Lesson Plan for Witness Video: "Detecting Landmines: Building Peace"

Rationale: Testimonials provide first-hand accounts of experiences that can help clarify complex concepts. This witness video offers a different kind of testimonial, telling the story of de-mining dogs as a window into the intense, dangerous work that must be done once violent conflict has ended. The lesson introduces students to the lifecycle of conflict, as a way to introduce the notion that peace and conflict are not static concepts. Students then watch the story of de-mining dogs and consider other types of activities that must be done during post-conflict reconstruction.

Objectives:

1. To understand the various phases of conflict and the idea that ending conflicts can be complex.

2. To examine the process of post-conflict reconstruction.

3. To consider what peacebuilding means and what it means to be a peacebuilder.

Age: 12 and above (US middle school grade 6 and above)

Time: 60 minutes

Materials:

- "Detecting Landmines: Building Peace" video
- Handout: Background on De-Mining Dogs
- Handout: The Curve of Conflict
- Teacher Resource/Student Handout: Explanation of the Curve of Conflict
- Worksheet: Note-Taking Sheet
- Worksheet: Analyzing a Conflict
- Teacher Resource: Background on De-Mining Dogs

PART 1: Understanding the lifecycle of conflict

Procedures:

1. Select a historical or current conflict with which your students are familiar. This could be the Civil War in the United States or the war in Iraq. Ask students the following questions:

    - When did the conflict begin?

- When did violence break out?
- When did the conflict end? How do you know that it ended?

2. Distribute the *Curve of Conflict* Handout to students and explain that violent conflicts do not always have a clear beginning or ending. Ceasefire agreements or peace agreements may be ignored or violated, which can lead to a re-emergence of violence. Even after violence has ended, the consequences of war affect many people in a society.

You can walk students through the first two stages of the curve of conflict using the conflict that you used in step 1 of the lesson or you can explain the concepts using the examples/cases in the Teacher Resource: *Explanation of the Curve of Conflict*, as well as other examples the students generate.

***Note**: If students do not know enough about the conflict you've selected as an illustration of the curve of conflict, you can have them research the conflict outside of class using the* Analyzing a Conflict *Worksheet.*

3. Explain to students that post-conflict reconstruction is the phase of a conflict in which societies attempt to rebuild after the violent conflict appears to have ended. With regard to the conflict you are using as an example, ask students:

- What happened during the post-conflict phase of that war?
- What rebuilding needed to happen?
- Who did the rebuilding?

4. Share with students that humans aren't the only ones capable of supporting post-conflict reconstruction efforts. Animals can also contribute. Introduce the video "Detecting Landmines: Building Peace" using information from the background on the video.

5. Distribute the Note-Taking Sheet and review the questions with students.

6. Show the video and de-brief the experience using some or all of the questions below:

Debrief:

1. What effects of war did you see in the video that came up during our discussion of the curve of conflict?

2. What effects did you notice that you had not thought of before?

3. In what way does the participation of dogs in post-conflict reconstruction shape how you think about peacebuilding – what peacebuilding means, who's involved in peacebuilding, etc…?

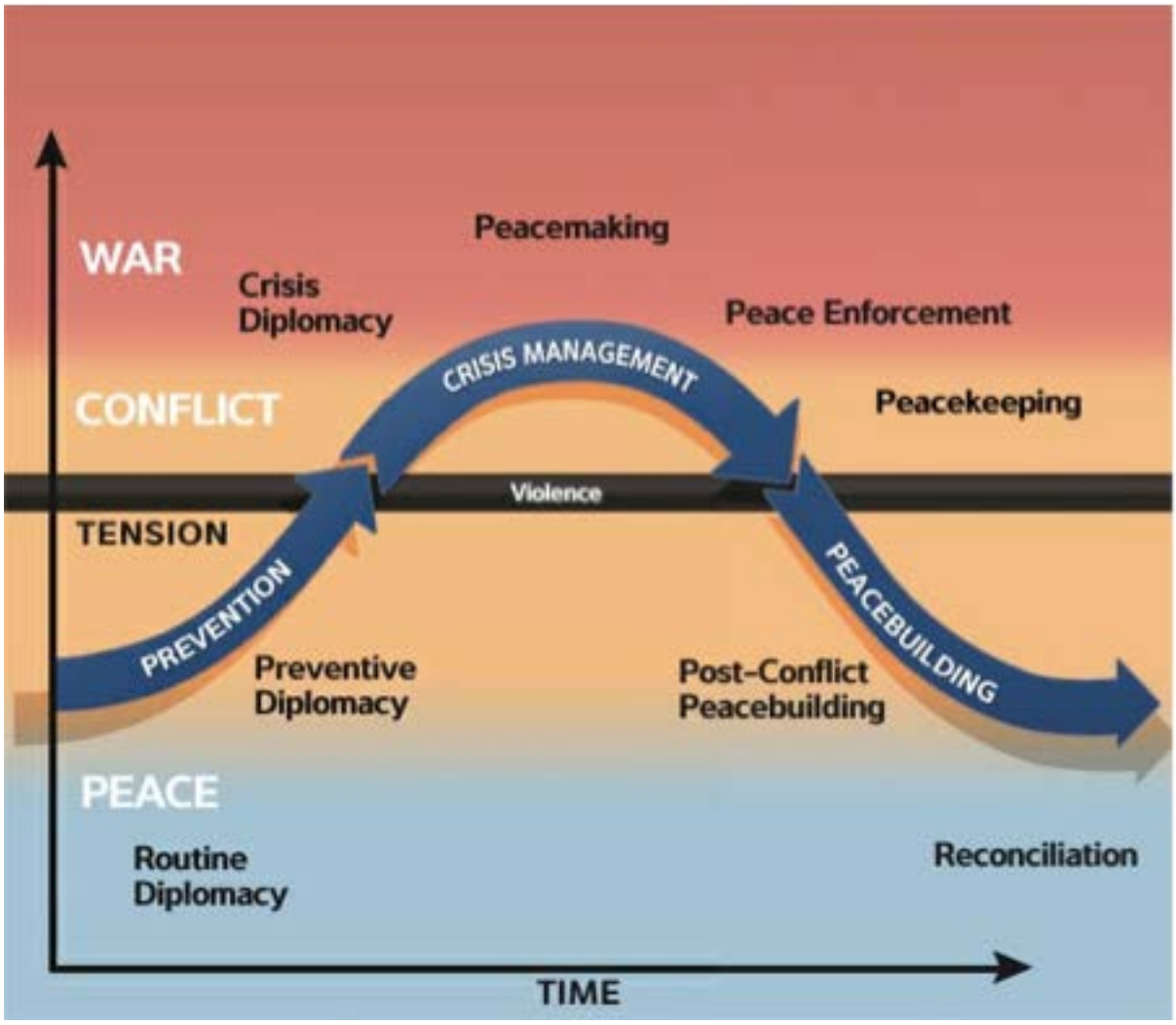
4. What organizations in your country work in countries affected by conflict? What do they do?

5. How might their work help build peace in those countries?

6. How can you get involved in these organizations?

Handout: The Curve of Conflict

Conflict has its own dynamic, and it tends to escalate and recede over time. The curve of conflict helps us to visualize how conflicts typically evolve over time and how different phases of conflict relate to one another. It is one way in which we can deconstruct the dynamic of conflict and seek to understand it and handle it more effectively. Along the curve, we can identify discrete stages where action can be taken to prevent, manage, or resolve conflict.



Teacher Resource/Student Handout: Explanation of the Curve of Conflict

Overview

The first phase of the curve shows an escalation from stable peace to growing hostility, increasing tension, and then the outbreak of violence. The mid-phase of the curve is where violent conflict peaks and then begins to subside. The back-end of the curve shows the de-escalation of conflict.

Understanding where a conflict falls in the cycle is essential to developing effective strategies for intervention, crisis management, and for controlling violence. It is also critical to determining the best timing of those strategies.

Even when conflicts de-escalate, they can recur, and the curve can turn back up. At any point in time, a number of the active conflicts in the world are old conflicts re-ignited; they were resolved only to fall back into old patterns of violence.

Peacebuilding is a process and not an end-state. Managing conflict takes constant work, but it can solve problems, save lives and money, and it is worth our best effort, particularly in an era of weapons of mass destruction.

Conflict Prevention

When dealing with international conflicts, it is our objective to prevent them from turning violent in the first place; to control and de-escalate the situation before violence breaks out. Acting early saves lives and saves money, too.

Conflict prevention refers to strategies used in the pre-violent phase, at the front-end of the curve of conflict. They may include measures to increase trust and establish predictability among the conflict parties. These strategies are intended to keep disputes from escalating into violence. While routine diplomacy takes place during peace time, preventive diplomacy can help address and manage escalating tension.

The idea that future wars can be prevented before they break out has been around for many generations. In more recent years, governments and international organizations – including the U.S. government and the United Nations – have made conflict prevention a clearer goal.

In today's complex world, new wars will continue to erupt unless new efforts are made to prevent them. Global dynamics such as political instability and economic turbulence, as well as phenomena such as climate change, may lead to new tensions and to escalating conflict over power and resources. It is important that we have the tools and strategies to prevent such conflicts crossing the line into violence and war.

Case Study

One example of conflict prevention occurred with South Africa's transition to democracy in the early 1990s, when decades of apartheid rule by a white minority government ended, and political and other rights were finally extended to the rest of the population. Despite deep-seated tensions, the country avoided an escalation into violent conflict, and successive elections since 1994 have confirmed the establishment of a democratic culture even in the face of ongoing internal challenges, including persistent poverty and high rates of unemployment.

Crisis Management

Crisis management describes efforts – by the parties to the conflict as well as outside parties – to limit, contain, or resolve conflicts, especially violent ones. While conflicts can rarely be eliminated entirely, there are measures that can be used to manage them and prevent their escalation into violence.

Crisis management can also refer to strategies used in the middle section of the curve of conflict; the point at which violence has erupted and reaches its peak. At this point, it is important to find ways to de-escalate the situation and get the crisis under control so that peacebuilding efforts can take hold.

There are many tools that can help to manage crises, including negotiation, mediation, and others. Crisis management at the Track I level involves high-level political and military leaders, and may include crisis diplomacy; Track II activities involve efforts by less-official actors, including religious and academic figures and civil society groups. Multi-track diplomacy means operating on several tracks simultaneously, including official and unofficial crisis management efforts.

When dealing with violent conflict, it is important that we have effective ways to achieve a "downturn" in the level of tension and violence, to protect lives and livelihoods, to establish a cease-fire and to pave the way for peacebuilding activities that can help parties to a conflict create lasting stability and develop peaceful ways of resolving their differences and addressing their grievances. Brokering a peace deal, or in some cases enforcing peace, and then keeping peace are all important ways to bring conflict back under control.

Case Study

One of the many places around the world in which crisis management is being practiced is in the Philippines, where a longstanding conflict between the government and rebel groups on the southern island of Mindanao has cost tens of thousands of lives and left millions of people displaced from their homes. In this case, crisis management has involved achieving a ceasefire, promoting a peace process, and fostering efforts to advance cooperation and understanding among different cultural, religious, and political groups in the southern Philippines, even as the conflict there continues.

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Peacebuilding

Even after the worst violence has subsided, the long-term effort to rebuild a society and ensure a lasting peace has many important aspects. It can involve the implementation of agreements reached by the parties to conflict, as well as broader efforts to reform or strengthen the government and other institutions to ensure stability in the future. Post-conflict measures can also encompass the rebuilding of damaged communities, and steps to promote justice in the aftermath of war.

Post-conflict peacebuilding, and stabilization and reconciliation, can refer to strategies used at the back-end of the curve of conflict. These strategies are intended to promote a transformation to more manageable, peaceful relationships and governance structures. It is also important over the long term that the different groups in a country or region reconcile, moving from a divided, violent past to a shared future.

Post-conflict situations generally remain fragile for a long time, and the potential exists for the violence to recur, particularly if underlying problems and grievances remain unresolved and if the basic needs of a society remain unmet. The long-term work of peacebuilding, therefore, requires commitment and effort from all sides.

Case Study

In the aftermath of the violent conflict in the Balkans in the 1990s, there have been a range of initiatives to help Bosnia, Serbia, Macedonia, and Kosovo overcome post-conflict challenges and prevent more potential violence in the region. Such efforts have included the provision of financial assistance to aid the reconstruction of war-torn communities, efforts to advance democracy and the rule of law, and steps to promote justice and reconciliation among diverse groups in these young countries.

Worksheet: Note-Taking Sheet

Directions: Read the questions below. Watch the "Detecting Landmines: Building Peace" video and answer the questions based on what you see and hear.

1. In what ways do landmines affect an area after violent conflict has ended?

2. What examples of post-conflict reconstruction activities are mentioned in the video?

Worksheet: Analyzing a Conflict

Conflict Country/ies:_____

1. Who was involved in the conflict?

2. What was the conflict about?

3. What was the relationship like between the parties during the conflict?

4. How long did the conflict go on?

5. How did the conflict finally come to an end?

6. What were the major elements of the peace agreement, if there was one?

7. What happened after the peace agreement was in place to rebuild the areas affected by conflict?

Teacher Resource: Background on De-Mining Dogs

Even after conflicts end, landmines remain in the ground in dozens of countries around the world.

These weapons cause injuries and death, mainly to ordinary people trying to rebuild their lives. In Afghanistan, Cambodia, Colombia, Laos, and elsewhere, landmines block access to roads and markets, to schools and hospitals. They deprive people of land on which to farm. They hamper reconstruction efforts in post-conflict zones long after the violence has ended.

The Marshall Legacy Institute was founded in 1997 to help provide landmine-affected countries with the tools and training needed to rebuild. Perry Baltimore became its President and Executive Director in 1998. The Marshall Legacy Institute trains Mine Detection Dogs and delivers them to countries in need around the world. These dogs use their incredible sense of smell to “sniff out” the explosive odors of landmines. During an intensive training course, they are trained to locate both metal and plastic mines.

When the Mine Detection Dogs are deployed to mine-affected countries, they find the places where landmines are buried and enable them to be cleared, keeping people safe and restoring access to the land.

The Marshall Legacy Institute brings retired Mine Detection Dogs to visit schools to help teach young people about the scourge of landmines and about the lifesaving work these dogs do to promote peace.