

We Can Change the World

- Grade Levels: 6-9
- Academic Standards: Academic Standards for Civics and Government 5.1C, 5.1J, 5.2A-G, 5.3G, and 5.3J.
- Background: This lesson can be used as an introduction to or a culminating activity for studying civil disobedience, creative nonviolence, Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy, significant events in his life, the influences on Gandhi's life, and the people Gandhi has influenced and continues to influence today. Its application here is focused as an introductory lesson in bullying prevention.

Sharon Silver (a middle school conflict resolution teacher at Ridley Middle School, Ridley Park, Pa.) and her cousin, Daniel Sembello (a Grammy award winning songwriter and producer), teamed up to research, write and produce the CD, *Revolution of the Spirit*. Silver created the materials reflected in the lesson below that shows how one song from the CD, the Gandhi track "We Can Change the World," can be used in a classroom. Silver recognized the role the media plays in educating our youth, and she wanted to provide an inspiring experience for students by exposing them to history and philosophy through music. There are 10 songs on the CD, each dedicated to individuals who have played a critical role in the struggle for justice. Track 4, "We Can Change the World," is about Gandhi. "Revolution of the Spirit," the title song of the CD, is dedicated to Aung San Suu Kyi, who is currently under house arrest in Burma. Archbishop Desmond Tutu lent his voice to "Walk Through the Fire," which is dedicated to those who fought the injustice of the apartheid system in South Africa. Others celebrated in song on the CD include Sojourner Truth, Henry David Thoreau, Jane Addams, Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta. Each of the songs could be easily used in a lesson similar to this lesson. For more information please visit www.RevolutionOfTheSpirit.com.

The CD's are available online at www.cdbaby.com/cd/sharonsilver, or you can purchase the *Revolution of the Spirit* CD from one of the following organizations and support that organization's work for peace and justice at the same time.

The M.K.Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence; www.gandhiinstitute.org; Ph: (901) 452-2824
The Liberty Museum; 321 Chestnut Street; Philadelphia, Pa.; Ph: (215) 925-2800, Ext. 5;
www.libertymuseum.org.

Materials:

- "We Can Change the World" Lyric sheets — one per student
- "Revolution of the Spirit" CD — (track 4: "We Can Change the World")
- CD player (if song is played)

Procedure:

Begin by asking students what kind of music they listen to in their free time. Tell them that you are going to share some music with them in teaching a lesson about the law and the role of the individual in society. The song also has a message for schools about bullying. Students and

teachers of subjects other than music sometimes forget the value of using music in learning, including:

- Reading lyrics to a rhythm provides an opportunity to increase fluency in reading.
- Lyrical rhythm increases memorization.
- Drawing a scene from the lyrics or Gandhi's life adds another dimension to the lesson, accommodating multiple learning styles and intelligences.
- It provides an opportunity to express creativity and make learning joyful.
- It provides an opportunity for students to work together.
- It makes it easier to get correct answers on a test.

Explain that the class is going to be listening to and/or reading a song about Mahatma Gandhi. The song will help students learn (or review, if students have already studied Gandhi) about some of the things he believed and some of the things he did. Biographical information on Gandhi is available at the Gandhi Institute Web site above; for purposes of this lesson, the song contains all of the biography the students will need to participate.

Distribute lyric sheets, and direct students to read along as they listen either to the playing or reading of the song. Cover the entire song while students read along. Ask the students if there are any words or phrases they don't understand and answer any questions. Students might ask "What is ahimsa?" AHIMSA is a Sanskrit term that means, literally, "non-injury," or "non-killing." It is a term that implies something far more than a passive way of life; it is a dynamic expression of compassion. It is more than just refraining from violence. It means going through life doing the least possible harm, but it also means doing the most amount of helping and benefiting of others. It has been redefined by some as "dynamic harmlessness" and "dynamic compassion."

Play or read the song again, and ask if there are any more questions. If there are no more questions, ask the students this key question: What does this song, and Gandhi's life, tell us about "My World, My Responsibility?" That is the theme of Law day in Pennsylvania — how would Gandhi interpret that theme?

Then ask the students how Gandhi would behave if he were a student at their school today? How would he look at instances of injustice such as bullying? What would Gandhi do if he saw students being bullied?

Gandhi believed that injustice had to be challenged but he felt challenging injustice with violence of any kind only added to the injustice. Dr. Martin Luther King credited Gandhi with inspiring his non-violent civil disobedience that helped overturn unjust laws in our nation. Civil disobedience means that you refuse to follow laws that you believe are unjust and that you suffer the punishment for breaking those laws, forcing the people who punish you to see the injustice both of their acts and the underlying law.

Here are a few questions that may help extend any discussion generated by the music:

1. What does "violence only breeds violence" mean? Give an example.
2. What does "an eye for an eye makes the whole world blind" mean? Give an example.

3. What does “in the midst of the darkness, the light still prevails” mean? What does prevail mean? Give an example.
4. What does “you gotta be the change you want to see in this world” mean? Give an example.
5. “Gandhi’s message was carried over turbulent seas — to the heart of Martin Luther King” — why are the seas described as turbulent? What was going on in America at the time?
6. What does “non-violence is truly a weapon of the strong” mean?
7. What are some other words for fearless?
8. What does humble mean?
9. What kind of protests did Gandhi use? Give examples.
10. According to Gandhi, revenge — or an “eye for an eye,” has what result?

Have the students explain their answers.

Homework options:

1. “Non-violence is a weapon of the strong” — Explain the meaning of the quote. Do you agree or disagree with the quote? Explain your answer. (Include examples)
2. “You must be the change you wish to see in the world” — Explain the meaning of the quote. Do you agree or disagree? Explain your answer and give examples.
3. “In the midst of the darkness, the light still prevails” — Explain the meaning of the quote. Do you agree or disagree? Explain your answer and include examples.
4. Describe and illustrate the meaning of Ahimsa with examples from history or from your community.
5. Illustrate a line or verse from the song or one of Gandhi’s quotes.
6. Create an anti-bullying poster using Gandhi’s words and life as a part of the poster.

“We Can Change The World”

by

Sharon Silver, Daniel Sembello, Michael Sembello

Ahimsa Satyagraha
Ahimsa Satyagraha

If you wanna start a revolution
Know what you're fighting for
Cause it's never gonna come
From the force of a gun
Violence only breeds violence
Oh our history tells it all

He walked 240 miles
To the Arabian Sea
With a handful of salt
He set India free
In the midst of the darkness
Oh the light it still prevails

The life of Gandhi
Taught the whole world to see
He was a pilgrim of peace
An ordinary man

Fearless and humble
Resisted all evil
With faith, hope and justice
Protests that won

With the soul force of love
We can change the world
Ahimsa Satyagraha
Ahimsa Satyagraha

Return goodness for evil
With no hatred behind
Cause an eye for an eye

Makes the whole world blind
Nonviolence is truly
A weapon of the strong

Gandhi's message was carried
Over turbulent seas
To the heart of
Martin Luther King
If we all stand together
It won't just be a dream

The life of Gandhi
Taught the whole world to see
He was a pilgrim of peace
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With the soul force of love
We can change the world
Ahimsa Satyagraha
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We can all make a difference
If we all do our part
If you stand up and fight for
The cause that you love
You gotta be the change
You wanna see in this world
So give with your heart
Unconditional love for all