

“Tree of Peace”: Critical Thinking About Resolution to Global Conflicts
High School – Contemporary World History; American Civics/Government
Middle School – Contemporary World History; American Civics/Government

Elaborated Lesson Focus:

The purpose of this activity is for students to consider how peace can be both fostered and suppressed in society. In addition, students are encouraged to explore the importance of peace in society, including its meaning for people who experience it; the consequences of living without it; and the prerequisites for establishing it.

Enduring Understanding/Essential Questions:

- What must be present in order for peace to exist?
- What are the results when peace exists?
- What, in essence, is peace made of—in a personal, local, and global context?

Performance Tasks:

- Students will discuss the importance and application of symbolism in different cultures, specifically, the symbol of a tree
- Students will create a common vocabulary for the different elements that exist in a peaceful society
- Students will work in groups to reach consensus on the importance and impact of these societal elements
- Students will make connections between personal and local events and events that take place on a global scale

Techniques and Skills:

Vocabulary building, reading comprehension, small group work, large group work, comparing and contrasting information sources, critical thinking, responsive and creative writing, creative thinking, literary analysis, and research skills.

Requirements:

Materials:

- Chalkboard and chalk, or chart paper and markers
- *Student Handouts: The Iroquois Tree of Peace, Tree of Peace Activity, A Poison Tree*

Time:

- 45 minutes

Lesson Preparation:

- Prepare copies of *Student Handouts* for distribution
- OPTIONAL: create a poster-sized “Tree of Peace” to be completed by the class as a whole group

Procedures:

1. Distribute the *Student Handout: The Iroquois Tree of Peace*. Allow 10 minutes for students to read the story silently, or, alternatively, ask for volunteers to read it out loud.
2. As a whole group, discuss the idea of a tree as a metaphor for peace. Use some or all of the following questions to guide the discussion:
 - According to the legend, who was The Peacemaker?
 - What attributes of the tree are mentioned in the legend and how are those attributes related to attributes of peace?
 - According to the legend, what is the role of the eagle? Who might fulfill a similar role in your life?
 - Why is the eagle a good choice for this role? What other animal could have been used? What would make that animal less (or more) appropriate?
 - In what ways is a tree a suitable metaphor for peace?
 - What other concepts are represented by trees in literature, myth, religion, etc. (Family Tree, Tree of Life, Christmas trees, the World Tree, etc.)?
 - What other concepts can you think of that could be symbolized by a tree? Explain your answer.
3. Distribute *Student Handout: Tree of Peace Activity*. Take a few minutes to discuss the list of terms in the chart on Page 1 of the handout.
4. Review the instructions as a whole group. Then divide students into small groups. Explain that they are now going to work together to complete the handout.
5. Explain that the purpose of the handout is to consider what is required in an environment in order for conflicts and disagreements to be resolved peacefully. Explain that every member of the group might not have the same opinions about where the terms belong on the tree. There are many “right answers” and it is acceptable to debate placement.
6. Allow 25 minutes for students to work together to complete their handout as a group.
7. Once the groups have finished, conduct a large group discussion about their process. Use some or all of the following questions to guide the discussion:
 - What does “self esteem” and “pride in one’s heritage” mean to you? Why might these things be necessary in order to have peace?
 - Give an example of the opposite of self-esteem. How might this affect peace in an environment?
 - How does communication affect peace or conflict? Why?
 - What do you think of when you think of “artistic freedom?” What is an example, from current events or history, when the lack of artistic freedom resulted in conflict?
 - Why do you think “hope” was on the list of terms? How does hope relate to peace?
 - Give an example from current events or history when prosperity (or lack of prosperity) on a personal, community, or international level created conflict or peace in that society. Explain.
 - How difficult was it to come to consensus when defining the terms? Why? Where did dissent arise?
 - How difficult was it to come to consensus when deciding where to place the terms on the tree? Why? Where did dissent arise?

