

Turf and Power: An Activity About Global Conflict
High School – Contemporary World History; American Civics/Government

Elaborated Lesson Focus:

The purpose of this activity is for students to examine how the elements of a personal conflict can be mirrored in a larger, global conflict. Students look at ways to manage and resolve personal conflicts and community conflicts in a productive manner and then apply these strategies to conflicts that are occurring around the world.

Enduring Understanding:

Issues of power and turf are at the core of the majority of personal and global conflicts.

Performance Tasks:

- Students will explore why “turf” is such a common cause of conflict through role-play
- Students will explore why “power” is such a common cause of conflict through role-play
- Students will examine how conflict can build or dissipate by analyzing the cycle of conflict
- Students will brainstorm possible nonviolent responses to conflict as well as aggressive ones, and discuss how best to achieve desirable outcomes
- Students will analyze personal conflict and apply these responses to evaluate outcomes
- Students will analyze community conflict and apply these responses to evaluate outcomes
- Students will analyze global conflict and apply these responses to evaluate outcomes

Techniques and Skills:

Vocabulary building, reading comprehension, public speaking, large group discussion, working in pairs, comparing and contrasting information sources, critical and analytical thinking, responsive and creative writing, literary analysis, research skills, and supporting ideas with examples.

Requirements:

Materials:

- Chalkboard and chalk, or chart paper and markers
- *Student Handouts: Situations of Conflict, Cycles of Conflict*

Time:

- 45 minutes

Lesson Preparation:

- Arrange four chairs in a row in the front of the room
- Prepare copies of *Student Handouts* for distribution

Procedures:

1. When students arrive, four chairs should be set up in a row in the front of the room.
2. After the class is settled, select six students to participate in the next activity. Ask one of the students to the front of the room to stand with you. Tell the other five participants that when you clap your hands they should come up and sit in the row of chairs, one student per chair. The four people who end up in the chairs will “win.” The person who ends up without a chair will “lose.”

3. Clap your hands. The five students will scramble to get to the chairs, and, inevitably, one student will remain standing. A disagreement might erupt (a student claims he/she got there first, a student tries to shoulder his/her way onto the remaining chair, a student complains that he/she was sitting farther in the back of the class and that the other students had an “unfair” advantage, etc.).
4. Tell the class that the student standing with you was chosen to be the judge and decide who wins and who loses. The student does not have to explain why he/she decides the way he/she does. The class can call out their opinions. Allow students to disagree.
5. Return all six students to their seats. Allow 10 minutes for the class to discuss the experiment.
6. Ask the class to describe what happened when there were five students and only four chairs. Ask the five students who were competing for the chairs to share how they felt during the activity. Why was it so important to “win” a chair? Ask the student who had to decide the “loser” to describe how he/she felt. What made his/her role difficult?
7. Tell the class that there are approximately 20 significant armed conflicts happening around the world today, and that almost every single one of them is being fought over one of two issues: power (governmental rule) or turf (land/territory).*

**Note:* This information according to *Patterns of Major Armed Conflicts, 1997-2006*, by Lotta Harbom and Peter Wallensteen, Uppsala Conflict Data Program, Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University

8. Ask students what happened when there were five people fighting over four chairs. Ask them what happened when there was one person who could make a decision for the larger group. Ask: How does this relate to the statistic they just heard? Why might so many global conflicts erupt over power and territory?
9. Divide the class into pairs. Distribute one copy of *Student Handout: Cycles of Conflict* to each pair.
10. Choose one of the following prompts and write it on the chalkboard, chart paper, or distribute it to each pair as a *Student Handout: Situations of Conflict*.

Situation I: Adults in your community/neighborhood are tired of the noise and nuisance of young people “loitering” near local restaurants, movie theatres, and parks in the evenings. For this reason, a group of concerned citizens is bringing a new proposal before the City Council at their next meeting: On Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights, the most popular commercial blocks will be off-limits to anyone under the age of 18 after 8 pm. Penalties for disobeying this ordinance would be monetary fines, forced community service, and potential house arrest.

-or-

Situation II: The administration of your school has decided that the school would benefit from a school uniform policy. The principal is bringing the suggestion to the next PTA/School Board meeting that all male students must wear grey slacks, a white button-down shirt, and a navy blue tie to school every day. Female students must wear a grey, knee length skirt, a white button down shirt, and a blue vest to school every day. Penalty for not wearing the uniform would be suspension, grade demerits, and possible expulsion.

11. Students must summarize the situation on their handout in the box labeled “Event/Situation.” Allow pairs 15-20 minutes to complete their handouts brainstorming possible choices, reactions, responses, and results that would be considered “aggressive” or uncooperative, and “cooperative” or nonviolent.

Example: The following is one example of how the *Student Handout: Cycle of Conflict* might be completed by students:

Situation I: Uniforms: Yes or No?

Choice (cooperative): Attend PTA meeting and present an alternative opinion (compromise)

Reaction (cooperative): PTA members consider kids’ perspectives

Response (cooperative): Conduct a “sitin” outside the next School Board meeting, invite a local newspaper or TV station to garner support

Result (cooperative): Uniform policy is vetoed or, if it is passed, it is passed in part, not in full

Situation II: Uniforms: Yes or No?

Choice (aggressive): Paper the school with anti-uniform flyers and graffiti

Reaction (aggressive): Principal threatens suspension if culprit is identified

Response (aggressive): Students become agitated and an “us and them” attitude is adopted throughout the school

Result (aggressive): School Board sees that the students are rebellious and agrees with the need for stricter policies; votes for mandatory uniforms.

12. When pairs have completed their handouts, come back together as a whole class to discuss their answers and their process. In addition to eliciting the students’ responses, use some or all of the following questions to guide the discussion:
- Do you think the situation you worked on with your partner dealt with turf, power, or both? Explain.
 - Did you or your partner have an emotional response to the situation? If so, why?
 - What, in general, did the reactions and results have in common with the original choices? Was there a clear pattern?
 - Was it harder to come up with an aggressive choice, or a cooperative one? Why do you think this was the case?
 - Would you ever be able to change an aggressive cycle once it’s started? What choices or behaviors might change an aggressive cycle into a cooperative one? In other words, how might you draw a new arrow from a box on the “aggressive” side over to the “cooperative” side?
 - Similarly, how could you change a cooperative cycle once it’s started into an aggressive one?
 - How do the two outcomes differ?
 - Based on this exercise, what is the best way to achieve your desired outcome in this sort of situation? Why do you think this?
 - Was there a similarity between the responses you and your partner brainstormed for this situation and the responses you observed when your classmates were arguing over the last chair? Explain.
 - How did the chair experiment affect how you responded to the situation on your worksheet?
13. Explain to the class that there are times that cooperative choices will be met with aggressive reactions and responses. Ask the class how they might manage the process if

this should happen. How might they redirect the cycle if their attempts at cooperation were to be met with aggression?

14. As a concluding activity, write the following prompt on the chalkboard or on chart paper. Students can respond in their notebooks or in their journals. Encourage students to relate this quote to the activities they completed in class. How might a small problem (not enough chairs) mimic a larger problem (in their community or in the world)?

“In matters of truth and justice, there is no difference between large and small problems, for issues concerning the treatment of people are all the same.”
—Albert Einstein

15. For homework, instruct students to read the newspaper or visit a global news website. Students should identify a significant armed conflict from the day’s headlines. They should print the article or clip it from the newspaper. Then instruct students to summarize the conflict and list potential responses—both violent and non-violent—to the conflict on a new *Student Handout: Cycle of Conflict*.

