

# C7

LESSON 7  
CHILDREN  
V.1



political

## UNDERSTANDING OPINIONS

### CHILDREN LESSON 7: POLITICAL PEACE 2

#### AGE(S)

Recommended for ages 8-12

#### TIME REQUIRED

1 hour

#### TEACHER PREPARATION

To prepare for this lesson...

- Read the “[5 Spheres of Peace](#)” NPA Framework focusing on the political peace sphere
- Read the [Teacher’s Guide](#) for preparation and reflection questions

#### MATERIALS

- Pictures cut into fourths from magazines, newspapers, or the Internet
- “Stranded” worksheet (included)

#### LEARNING GOALS

- Students will reflect on how individual experiences shape personal opinions
- Students will explore methods of resolving differences in opinion through practicing peace-building strategies such as: active listening, asking questions, communicating with care, using “I feel” statements, and looking for win-win solutions

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will guess what object is in a cut piece of photograph based on their previous experiences of seeing similar shapes
- Students will discuss how their previous experiences helped form their opinions of what object was in the photograph
- Students will brainstorm practices for building peace when differences of opinions arise between people
- Students will use these strategies while engaged in a group activity that challenges group members with differing opinions to come to a consensus
- Student will reflect on what strategies were most useful for building peace in the midst of differing opinions

#### INTRODUCTION

Intentional reflection on how opinions are formed and ways of managing differences in opinion can be useful for students of all ages. As students begin to develop opinions and see differences, it is important they are provided with many peacebuilding strategies they can utilize when faced with these conflicts. Through building perspective-taking skills, children can develop capacities to manage differences in opinions constructively. Knowing and acknowledging alternative perspectives can lead to new solutions and conflict prevention. Students can rely on the skills used for building right relationships in the social sphere as they navigate new relationship challenges in larger group settings and the political sphere.

The first activity of this lesson is intended to challenge students to think about how previous experiences shape their opinions through interpreting pieces of images. It is also important to

note during this activity that others' opinions are also based upon life experiences. The opinions of others, similar or different, are shaped by a variety of experiences, including encounters with school, family, church, entertainment/media, and friends. The second activity engages students in a group decision-making process where students start with personal opinions and try and reach a consensus. Reflection on decision-making process of the group and the strategies that were most helpful in building peace can nurture the peacebuilding skills needed for future political engagement.

## GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What is an opinion?
- How are opinions formed?
- Why do people have different opinions?
- What strategies are useful for building peace when differences in opinion arise?

## OPENING DISCUSSION

Begin the activity by asking students “What is an opinion?” Listen to student responses. Ask students to raise their hands if they like or dislike different foods, objects, TV shows, hobbies, etc. Think of relevant examples for your students where you know they may have differing opinions. Tell students that their opinion is their thoughts and feelings about an issue. As demonstrated by the show of hands, many of them have differences in opinion. Share with students that when groups of people have to make decisions together differences in opinion can sometimes cause conflicts. These differences can be an opportunity to learn something new or think in a new way. Sometimes it can be difficult to see these differences as a positive experience, especially when you may not understand where these differences in opinion are coming from. Inform students they are going to explore where opinions come from and practice some different ways to manage conflicts when differences of opinion arise.

## RESOURCES

- [The Learning Network – Teaching and Learning with the New York Times: Student Opinion Section.](#) Provides questions that students 13 years and older can contribute their opinions to. Although this lesson is for younger students, many may still be interested in contributing their opinion to a classroom discussion on the questions and then read the thoughts of other students online.
- [Open-ended writing prompts that develop students' opinions](#) (developed by Minds in Bloom)
- [How to use open-ended questions with Children.](#) (Developed by Susan Syddall)

## ACTIVITY 1: PIECING TOGETHER OPINIONS

To prepare this activity you will need to print pictures from the Internet or find pictures in magazines and newspapers. Cut these pictures into fourths (or more as needed to “disguise” the overall picture). Students will look at one piece to guess what they think the whole picture is. The best pictures for this activity are of close up items, where you will only see a small section of the subject by seeing a piece of the picture. The more abstract the picture the more differences there will be in student guesses.

**1.** Tell students that they are going to play detective. Hold up a piece of a picture (as described above) and have students guess what they think is on the picture. Give students time to make multiple guesses. As students make guesses, ask why they think their guess is correct. Ask what the picture reminds them of? Have they seen or owned the item before? Repeat this process multiple times with different pictures before going on to the following questions. Share with students the idea that similar to the different guesses they had on these pictures people have differences in opinions all the time. Just as the students used their previous experiences to help them guess what was in the pictures, people use their previous experiences to help form their opinions. Refer to some of the differences in opinion found when students raised their hands earlier. Ask a few students how they know they liked or disliked the item. This will provide more concrete examples for how previous experiences form opinions.

**2.** Once students have made guesses on multiple pictures, ask why they had different opinions/guesses. How did they come up with their guesses? Did they use previous experiences to help with their guess? Remind students that all of our opinions are shaped by our life experiences. Each of us has different life experiences, which can make our opinions different as well.

**3.** Ask students what happens when they have a different opinion than someone else. Can this impact the relationship between you and another person? Can differences in opinion be positive or helpful? How? Can differences in opinion

sometime create an argument? Ask students if they can give an example of a time when they disagreed with someone else.

**TEACHER NOTE:** You may want to ask students not to use examples of conflicts that involve people at school or to use names.

**4.** Once students have given a few examples, ask what kind of actions can help build peace when there are differences in opinion? Write down suggestions on the board. In addition to student suggestions you may want to add some of the following: Take turns listening and speaking, ask questions - remember your differences come from different experiences so ask why someone has this opinion, use “I feel statements”, if you need to make a decision together look for a solution that both people can agree upon.

**5.** After brainstorming some peacebuilding strategies, inform students they are going to try these skills today with their next activity.

## **ACTIVITY 2: STRANDED**

**1.** In the following activity students will be working together in small groups. Each represents a group of people who will be stranded on an island for a full year. Their challenge is to survive that year with only ten items. Tell students that they will get a piece of paper and at the top will be a box with options of items they can pick from. Each group may also add one item to their supplies that is not in the box.

**2.** Pass out a “Stranded” worksheet to each student. Tell students that first they will form their own opinions on what items they think they will need to survive this challenge. Give students five minutes to fill out the worksheet individually then break students into small groups of no more than five or six students. Pass out another blank copy of the worksheet to each group.

**3.** Inform students their challenge is to work as a group to create a group list of ten items. Remind students of the different peacebuilding strategies they brainstormed such as: active listening, using “I feel” statements, taking turns listening and speaking, asking questions about why others have opinions, and coming up with win-win solutions that can be used to help them come to an agreement. Give students 15 to 25 minutes to complete their list. Walk around to different student groups and suggest different peacebuilding strategies as students arrive at conflicting ideas.

## **CLOSING**

Have groups present the ten items they packed to survive the year on the island. After each group presents, ask the following questions:

- How did you decide what to pack? How did your previous experiences help you make these decisions?
- Were there any differences in opinions within your group?
- Are differences in opinion always negative? How can they be helpful?
- What were the most difficult items to decide upon within your group?
- What strategies did you feel were most useful in building peace when faced with differences in opinions?

## **FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES**

### **1. Walk the line**

Put colored masking tape in a long line across the floor of the classroom. On one end of the line put a piece of paper that reads, “agree.” On the other end of the line put a piece of paper that reads, “disagree.” In the middle, place a piece of paper that reads “neutral.” Ask students opinion questions and have them stand somewhere on the line between these words to demonstrate their thoughts and feelings on the issue. After students are on the line you can ask for volunteers to share why they agree, disagree, are neutral or somewhere in between. This activity has a similar format to the lesson “Where do you stand?” as included in the [Compasito Manual on Human Rights Education for Children](#).

### **2. Family Interview**

Have students come up with an opinion question to interview their family or friends. Be sure to have students ask their interviewees why they have their opinion. After collecting interviews, ask students their own opinions about the issue. Did they learn anything about the issue from listening to the thoughts of others? Do they agree or disagree with these perspectives.

### 3. Question of the Week

Pose an open-ended question each week to students. Use an empty tissue box as a response box, where students can place their written opinions, with reasoning, either anonymously or not. At the end of the week, read the student responses to the class.

## REGISTRATION, FEEDBACK & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Use of this curriculum is free – no registration is required. However, we encourage you to take 3-5 minutes to complete our [registration/feedback form](#) so we may know how and where the curriculum is being used, what is most effective, and how we can continue to improve it.

\*This curriculum was developed by [Tony Jenkins](#) and [Tiffany Jenkins](#). Reproduction and distribution is permissible and encouraged, however credit should be given to the authors and the [National Peace Academy](#).

## STRANDED ON A DESERT ISLAND

You are stranded on a desert island for a whole year. Your challenge is to survive by choosing 10 items from the list below. You are also allowed one bonus item of your choice (it does not have to be from the list below).

### Supply Choices (choose 10)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 100 cans of beans</li><li>• Rope (unknown amount)</li><li>• 50 gallons of water</li><li>• Sharp machete</li><li>• Compass</li><li>• Journal</li><li>• 5 books (contents unknown)</li><li>• Field guide of poisonous plants &amp; animals on the island</li><li>• Guitar</li><li>• Blankets</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Plastic tarp</li><li>• Flashlight</li><li>• Box of 500 Matches</li><li>• Map of the island</li><li>• Water filtration system (to get clean water)</li><li>• Toilet paper (20 rolls)</li><li>• Toothbrush</li><li>• 4 Cups, 4 plates, and 1 set of silverware</li><li>• Can opener</li><li>• 5 large Jackets</li></ul> |
|--|---|

### My Supply Box

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

6)

7)

8)

9)

10)

Bonus Item: