

CHARACTER

Connection



Peace

A Result of Goodness and Service

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Connection



“If you want to make peace, you don’t talk to your friends. You talk to your enemies.”

~ Moshe Dayan~

December Character Connection Theme: Peace

Definitions

Peace is “freedom from quarrels and disagreement; harmonious relations.” In the public setting, there is peace when there is law and order and the people feel secure. On an individual basis, peace is a feeling of calmness, tranquility, and inner serenity. It is inner contentment.¹ Peace is embodied in the Christmas words of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: “And wild and sweet the words repeat Of peace on earth goodwill to men.”

Here are some ways to be peaceful:

- *Enjoy the beauties of nature.
- *Be a peacemaker: work towards peaceful solutions.
- *Use peaceful language and express appreciation.
- *See strangers and others as people that are like us. Take time to learn their background, ideas, and find common ground.
- *Be forgiving rather than mistrustful
- *Take the first step to apologize or forgive.



Quotes

“Peace is the one condition of survival in this nuclear age.”
--Adlai E. Stevenson²

“Peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek, but a means by which we arrive at that goal” -Martin Luther King Jr.³

“For it isn't enough to talk about peace. One must believe in it. And it isn't enough to believe in it. One must work at it.” --Eleanor Roosevelt⁴
“While you are proclaiming peace with your lips, be careful to have it even more fully in your heart.” --St. Francis of Assisi⁵

“Five great enemies to peace inhabit with us: viz., avarice, ambition, envy, anger, and pride. If those enemies were to be banished, we should infallibly enjoy perpetual peace.” --Plutarch
“If we have not peace within ourselves, it is in vain to seek it from outward sources.” --Rochefoucauld.⁶

Activities

**Make a December Christmas service chain. Have class members write their service (small or large) on a strip of paper and add it to the chain. On the last day of class, comment on the chain's length, read the acts of service and talk about how serving others brings “peace on earth.”

**Read “The Zax,” especially pages 28, 30, 31, 32, 35 in The Sneetches and Other Stories by Dr. Seuss. *The Zax' obstinacy did not stop progress. Roads were built, other people traveled back and forth to their destinations. However, the Zax grew older and lost opportunities to travel, learn, and grow. Our own unwillingness to make peace can also stop our progress. With the absence of peace, nothing is gained.*⁷

¹ from The American Heritage Dictionary

² http://www.cyber-nation.com/victory/quotations/subjects/quotes_peace.html

³ <http://www.pj-marketing.com/readquotes.html>

⁴ PeaceCenter <http://www.salsa.net/peace/quotes.html>

⁵ PeaceCenter <http://www.salsa.net/peace/quotes.html>

⁶ Edwards, Tryon. The New Dictionary of Thoughts, Standard Book Company, 1957, page 472

⁷ submitted by P.G. High School PTA representative

**Have class members stand together in a bunch, then reach out and grab two hands. Without letting go of hands, have students untangle themselves until they are standing in a circle. *Life may seem tangled, but peaceful perseverance can make sense out of the most tangled knot or disagreement.*

** Needed: an unbaked, unpeeled potato; a hammer; and a plastic drinking straw. Henry David Thoreau said, “Thaw with her gentle persuasion is more powerful than Thor with his hammer. The one melts, the other breaks into pieces.” Talk about Thor, the Norse god of thunder, and how the loud “bark” of thunder is much less dangerous than the “bite” of lightning. Point out how flimsy the straw is when compared with the potato. Hold the potato still. Now, hold the straw a few inches above the potato. Then firmly and swiftly stab the potato with the straw. (The straw and potato should be at right angles.) The straw will pierce the potato. Notice how this is a much different result than the mashing that occurs when a hammer hits the potato. Talk about the forces (inertia, etc.) that are at work to make the straw pierce the potato. *“I am sorry” or other peaceful phrases may seem weak, yet when applied with sincerity, can pierce even the hardest heart. On the contrary, a gruff and pushy manner may make a problem worse, often obliterating any possibility of good.* Gersonides said, “A peace that comes from fear and not from the heart is the opposite of peace.”⁸

Stories

St. Francis of Assisi: A Life of Peace

St. Francis of Assisi (1181-1226) loved nature and all living things. In *The Little Flowers of Saint Francis*, a book compiled by a Franciscan 100 years after St. Francis’ death,⁹ the story is told of St. Francis’ dealings with some infamous thieves. Three robbers came to the monastery to beg for food. The guardian censured them for wickedly taking away from the poor and sent them away. When St. Francis heard of the incident, he chastised the guardian, and reminded him that sinners were converted by kindness, not harshness. Then St. Francis asked the guardian to search over hills and across valleys for the robbers. To these thieves, he sent food and water as well as an invitation to become monks. Touched by this kindness, the robbers went back to St. Francis and lived lives of penance and goodness.¹⁰ Hundreds of years later, St. Francis of Assisi’s prayer still inspires those searching for peace. A part of it reads:

Lord,
make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy. . .¹¹



The Picture of Peace

There once was a king who offered a great reward for the best painting of peace. Many artists submitted beautiful works. At last the king narrowed his choice to two paintings. One was a picture of a calm lake, mirroring the tall mountains that surrounded it. Above the mountains, a single wisp of a cloud floated in the sky.

The other picture was of an angry storm pouring torrential rain into a tumultuous river. Mountain crags were illuminated by angry flashes of lightning that burst across the canvas. However, the king saw only the mother bird, nesting in a crevice of a rock, protected from the elements by an overhanging pine branch.

“This,” said the king, “Is the painting for which I have been looking. Peace is not necessarily in pleasant surroundings. It is the calm heart in the midst of life’s storms.”¹²

⁸ http://www.cyber-nation.com/victory/quotations/subjects/quotes_peace.html

⁹ “Francis of Assisi,” *World Book*, 1988, pp. 481-482

¹⁰ <http://ccel.wheaton.edu/u/ugoline/flowers/flow31.htm>

¹¹ http://www.geocities.com/Wellesley/5979/help/list_stfrancis.html, accessed Nov 3, 2003

¹² adapted from “The Rainbow Garden” @ <http://www.io.com/~rga/saying190.html>

I Can

One day Ruth Hana picked up a few aluminum cans outside her apartment and started recycling. Not only was the environment benefited, but in 14 years, she gathered and recycled over 520,000 aluminum cans, collecting over \$24,000 for charities. Ruth donated this money to more than 14 charities (including the Red Cross and the American Heart Association.)¹³ *Although one recycled can or one small act may seem insignificant in a quest for world peace, combined and continuous efforts can have great effect. Perhaps the recycled can brought peace to a refugee camp, or lifesaving heart treatment to a father.*

Writing or Discussion Topics

**Mother Teresa was born August 26, 1910, as Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu. At 18 she became a nun and taught school in Calcutta until 1946. She then began to devote herself to the “poorest of the poor.” In 1949, she founded the Missionaries of Charity that grew to encompass 450 centers in 200 slum cities. As she accepted the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979, she said, “I choose the poverty of our poor people. But I am grateful to receive (the Nobel) in the name of the hungry, the naked, the homeless, of the crippled, of the blind, of the lepers, of all those people who feel unwanted, unloved, uncared-for throughout society, people that have become a burden to the society and are shunned by everyone.”¹⁴ She died September 5, 1997. *How does helping the poor promote world peace? Find out about other Nobel Prize winners and their works. What work can you perform to promote peace?*

**Carl Sandburg, biographer of Lincoln, wrote that a Union officer had asked Lincoln for permission to attend the burial of his wife. Because all officers were needed in an imminent battle, Lincoln gruffly refused. However, the next morning, a repentant Lincoln visited the grieving man. He took his hand and said, “My dear Colonel, I was a brute last night. I have no excuse to offer. I was weary to the last extent; but I had no right to treat a man with rudeness who had offered his life for his country, much more a man who came to me in great affliction. I have had a regretful night, and come now to beg your forgiveness.”¹⁵ *What part do forgiveness and repentance play in peacemaking?*

Role Plays

**Shayla overhears some gossip about her classmate, Susan, that she knows is not true. *What can Shayla do to promote peace among the girls in her class?*

**Timothy has heard much about the poor countries in the world. In the newspaper, he reads about the pollution of oceans and the environment. He looks at the tears of excluded children on the playground. Sometimes he hears loud arguments between his brothers. Timothy has a desire to promote peace. *What can he do?*

Book List

The Christmas Miracle of Johathan Toomey by Susan Wojciechowaskie

The Other Wise Man by Henry van Dyle

Great Granny Rose and the Family Christmas Tree by Ann Edwards Cannon

Silver Packages by Cynthia Ryland

The Littlest Angel by Charles Tazewell

January: **Responsibility** February: **Forgiveness** March: **Respect**

April: Compassion/Caring

May: Loyalty



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¹³ “Woman uses cans for good causes,” Milwaukee (AP) Daily Herald, July 14, 1999

¹⁴ <http://www.io.com/~rga/saying78.html>

¹⁵ submitted by PGHS Character Representative; Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln, The War Years*, 4 vols., New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1939, 1:514

December Character Connection Theme:



Color one letter of “Peace” or a part of the world picture each time you say or do something that brings a greater peace to the world. Write about the experience and the results on the back of this paper. Perhaps the first incident could be written in the shape of a letter “P,” the second in the shape of “e” until the word “Peace” is written.

“Peace does not dwell in outward things, but within the soul; we may preserve it in the midst of the bitterest pain, if our will remain firm and submissive. Peace in this life springs from acquiescence, not in an exemption from suffering.” --Fénelon¹⁶

¹⁶ Edwards, Tryon. The New Dictionary of Thoughts, Standard Book Company, 1957, page 472