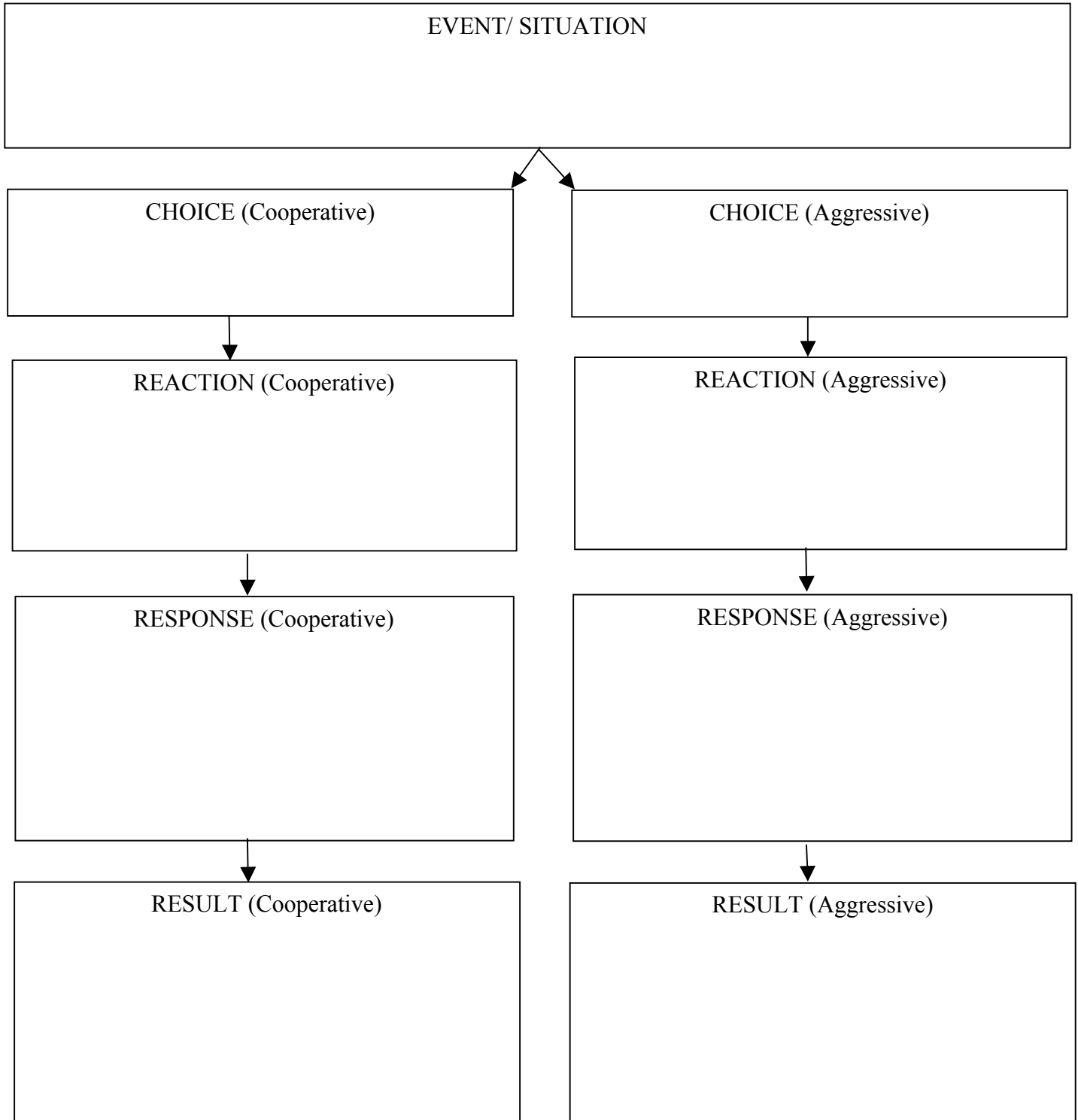
Extension Activities and Ideas for Further Learning:

- Instruct students to write an in-depth research paper on one of the following significant ongoing global conflicts. Their paper should include background on the situation, circumstances that are causing the situation to remain unresolved, the underlying reason for the conflict (i.e., land, governmental power), and a personal reflection on what they learned from their research, including their own ideas for how the conflict might get resolved.
 - Sudan vs. Darfur rebel groups
 - Russia vs. Chechen separatists
 - India vs. Kashmiri separatist groups/Pakistan
 - Uganda vs. Lord’s Resistance Army
 - Columbia vs. the National Liberation Army and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC)
 - Sri Lanka vs. Tamil Eelan
 - Israelis vs. Palestinians
- Instruct students to create a “Collage of Conflict.” Students should read the newspaper for 2 to 3 weeks and clip all the headlines they see which relate to a conflict, either on a global, local, or personal scale. Have them create a collage using the headlines to communicate an additional message about the nature of conflict and its consequences. Students should write 2-3 paragraphs “analyzing” their collage, explaining why they chose the headlines they chose, as well as the larger message of their collage.
- Students should identify a nonprofit or NGO that addresses one or more global conflict. How might they get involved in the work of that nonprofit? How might they raise awareness about this conflict in their local communities and at school?
- Students should organize a “Resolving Conflict Around the World” exhibit for their local community or school community. Students can work individually, in pairs, or in small groups to research a particular conflict and create an informational poster about that conflict. Display the posters in the school lobby before and/or after school as students enter and leave for the day. Posters should include the following information:

- Background of the conflict, including geography and parties involved
- Statistics about the number of people killed, injured, or left homeless due to the conflict
- Statistics about the duration of the conflict
- Photographs and maps that illustrate the conflict
- At least two nonprofit organizations working to resolve the conflict or provide aid to people hurt by the conflict
- At least one way students can get involved in resolving this conflict and/or raise awareness about the conflict

Student Handout: Cycles of Conflict

Directions: Summarize the conflict in the “Event/Situation” box. Then brainstorm possible reactions, responses, and results, following a path of “cooperative” choices (non-aggressive, supportive) as well as a path of “aggressive” choices (confrontational, non-cooperative).



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