- As a group, did you enact any of the terms from the chart in order to resolve your difference of opinions peacefully?
- What additional terms did your group come up with? Where did you place them on the tree?
- What terms did your group place on the roots of the tree? Why did you decide that these were basic requirements for peace?
- What terms did your group place on the fruit of the tree? Why did you decide that these were results of peace?
- What terms might be BOTH requirements for, and results of peace?
- How do the presence (or absence) of civil rights relate to the existence of peace in a society? Why do you think there is this correlation?
- How do the presence (or absence) of civil rights relate to conflict or war in a society or region? Why do you think there is this correlation?

OPTIONAL: On a large piece of chart paper, create another tree as a class. Allow time for discussion and consensus building. Encourage students to suggest new terms to place on their class tree.

8. Distribute *Student Handout: A Poison Tree*. Instruct students to complete the handout for homework.

Extension Activities and Ideas for Further Learning

- In your journal, or notebook, respond to the following question:

Why do people fight?

- Keep in mind that you are not being asked to write about what people fight *over*, but rather about *why* people so often resort to fighting and violence to resolve disputes and disagreements instead of mediation or compromise. In your answer use examples of disagreements that occur on a personal level (between friends or family members), a local level (between neighbors or rival groups in the community), and a global level (war, terrorism, institutional racism/prejudice). What environmental conditions contribute to fighting? What environmental conditions contribute to peaceful resolution? What types of personalities are more likely to resolve a dispute by fighting versus negotiation?
- Instruct students to research one of the following ongoing armed international conflicts and write an expository essay relating their research to the elements of peace from the Tree of Peace exercise. Students should consider what is missing in these situations in order for peace to falter, and how the situations might be adjusted to be more conducive to a peaceful resolution.
 - Armed conflict in Afghanistan—the U.S., U.K., and Coalition Forces fighting al-Qaeda and Taliban
 - Genocide in Sudan—internal fighting with rebel groups in Darfur
 - Middle East conflict—Israelis and Palestinians
 - Jimmy Carter, while serving as the 39th president of the United States, brokered the first modern peace settlement in the Middle East: the Camp David Accords of 1979 between Israel and Egypt. Before becoming President, Carter grew up on a farm in rural Georgia, and today he lives and farms on that same land. The Carter Farm yields many crops, but there is one that is particularly special to the former President: 16-acres of pines that he

himself planted by hand over 50 years ago. Write a well-researched essay about the Carter administration, the current work of the Carter Center, and the life story of Jimmy Carter in which you relate his background as a farmer to his work in the arenas of global peace and human rights—both while he was president, and after he left the White House.

- Have students create an original artistic representation of peace, using their own unique symbol. Each piece should include the terms from their tree and a short explanation of their choices. Organize a class “exhibit” that displays all the different symbols for peace in the school lobby or in a designated display case.
- Have students create their own awareness campaign about a specific conflict in which they are particularly interested. Their campaign should include a slogan/motto, a logo, three specific ideas for ways to help educate the community about this conflict, information about three existing nonprofit organizations that are dedicated to resolving the conflict peacefully, and suggestions for how local students and community members can support the work of these nonprofits.
- Have students write a personal response essay to the following quote:

“It is one thing to say that we each have the right not to be killed. It is another to say that we each have the right to live comfortably, with adequate food, health care, shelter, education, and opportunities for employment. It is even more powerful to say that we each hold these rights equally—that no one person is more entitled to any of these rights than the next, regardless of his or her sex, race, or station in life.”

—Jimmy Carter, Talking Peace

Student Handout: The Iroquois Tree of Peace

There is an ancient Iroquois legend that tells of a mystical Peacemaker and a Tree of Peace.

Once, in a period of terrible warfare and bloodshed among the *Five Nations**, a cycle of anger and violence was taking over every village and threatening to destroy their entire culture. It was at this time that a baby was born to a young woman in a small village. Very early in life, this little boy exhibited almost magical powers. His family knew right away that he was different, and raised him with special care. When he grew into a man, he left his village on a personal quest—to bring Peace to the Five Nations and to the world. He would become known in Native American legend as The Peacemaker.

The man left his family and embarked upon a long, arduous journey from village to village, striving to convince even the most hateful warmongers that Peace must come. After many challenges, and years of traveling throughout the Five Nations, The Peacemaker successfully ended the ongoing wars that were tormenting his people.

When The Peacemaker finally restored Peace to the world, he turned to a nearby pine tree and told his followers, “From now on, this tree will stand as a symbol of Peace, to remind all of us how important it is to use negotiation, not violence, to resolve our differences. I chose this pine tree because of its height: it can be seen from even the most distant villages. The clusters of needles represent all the First Nations of our people, and they are evergreen, symbolizing my wish that this Peace may never be broken. The roots of this tree spread out in all four directions, north, south, east, and west, symbolizing the influence that our Peace will have, all over the world. In the branches of this tree lives a majestic bald eagle. When the eagle thinks danger is approaching, it screeches and calls out. This represents the duty that each of us have to protect our Peace if we feel there is danger approaching.”

**The “Five Nations” refers to five Native American tribes that lived on what is now known as the eastern seaboard of the United States. They were the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca tribes.*

Student Handout: Tree of Peace

Name _____ Date _____

Directions: Provide a meaning for each of the terms below. You may use a dictionary definition, brainstorm examples to illustrate the term, or explain its importance to you. Then arrange each term on the Tree of Peace (Page 2).

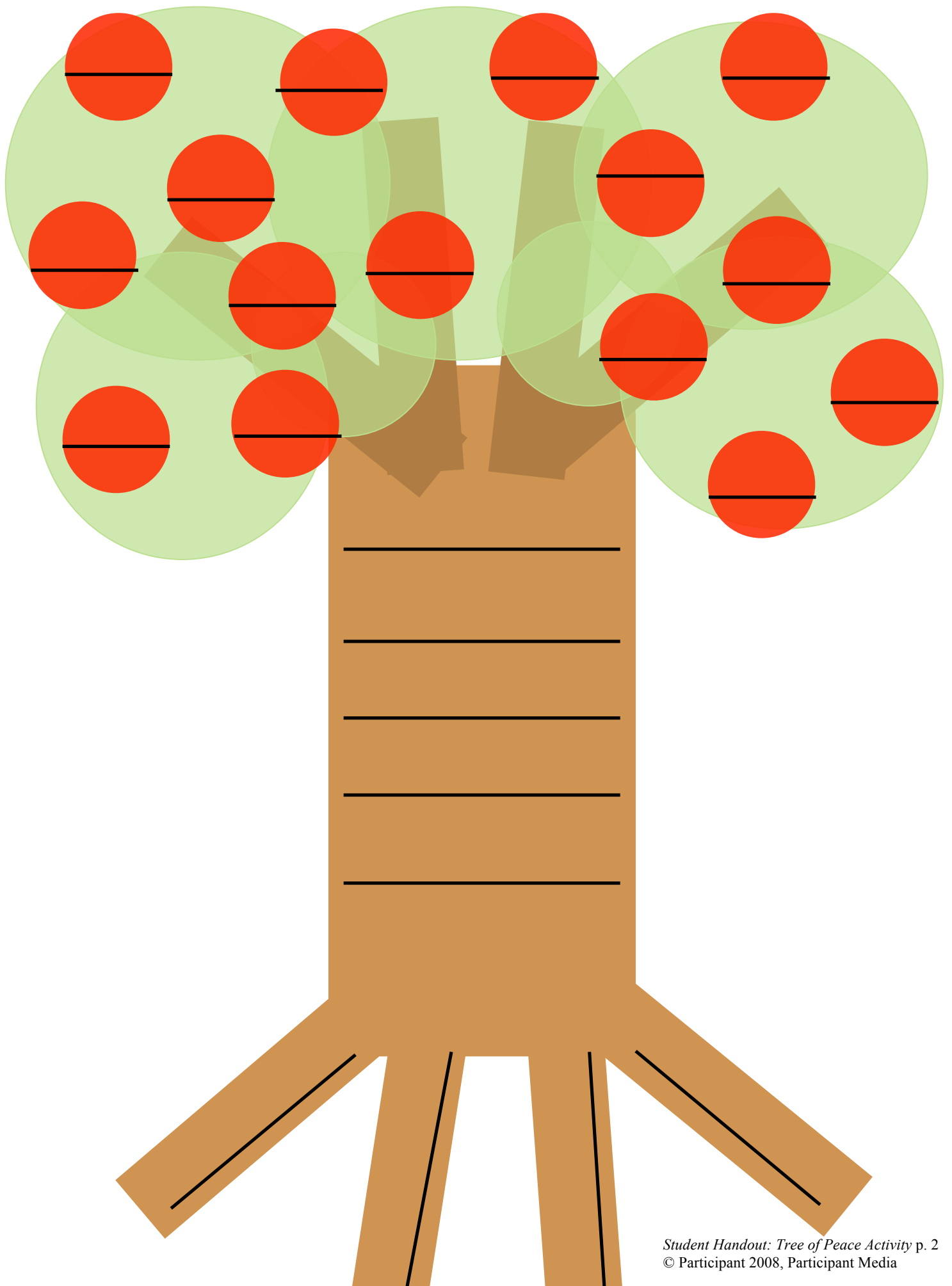
- Write the basic requirements for peace on the roots of the tree.
- Write the core aspects of peace on the trunk of the tree.
- Write the results of peace on the fruit of the tree.

In the space provided, explain why you placed each term where you did on the tree.

Brainstorm additional terms that are not listed below, but which you think belong on the tree.

Place them on the tree in the appropriate places.

TERM	MEANING	EXPLAIN PLACEMENT ON TREE
SELF ESTEEM (PRIDE IN ONE'S HERITAGE)		
PHYSICAL SECURITY AND SAFETY		
FREEDOM OF RELIGION		
COMMUNICATION, FREEDOM OF SPEECH & PRESS		
TOLERANCE ACCEPTANCE OF DIVERSITY		
ARTISTIC FREEDOM		
FRIENDSHIP		
PROSPERITY		
COMPASSION		
HOPE		



Student Handout: A Poison Tree, by William Blake

Directions: Use the poem *A Poison Tree*, below, to answer the questions that follow. Use a separate piece of paper for your answers if necessary.

I was angry with my friend:
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow.

And I watered it in fears
Night and morning with my tears,
And I sunned it with smiles
And with soft deceitful wiles.

And it grew both day and night,
Till it bore an apple bright,
And my foe beheld it shine,
And he knew that it was mine,--

And into my garden stole
When the night had veiled the pole;
In the morning, glad, I see
My foe outstretched beneath the tree.

1. What is this poem about? What is the story that the narrator is telling?
2. Why do you think the narrator tells his *friend* that he is angry, but not his *foe*? What are the results of these actions?
3. What might have happened if he had told his foe that he was angry? How might the outcome have been different? Explain.
4. Trees are often used as symbols of positive things in different cultures, and in literature (Tree of Life, Tree of Peace, Family Tree, etc.). In this poem, the tree symbolizes something negative. What does the tree symbolize? What does the apple symbolize? What does the garden symbolize? Explain whether you find this use of symbolism effective or not.
5. This poem follows a singsong rhyme scheme (aa/bb/cc/dd...etc.). How might this be seen as an example of irony? How does the rhyme scheme work with or against the content of the poem to add meaning? Explain.
6. The last lines of the poem; “In the morning, glad, I see/ My foe outstretched beneath the tree” tell us a great deal about the narrator. What do we learn about him in these two lines? How might one argue that the narrator has also been poisoned?
7. Identify an example of strife in your family, school or neighborhood that could be seen as an illustration of the poem *A Poison Tree*. Support your choice with specific details about the conflict, as well as specific references to the text of the poem.