

# Lesson 1.1

## Defining Conflict



### Rationale

Before students can begin to think about how to prevent or manage conflict, they must be able to identify it. This process begins with establishing a definition for conflict. In this activity, students begin to define conflict and explore various interpretations of conflict in order to further their understanding of the subject.

### Objectives

1. To consider definitions and interpretations of conflict as a way of forming one's own understanding.
2. To consider whether conflict is positive or negative.
3. To explore the role of conflict in our lives.

### Standards

- ◆ Culture
- ◆ Power, Authority, and Governance
- ◆ Civic Ideals and Practices

**Time:** Two class periods (Part 1–45 minutes; Part 2–45 minutes)

Materials are listed below but this lesson could be done with black/white board and markers.

### Materials for Part 1

- Sticky notes like Post-It® notes (a different color for each group) or small pieces of paper
- Chart paper and markers
- Tape (to tape up chart paper, if needed, and to tape small pieces of paper if sticky notes are not available)

- Paragraph Exit Pass Worksheet (or write it on the board)
- Timer or watch/clock

### Materials for Part 2

- Sticky notes like Post-It® notes (a different color for each group) or small pieces of paper
- Chart paper and markers
- Tape (to tape up chart paper, if needed, and to tape up small pieces of paper if sticky notes are not available)
- Quotes on Conflict and Conflict Management* Handout (cut into strips)
- CD player and CD (of your choice, developmentally appropriate)
- Paragraph Exit Pass Worksheet (or write it on the board)
- Timer or watch/clock



45 minutes

## Part 1

### Procedures

#### I. Essential Questions

1. How can we define conflict?
2. Why might there be multiple definitions of conflict?

#### II. Motivation/Introduction (10 minutes)

1. Explain to students that you are going to share a list of words that can be associated with conflict. Share that each statement will begin with “When I say conflict, you think of . . .” and then a word. Each time you finish the sentence with a new word, they should clap if students think of that word very often; snap if they think of the word sometimes; and stay silent if they do not think of it much at all. Encourage students to look around the room and listen with each word to be aware of their classmates’ responses. Note that there are no right or wrong answers for this activity.
2. Start each statement round with, “When I say conflict, you think of . . .” and use some or all of the following words to finish each sentence: difference, innocent, hurt, anger, win/lose, decision, normal, disagree, guilty, unfair, struggle, right, clash, violence, fight, people, learning, wrong, war, ideas, agreement, against, separate, change, avoid, intervene, help.

When you have finished your sentences, ask for volunteers to finish the sentence with their own words.

3. Briefly discuss the exercise using some or all of the following questions.
  - ◆ Which words had the “loudest” reaction, meaning that many of you associate conflict with the word? Which words had the “quietest” reaction? (write them on the board)
  - ◆ Why do you think these words were either frequently associated or infrequently associated with conflict?
  - ◆ Is a fight different than an argument? Why do conflicts become violent?
  - ◆ Do you think conflict is always bad or negative? Can it be positive or have a good ending?

**Note:** People view conflicts in many different ways, though often, we tend to think of conflict as something that should be avoided. Yet, conflict is neither positive nor negative by itself; how we choose to respond to conflict makes it positive or negative. In this lesson, students will challenge their notions of conflict in order to develop the skills and awareness necessary to respond to conflicts in positive and constructive ways.

- ◆ Can you think of a conflict you experienced that ended up being positive and that helped you learn something about yourself or someone else?

### III. Teacher Directed (15 Minutes)

1. Divide students into groups of three. See sidebar for grouping suggestions.
2. Introduce the different levels of conflict: personal, local, national, and international. Personal—something that directly involved or impacted you; Local—something that happened in your community, school, state; National—something that happened in the country; or International—something that happened in the world.
3. Provide students with an example of each type of conflict.
4. Ask students to think about and share stories about conflict in their lives. They can think personally, locally, nationally, or internationally. Tell them that while one person is sharing, the rest of the group should listen without interruption and write down key words that run through everyone's stories. Refer back to the exercise "When I say conflict, you think of . . ." for examples.
5. Circulate as groups are sharing.
6. Call out "Switch" every two minutes to ensure that every student gets to share.
7. Distribute sticky notes to each group, with each group getting a different color. Once the groups are done, tell them to share their lists of key words out loud and write each word on a sticky note, writing only one word per sticky note. Direct them to stick all of their group's sticky notes on a piece of chart paper.

### IV. Guided Practice (15 minutes)

1. Once all groups have placed their sticky notes on chart paper, have each group share their words with the whole class and hang their chart paper on the wall/board. They can stick the notes directly on the board if you don't have chart paper.
2. After all groups have shared, tell them that they are going to write a definition of conflict using the sticky note words from any of the groups.
3. Tell them that their group needs to decide on their top ten words (as a start) from any of the sticky notes hanging. Once they have decided on their top ten, have one representative from each team come to the front and have him or her take their group's ten sticky notes. There will likely be multiples of some words. If a group wants a word that has been taken, they can write that word on a new sticky note.
4. Tell each group to write their definition of conflict using only the sticky notes they have selected. They may write transition and conjunction words between sticky notes (i.e., the, and, if, etc), and they may gather more sticky notes as they are working, if they need them.

### V. Independent Practice (5 minutes)

1. Give time for groups to write their sticky note definitions on chart paper.
2. Once done, hang all of the definitions in the room.
3. To share, each group can read their definition or have the whole class take a Gallery Walk (a walk around the room) of the definitions.
4. Ask some or all of the following questions:
  - ◆ What similarities and differences do you see between the groups' definitions?

**Note:** The U.S. Institute of Peace focuses on conflicts beyond U.S. borders. These conflicts may be interstate (between countries, e.g., Arab-Israeli conflict) or intrastate (between groups within a country, e.g., the Lords Resistance Army and the government in Uganda).

#### GROUPING SUGGESTIONS

**Option 1.** Invite students to create a physical expression of how they feel about conflict. Have them look around the room and identify a person who has made a similar expression. Start clapping slowly and tell them with each clap they should take one step closer to their identified classmate/s. If the groups are not the right number, adjust them accordingly.

**Option 2.** Place a big sign that says conflict in the middle of the room or wear it yourself to personify conflict. Invite students to position themselves in relation to the conflict according to how they tend to respond to conflict. For example, if they don't like dealing with it, they can go to the far end of the room and turn away from the conflict. If they directly address it, they can stand really close to the conflict. Create groups with students according to where they are standing in the room.

**Note:** USIP's Peace Terms defines conflict as follows: An inevitable aspect of human interaction, conflict is present when two or more individuals or groups pursue mutually incompatible goals [glossary.usip.org](http://glossary.usip.org).

**Extension Activity**

Do the same “When You Say Conflict, I Think Of . . .” exercise with different words instead of conflict, such as democracy, global citizen, human rights, etc.

- ◆ Are these differences important? Why?
5. Have each student put a dot sticker on the definition of conflict they like most or have students verbally identify which definition they like most.

**VI. Homework**

Distribute the *Paragraph Exit Pass* Worksheet and tell students that for homework they must answer the following question in a paragraph, “Why might there be multiple definitions of conflict?” The paragraph must contain a topic sentence, four supporting details and a concluding sentence. Have students complete the exit pass for homework unless you complete the lesson early, in which case students can complete it in class.

**Assessment:**

Participation, group definitions of conflict, *Paragraph Exit Pass* Worksheet

## Lesson 1.1 WORKSHEET: PARAGRAPH EXIT PASS, Part 1

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Exit Pass Question:

Topic Sentence:			
Supporting Detail 1	Supporting Detail 2	Supporting Detail 3	Supporting Detail 4
Summary/Concluding Sentence:			

Cut here ✂ \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Exit Pass Question:

Topic Sentence:			
Supporting Detail 1	Supporting Detail 2	Supporting Detail 3	Supporting Detail 4
Summary/Concluding Sentence:			



45 minutes

## Part 2

### Procedures

#### I. Essential Questions

1. What can we learn about conflict through the words of others?
2. Does the definition of conflict always remain the same?

#### II. Motivation/Introduction (1 minute)

Explain to students that people view and understand conflict in different ways.

#### III. Teacher Directed (5 minutes)

1. Distribute quotes from the Handout: *Quotes on Conflict and Conflict Management*—one quote to each student—and give them time to read their quotes. You may choose to supplement the list with quotes from your own research.
2. Explain that the goal of this activity is to hear many different quotes about conflict and to end up with the one that best reflects conflict. In order to do this, they will be given the chance to share their quotes with classmates.
3. Tell students that when you begin playing music, students should walk around the room. When the music stops, students should form a group with two to four people standing near them. Each person in the group should read his or her quote out loud to the small group. If students hear a quote they like better than the one that they have, they can ask that person to trade with them. Make note that students do not have to trade their quote if they do not want to, but encourage students to share and exchange in a respectful manner. Students are encouraged to share their opinions about the quotes within their small group and to listen quietly to others.

When the music starts again, students should move around again and repeat the same process with different peers.

#### IV. Guided Practice (15 minutes)

1. Set the timer for five minutes.
2. Play the music, stop, give five minutes for conversations and trading.
3. Repeat one or two more times.

#### V. Independent Practice (10 minutes)

1. After the final round, gather students in a large circle if you have space. Otherwise, students can return to their seats.
2. Go around the circle and have everyone share in 30 seconds the quote they ended up with, what it means to them, and why they chose that quote.
3. Ask students to tape their quote to the sticky note definition of conflict (on chart paper from the previous lesson) that it best matches.

**VI. Discussion (7 minutes)**

Lead a discussion with the whole class using some or all of the following questions:

- ◆ What did you learn from this activity about how different people view conflict?
- ◆ Is one view and understanding of conflict more correct than another?
- ◆ Why do you think so many quotes exist about conflict?
- ◆ Why might different societies have different views about conflict?

**VI. Closure (7 minutes)**

1. Handout Paragraph Exit Pass.
2. Have students complete a Paragraph Exit Pass by answering the following question in a paragraph, "In what ways has your definition of conflict changed?" Collect the paragraphs as students leave the room or have students complete the exit pass for homework if you do not have time.

**Assessment:**

Participation, *Paragraph Exit Pass* Worksheet

**Note:** Conflict by itself is neither good nor bad. Each of us as individuals decides what conflict means to us, and we influence what happens in a conflict based on how we respond to it. Our goal is to learn to respond to conflict in a way that does not involve violence and that can change the situation for the better.

**Extension Activities**

1. Connect with the art teacher to have students illustrate their quotes.
2. Have students research the person who said the quote and identify the context in which the statement was made.
3. Have students find additional quotes on conflict and share them with the class.

## Lesson 1.1 HANDOUT: QUOTES ON CONFLICT AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

(cut into strips)

Peace is not the absence of conflict, it is the ability to handle conflict by peaceful means. —Ronald Reagan

Aggressive conduct, if allowed to go unchecked and unchallenged, ultimately leads to war. —John F. Kennedy

Today the real test of power is not capacity to make war, but capacity to prevent it. —Anne O'Hare McCormick

You can't shake hands with a clenched fist. —Indira Gandhi

There should be an honest attempt at the reconciliation of differences before resorting to combat. —Jimmy Carter

If you want to make peace, you don't talk to your friends. You talk to your enemies. —Moshe Dayan

When you negotiate an agreement, you must remember that you are also negotiating a relationship. —Harold Nicolson

A diplomat must use his ears, not his mouth. —Komura Jutaro

Truth springs from argument amongst friends. —David Hume

Don't be afraid of opposition. Remember, a kite rises against; not with; the wind. —Hamilton Mabie

The harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly; it is dearness only that gives everything its value. —Thomas Paine

Never ascribe to an opponent motives meaner than your own. —John M. Barrie

An eye for an eye makes us all blind. —Mahatma Gandhi

If war is the violent resolution of conflict, then peace is not the absence of conflict, but rather, the ability to resolve conflict without violence. — C.T. Lawrence Butler, author of *On Conflict and Consensus. A Handbook on Formal Consensus Decision-making* (2000)

Work on developing a cooperative relationship, so when conflict comes, you believe you are allies. —Dean Tjosvold

You can outdistance that which is running after you, but not what is running inside you. —Rwandan Proverb

Difficulties are meant to rouse, not discourage. The human spirit is to grow strong by conflict. —William Ellery Channing

## Lesson 1.1 WORKSHEET: PARAGRAPH EXIT PASS, Part 2

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Exit Pass Question:

Topic Sentence:			
Supporting Detail 1	Supporting Detail 2	Supporting Detail 3	Supporting Detail 4
Summary/Concluding Sentence:			

Cut here ✂ \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Exit Pass Question:

Topic Sentence:			
Supporting Detail 1	Supporting Detail 2	Supporting Detail 3	Supporting Detail 4
Summary/Concluding Sentence:			