

Lesson Plan for Seeds of Peace Witness Video

Rationale: Testimonials provide first-hand accounts of experiences that can help clarify complex concepts. The Seeds of Peace video offers the testimonials of two teenagers engaged in a process of learning about one another through peacebuilding activities at a summer camp. The video introduces the notion of humanizing those who are different from us by getting to know them and by dismantling our prejudices about them. The lesson engages students in watching the video, and then in an exercise that invites them to explore their perceptions of people who have different identities than them and to examine where these perceptions come from.

Objectives:

1. To understand how stereotyping can fuel prejudice and affect communication.
2. To explore where stereotypes come from.
3. To understand the link between stereotypes/prejudice and conflict.
4. To consider how youth can build peace.

Age: 10 and above (U.S. grade 5 and above)

Time: 60 minutes

Materials:

- *Seeds of Peace Note-Taking Sheet*
- Chart paper
- Markers

PART 1: Viewing the Seeds of Peace Video

Procedures:

1. Tell students that they are going to watch a video in a few minutes about two individuals on different sides of a conflict.
2. Ask students:
 - What is a stereotype?

One definition is “A stereotype is a statement about a group of people that reduces that group to one characteristic and assumes everyone in that group has that characteristic. For example, all Americans are loud.”

2. Ask students to raise their hand if they have ever been stereotyped. Ask for volunteers to share what it felt like to be stereotyped. You might share how you felt when you were stereotyped.

8. Now ask students to raise their hand if they have ever stereotyped someone else. How did it feel to do that? Share how it felt for you when you realized you stereotyped someone.

9. Ask:

- How do our stereotypes about someone shape how we interact with them?

4. Tell students that the video they are going to watch is about two teenagers, a Palestinian and an Israeli, who have decided to learn about one another as a way of building understanding and breaking down the barriers that separate their communities. Provide background on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict taken from the attached backgrounder.

5. Distribute the *Seeds of Peace Note-Taking Sheet* and review it with students. Ask students to listen for answers to the questions while watching the four-minute video and to take notes on the sheet.

Debrief:

1. Why are the activities in the camp important for people who might not get along with each other?
2. What is the impact of bringing these young people together? How can it help their future?
3. What did Tamar and Suma do when they returned home? How were their actions peacebuilding?
4. Tamar and Suma are young peacebuilders. What are some benefits of youth as peacebuilders? What are some of the challenges youth face?
5. How do you and your peers build peace in your school and community? How can you build peace globally?

Seeds of Peace Note-Taking Sheet

Directions: Read the questions below. Watch the Seeds of Peace video and answer the questions based on what you see and hear.

1. What activities do the Israeli and Palestinian youth engage in at the Seeds of Peace camp?

2. How did Tamar and Suma build peace after attending the Seeds of Peace camp?

Background for Seeds of Peace Witness Video

Tamar and Suma are Israeli and Palestinian teenagers. They came together at a summer camp in Maine run by an organization called Seeds of Peace, which encourages dialog and understanding among young people to resolve international conflicts. The camp helps develop the skills and understanding necessary to build peace.

Each summer since 1993, at a camp in Maine, Seeds of Peace brings together 300 Arab and Israeli teenagers for a three-week program. These young people leave behind the violence and hatred that is often ingrained in their homelands to meet the “enemy” face to face.

At home, their two societies remain locked in a conflict that has pitted two people—Jews and Palestinian Arabs—against each other for most of the past century. At its heart, this conflict is a struggle for land, existence, security, justice and acceptance—by both peoples.

While at the camp, these young people—supported by trained counselors—can dare to argue with and play alongside each other. They can challenge preconceptions, share ideas and opinions, and envision a peaceful Middle East. It can be an emotional and difficult process, but it can produce surprising friendships. It can also shape the ways in which these young people think and act after they return to their homes.

Seeds of Peace was created to empower young leaders from regions of conflict with the leadership skills required to help move from a divided past to a shared future. It received grant support from the U.S. Institute of Peace and its founder, John Wallach, was a Jennings Randolph Senior Fellow at the institute in 1997-98.

Seeds of Peace, the U.S. Institute of Peace, and many other organizations work with young people in conflict zones around the world, providing them with the skills and tools to be effective peacebuilders in their own communities.

PART 2: Exploring Perceptions: Mirror Mirror On the Wall

Procedures:

1. Explain the rationale of the activity to the students: the exercise invites them to explore their perceptions of people who have different identities than them and also to explore where these perceptions come from.
2. Divide the group using any identity that will split the group roughly in half. Avoid using any identity that a student doesn't actually belong to. Gender is used most frequently in this exercise, but you can divide the group by age, religion, ethnicity, etc... Students should determine which group they belong to.
3. Give each group large pieces of paper and markers and have one person in each group draw a line from the top of the page to the bottom down the center. Have them put a (+) on the left side of the paper and a (-) on the right side.
4. Have each group generate a list of all the positive and negative aspects of being a member of their group. For example, if you divide the class by gender, girls will generate a list about girls, and boys will generate a list about boys. Allow 10 minutes for this.
5. Give each group a second piece of paper and have them draw a line and the (+) and (-) on each side. Instruct students this time to generate a list of what they think are the positive and negative aspects of being a member of the other group. If you use gender, girls will generate a list about boys, and boys will generate a list about girls. Allow 10 minutes for this.
6. Give groups a third piece of paper and have them draw a line and the (+) and (-) on each side. Instruct students to generate a list of how they think the other group views them. If you use gender, boys will create a list about how they think girls view them and girls will create a list about how they think boys view them. Allow 10 minutes for this.
7. Post all of the papers on the wall and give students time to read all of the charts, noting questions they might want to ask about what they see on the lists.
8. Have students return to their seats and facilitate a discussion using some or all of the following questions.

Debrief:

1. What did you see on the lists that surprised you?
2. Which list was easier to work on? Why?
3. What patterns do you see on the lists?
4. Where did the information on the lists come from in parts 2 and 3 of the activity? (*elicit stereotypes—from media, friends, parents, etc...*)

5. How can stereotypes contribute to conflict?
6. How can we learn to see people without stereotypes?
7. What have you learned from this exercise that you can help you manage conflicts with others?