s Fairy Tale, *The Little Red Hen*, the Hen is slighted by the lack of help of the dog, cat and mouse as she goes through the step by step process to bake some bread. At the end, she produces a big delicious loaf of bread that she refuses to share the bread with the other animals who desire some. The moral of the story is: If you work, you eat. There are many other fairy tales, fables and legends that use animals and characters to instruct our morality.

Mahatma Gandhi devoted his life to moral living. He called this philosophy, Ahimsa which is noninjury or nonviolence to all people, animals and things. Ahimsa strives to seek the truth. The practice of Ahimsa is necessary in order to embody true love. Through such love, others,

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especially those with whom we have strong disagreements can be transformed into persons that we share the truth with. When we share truth with others after ‘peacefully fighting’ we practice what Gandhi called Satyagraha\(^2\): a state of inclusiveness for differing viewpoints each with some aspect of the truth. Then it is the love of Ahimsa and the inclusiveness of Satyagraha that can transform adversaries into common supports and perhaps even friends.

Gandhi applied Ahimsa to many of the events in his life such as:\(^3\)

1. Speaking out against racial discrimination by whites in South Africa. His focus was to uplift the habits and status of Indians first and then work on the injustice of whites towards the Indians.
2. His support of the freedom of untouchables to worship in the Hindu temple which was accomplished through dialogue between Brahmans and untouchables.
3. Leads a march to protest against anti-Indian legislation in 1913.
4. Helps to settle the grievance of indigo workers in Champaran, Bihar
5. Lead the 218 mile Salt March to protest the unjust salt tax.

Ahimsa focuses on the transformation of the individual as a prelude to the transformation of the family, community, nation and world. Therefore, as we read traditional children’s literature, the opportunity arises to examine those stories for whether the moral lesson includes a transformation for all parties. Gandhi encouraged this transformation through suffering, sacrifice and patience. He fasted to bring different factions to dialogue with one another. He meditated on a problem until he discovered a solution. He simplified his life until at the end of his life his worldly possessions were a handful of items.

In order for students to understand Gandhi’s application of Ahimsa, instruction on the forms of violence and nonviolence should include examples of ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ violence as well as ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ nonviolence. The chart below gives examples of the forms of violence and nonviolence. Students can add their own and when they read stories with this knowledge, ask themselves, What would Gandhi do if needed, to reconcile the parties involved?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hard Violence</th>
<th>Soft Violence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Destroying Property</td>
<td>Using words to hurt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hitting</td>
<td>Put down someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pushing</td>
<td>Yelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stealing</td>
<td>Bullying</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hard Nonviolence</th>
<th>Soft Nonviolence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marching peacefully</td>
<td>Hugging, Care, Love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protesting peacefully</td>
<td>Dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Fasting</td>
<td>Personal Fasting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The distinction between ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ violence and ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ nonviolence is critical because there are forms of each word that students may not have considered as either violent or nonviolent.

Another version of the Little Red Hen published by the Jaina Education Committee (A religious sect of Hinduism of which Gandhi’s mother reportedly belonged) and has an alternate ending in which the Hen, though she received no help with baking the bread shares with the other animals anyway. They in turn appreciate this and help the Hen with her chores. This is an example of the transformative power of love and care.

From this example, students can learn to discern whether the concept of Ahimsa is practiced by characters in stories as well as figures in history.

One goal is to instruct students in the philosophy of Gandhi and his contemporary, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to read stories with the mind of a nonviolent crusader. Another goal is to teach students how to relate the stories we read with our own actions, especially how we treat each other. Finally, reading fairy tales, legends and myths can support our understanding of conflict resolution Gandhi’s way, such as the practice of Satyagraha in which all viewpoints are heard and the challenge is for everyone to get on the side of truth. This takes patience and tremendous respect and appreciation for the other. The payoff is fewer struggles with others and more peace in the world.

With new ‘Ahimsa eyes’ students should read more well known fairy tales, such as Cinderella and create an alternate ending that focus on a win-win resolution for all characters. Through learning about Gandhi and his philosophy of Ahimsa, students can observe their own actions and extend that observation to not only transform the stories they read but use that transformative power for themselves, which will support building peace one child at a time.

California State Content Standards:

Second Grade English Language Arts Standards:

Reading Comprehension: 2.0

2.2 State the purpose in reading (i.e., tell what information is sought).
2.3 Use knowledge of the author's purpose(s) to comprehend informational text.
2.4 Ask clarifying questions about essential textual elements of exposition (e.g., why, what if, how).
2.5 Restate facts and details in the text to clarify and organize ideas.
2.6 Recognize cause-and-effect relationships in a text.

Literary Response and Analysis 3.0

3.1 Compare and contrast plots, settings, and characters presented by different authors.
3.2 Generate alternative endings to plots and identify the reason or reasons for, and the

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3.3 Compare and contrast different versions of the same stories that reflect different cultures.

**Guiding Questions:**

- What is an example of hard violence? Soft violence?
- What is an example of hard nonviolence? Soft nonviolence?
- Who was Mahatma Gandhi and what did he do? How did he do it?
- What is Ahimsa? How did Gandhi use Ahimsa to create social change? How can you use Ahimsa to create an alternate ending for traditional fairy tales and other stories?
- What is the main idea of the story by Aesop, *The Little Red Hen*? Do you agree? Why or why not?
- What is the main idea of the story by the Jaina Education Committee, *The Little Red Hen*? Do you agree? Why or why not?
- Compare both endings. Which ending did you like more? Why?
- Based upon learning about Ahimsa, how might you view fairy tales and other stories? Why?

**Materials Needed:**

- Books: Little Red Hen (traditional, by Aesop) and The Little Red Hen (non-traditional, by the Jaina Education Committee).
- Paper, pencil, pens
- Crayons, colored pencils, markers
- Butcher paper, chart paper
- Word Web for Ahimsa Definition

**Lesson Context:**

- Open Court Reading Themes in grades K-5 (Storytelling, Kindness, etc.)
- Holt Reading Themes in grades 6-8 (Legends, etc.)
- Social Studies Themes
- Read-a-Loud used throughout the curriculum, after recess, lunch and during ‘down’ time.
- I would show the digital story after the brainstorming lesson with students.

**Teaching Activities:**

- Read-a-Loud of each story. Discussion of characters, plot, setting, problem and solution.
- Generate student ideas about other ways to solve the problem(s) presented in the story.
- Define Gandhi’s Ahimsa using a Word Web.
- Explain how and why he used it.
- Ask students to predict, discuss then create alternate endings for three more fairy tales applying the philosophy of Ahimsa.
- Brainstorm what students know about violence and non-violence.
- Create a chart with soft/hard examples of violence and soft/hard examples of nonviolence. Place the traditional and non-traditional fairy tale stories in the appropriate
category on the above chart. Change the category as alternate endings are created.
- Read, and then write an alternate ending to the traditional Cinderella fairy tale.

### Assessment/ Evaluation:
- Compare/Contrast Organizer
- Written Alternate Ending of Story
- Discussion
- Vocabulary
- Problem Solution Organizer
- Narrative Organizer

### Extension Activities/ Enrichment:
- Create a digital story of one of the stories showing the original ending and the new ending
- Research other favorite stories and change the ending to support the philosophy of Ahimsa
- Collage of pictures that depict hard/soft violence and hard/soft nonviolence
- Tally times other students, news; stories from textbooks use hard/soft violence and/or hard/soft nonviolence.

### Bibliography:


