

Why Do Children Fight?

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INTRODUCTION

If asked about war in the world, the response of most of my children would probably concern updates they've seen on the news or movies they've watched or heard about. War is quite foreign to most of my students unless they have a parent who is serving, or has served, in the military. Even so, they know that Daddy is in Afghanistan but can barely grasp the impact on themselves and even less on the other children around the world. Yet, when asked about getting along, my children have great experience with friendship and disagreements. They have all been slighted; they have all known bullies; some even acknowledge that they have been the bullies on occasion. Still they see no connection with their own needs and experience and those of others.

Why do people go to war? Why do they fight? Why do children fight? What do children need?

BACKGROUND

I teach all subjects to a 4th grade class of 9 and 10-year-olds. My students come from upper middle-class families with parents who want the best of everything for their children. They want their children challenged academically, and they want their children to succeed. Still, they do not often recognize the pressure put on the children to do it all and to be all that they can be. Even in our positive, caring environment, many children struggle with high expectations, family strife, illness of a close family member, peer pressure, fear.

A main focus at my school is Character Education. Throughout the school, teachers teach lessons on good character, engage in seminars, and participate in service projects. In fourth grade, we reach out to our homeless neighbors through a shelter that provides meals once a day everyday all year. Neighbors come from the center to our classes to share about their own lives, how they became homeless, what their needs are, how they are trying to better themselves, and what their plans and aspirations are. The children hear their stories and then make sandwiches and pack lunches for these neighbors. They understand far more after the visit and the project. The children see that these neighbors

who are homeless have names, they have dreams, they have stories. The children also see that there is something that they themselves can do to make a difference.

My children are in the age of “fair” versus “not fair,” and therefore frequently get embroiled in debates over misdeeds, who said what, and pushing for their own way. To them, as to most of us, “fair” means what I want or what I think should happen.

Critical Needs Of Children

Abraham Maslow, in detailing a hierarchy of needs, sees the necessity of meeting deficiency needs before being able to address needs of growth. According to Maslow, the deficiency needs must be met; the need for food, drink, bodily comfort comes first, along with safety, security, belongingness, and esteem. It is only after basic satisfaction sequentially of each of these needs has been attained that the individual can move on to address needs of growth.ⁱ

Erik Erikson, in his book *Childhood and Society*, posits the “Eight Ages of Man.” He lists the ego qualities that emerge as a child/person achieves certain developmental stages. According to Erikson, “Basic Trust vs. Mistrust” is the foundation for all other development. Here the infant learns to trust both the caretaker and him/herself. Further psychosocial development moves forward by critical steps, one being necessary for the development on the next level.ⁱⁱ

A quotation from U Thant in a Houston newsletter states that “Every human being, of whatever origin, of whatever station, deserves respect. We must each respect others even as we respect ourselves.”ⁱⁱⁱ The same Houston Character Education newsletter also states, “it is imperative that teachers respond courageously and creatively to create curriculum and provide the kinds of experiences that children need to ‘come to know, understand, respect, and appreciate those who differ from them and to recognize what they hold in common as well as what divides them.”^{iv}

Results of Unmet Needs

According to Maslow, "This inner nature, as much as we know of it so far, seems not to be intrinsically evil, but rather either neutral or positively 'good.' What we call evil behavior appears most often to be a secondary reaction to frustration of this intrinsic nature."^v Steve Hein further explains his thoughts. “I believe the reason people do things which we commonly refer to as sick and criminal is generally a result of their unmet emotional needs.”^{vi}

According to Chuck T. Falcon in *Fighting and Bullying in Children and Schools*, “Research shows an early lack of certain skills leads to later violence.” According to

Falcon, the important skills are empathy—which he defines as “recognizing other people's feelings, taking their perspective, and expressing concern,” impulse control, problem solving, and anger management. He further notes that early intervention plus long-term programs for training social skills are important in preventing delinquency, crime, and substance abuse. He emphasizes that it is especially important for impulsive children to learn empathy to prevent their aggressive behavior and to help them with problem solving.^{vii}

All children have basic needs that must be met for the child to survive and thrive. Children suffering the effects of unmet needs may be viewed as innocent victims or as victims who act out of their pain. The question remains: When does an innocent victim acting out revenge cross the line from innocence to guilt? How can we understand and help children?

RATIONALE

In this unit “Why Do Children Fight?” I provide ways for my students to study different children who experience war and/or violence. I guide my students to understand basic needs of all children and what happens if these needs are not met. I help them see ways to understand issues from more than just their own perspective. My goal is for my children to connect with others who are enduring strife in the world and to understand that the disagreements and battles have similarities with their own struggles. Even if on a much smaller scale, their own controversies injure and hurt. It is my hope that while my students learn about other children around the world and across history, that they also learn about themselves.

With the overarching theme of the similarity of children everywhere, my unit demonstrates that children share common needs and have many common reactions to problems. My students discover how similar their needs and difficulties are to those of children around the world and across history. They connect with the lives and experiences of others, thereby increasing their awareness of others and of themselves.

Over the course of modern history, children have repeatedly been called into war—into service to their country. The self-perceived invincibility of children adds to their total abandon to, and relinquishing of control in, setting limits on cruelty. During periods of war, children are lured in by the excitement of the fight. Child soldiers can be relentless with few boundaries. Children deserve and need our attention and protection.

“Why do children fight?” is a question that impacts every child. There are the physical fighters, picking fights to show how tough they are. There are the bullies who seek to have power by causing others to act. There are the victims who succumb to the pressures of the bullies and fold into nothingness or become bullies themselves. There

are the quiet observers letting what will be done be done and not intervening. There are the righteous warriors fighting for what they think is right.

This unit is timely and relevant. Strife is rampant in our world. We live in a world becoming ever smaller as we are able to communicate more readily and more rapidly. Isolation and ignoring are no longer options. "Innocence Lost: Children in War and Conflict" highlights the plight of many children in our world today.

OBJECTIVE

In my teaching, I try to structure lessons to allow my students to experience for themselves what I want them to learn. They are ready participants in any interactive lesson. By engaging them in more than one basic way to learn, I encourage them to fully experience the lesson and further make the learning their own. In Social Studies, my students come face to face with the experiences of history. In Literacy, they identify with characters in our novel studies and write from their perspectives. This approach is especially helpful in character education where I want the children to inculcate values and habits into their daily lives. With this direct experience, my character lessons are not just something else to read and think about; they are applicable to the children in their daily lives. Presenting characters with needs and issues helps my children see the commonalities between themselves and these characters. Seeing these similarities allows my children to connect, and these characters become people they know and understand. They see from another point of view, another perspective. Their awareness expands and their world enlarges.

As we apply these lessons to our daily lives, the children relate to these characters and begin to understand why someone did what they did even though it may seem very wrong to us now or in our situation. In meeting these characters and learning about them, my students also learn about themselves. Exploring such questions as "Why do people fight?" and "What do children need?" opens the possibility of understanding other children at all levels of conflict and to a deeper understanding of oneself.

Within this unit, I bring the big, overarching topic of war and fighting down to a personal level. Children who see war as distant can see daily squabbles erupt all around them. As they learn the different reasons people fight, they recognize and can begin to have empathy with their reactions. Learning to handle these disturbances and seeing how others react to them can help the children learn better ways to get along and ways to help meet the needs of all.

In exploring why people fight, the children experience the fight from different perspectives. They journal about the fights of the characters they meet. In so doing, they form opinions and discern what it is that they value for themselves. They write about

their own needs, their own dreams and ideals, their own frustrations and battles. What is war for them?

My children desperately want to be right. They want to be valued. They want to be important. They want to belong. These are the same basic needs that lure many youth into the fight. The lack of ability to engage in thoughtful debate and to consider perspectives other than their own seriously limits a person and drives him/her further into discord.

How can my students' minds be opened? How can their perspectives be broadened? Presenting to them characters of war, characters of the struggle, of both sides of the fight, trying to understand both, the students are led to think beyond the normal reaction. In connecting with the characters, the students identify similarities between themselves and all the various characters portrayed. During seminar, the difficult task of juxtaposing the needs of one faction against the needs of another takes a concerted effort of the class.

This curriculum unit expands the students' ability to listen critically. It helps the students to verbalize what motivates them and to acknowledge others. It helps students think through their own actions and those of others and evaluate these actions. As students analyze the actions, looking carefully at what is done, at factors motivating the fighters, they can begin to evaluate the motivation that leads them to fight.

CHILD SOLDIERS

According to UNICEF, "a child soldier is any person under 18 years of age who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to cooks, porters, messengers and anyone accompanying such groups, other than family members. The definition includes girls recruited for sexual purposes and for forced marriage. It does not, therefore, only refer to a child who is carrying or has carried arms." This definition comes from the *Cape Town Principles and Best Practices on the Recruitment of Children into the Armed Forces and on Demobilization and Social Reintegration of Child Soldiers in Africa*.^{viii} Mark Lorey writes in his book, *Child Soldiers: Care & Protection of Children in Emergencies—A Field Guide*, that the Save the Children Federation considers child soldiers as defined above by the Cape Town Principles.^{ix} Lorey continues to discuss three ways that children are recruited for soldiering: forced recruitment, government authorized conscription, and voluntary recruitment. In forced recruitment, children are typically abducted and taken away from their homes and families. In government conscription, despite laws against using underage soldiers, governments continue to utilize the child soldier. There are many reasons why governments are able to continue compulsory conscription. Children and parents may be unaware of laws against underage recruitment. Recruiters may be

unaware of the laws or be under orders to ignore the law. There are few checks on the recruitment practices, and families often lack the documents to prove the age of their children. Poor and powerless families often cannot withstand the pressure to submit their children for service. Even with voluntary recruitment, it is rare for the choice to be truly voluntary. Many children have lost parents and family to death or to service in the war. Many feel a sense of hopelessness or a need for revenge. They are particularly vulnerable to recruitment and join seeking a way out or a purpose for their lives.^x

Child soldiers are present throughout history. Children have been involved in wars from the earliest times and continue today. They fight for a variety of reasons. Some seek glory; some seek to prove themselves; some fight out of obligation; some are abducted and forced to fight.

Children fought in the Revolutionary War and in the Civil War in North Carolina. According to David Rosen in *Armies of the Young: Child Soldiers in War and Terrorism*, there is much evidence to prove the presence of very young soldiers fighting on the American side of the Revolutionary War and on both sides in the United States Civil War. “Throughout the Civil War, youngsters followed brothers, fathers and even teachers into battle. They often had support roles but quickly graduated into combat roles. They were sometimes recruited at school and, when necessary, used weapons that were cut down and adapted for use by smaller people.”^{xi} Rosen notes examples of child soldiers. At age eleven, David Baily Freeman, called “Little Dave,” accompanied his older brother on the Confederate side. He served at the camp and as needed on the survey team until he was finally needed to fight against Sherman’s army. At only ten years old, Gilbert Van Zandt, “Little Gib,” enlisted in the Ohio Volunteer Infantry. He followed his teacher into service and joined his father, uncles, and friends, despite his mother’s declaring him “too young to fight.” Joseph John Clem, who became a “camp follower” as early as the age of nine, officially enlisted in the Union army at the young age of ten. He changed his name to John Lincoln Clem because of his admiration for Abraham Lincoln. While there is no official count of the underage soldiers in the Civil War, child soldiers played a significant role in the war. Even more important than their numbers may have been the interpretations of their service. Rosen notes that child soldiers were regarded as grand and heroic and that battles, no matter how horrific, were seen to ennoble these young soldiers. Thus, the child soldiers were viewed with pride.^{xii}

Child soldiers fought in both World Wars I and II. The children who volunteered for service in World War I viewed the war as a heroic adventure. They were so anxious to play their part that they lied about their ages and snuck away to the battlefield. By World War II, children were persuaded to be involved. Propaganda showed only the glorious side of war, and new recruits were encouraged to become a part. Often ages were guessed or modified to make the child soldier fit the need. We see the volunteer child soldiers in the stories from WWII on both sides of the battle.^{xiii}

Certainly there are children engaged in modern day conflicts between peoples, religions, nations. We see the recruitment of children between the ages of 10 and 18 into the People's Liberation Guerilla Army in India.^{xiv} In Afghanistan the percentage of soldiers who are children is thought to be as high as 45 percent.^{xv} In Liberia, child soldiers have been identified as young as 7 years old,^{xvi} and 20 percent of the wounded soldiers surveyed in Cambodia had been recruited between 10 and 14 years of age.^{xvii} Child soldiers continue to fight and to suffer around the world today.

STRATEGIES

My children love to read and experience the lives of characters in novels and stories. They are growing in their abilities to relate to the characters by finding similarities and differences in their lives, experiences, circumstances. I teach my children to think as they read, to find connections to the story, to consider cause and effect. As I present the various characters, I want to grab my children's attention with riveting stories of action and feeling. I present the characters I want my students to know in different ways. Through novel study and comparing short stories, in history lessons, and assuming historical characters, I let the characters take on a life of their own in our classroom.

To keep the characters before my children, we create a group graphic organizer that focuses our attention on the particular characters as we study the three parts of this unit.

Part I

In Part I, I guide my children to explore "What is war?" and "Why Do People Fight?" First we look at the old-fashioned or territorial war. In our study of North Carolina, we consider the role of Imperialism as the European colonists move in and take over the land pushing the Native Americans farther and farther away from their homes. We consider the reasons for the Civil War and look at the issue of slavery. We wonder that some people could justify owning other human beings and understand the reasons for going to war against your own country's citizens and, in some cases, your own family. Next we look at the unfair war or modern war. We wonder what makes war justified. Is it ever right to go to war? Is war ever a good thing to do? Would you go to war? For what would you fight?

Part II

In Part II, I guide my students to explore "Why Do Children Fight?" We look at case studies drawn from history and literature. We meet John Lincoln Clem, a nine-year-old volunteer in the Confederate Army. We see what propelled him into conflict and what he

hoped to gain. We meet boys of World War II in stories designed to convince the young of the need for war, the necessity of their support, and the glory that can be theirs. My students read and discuss two stories from German propaganda showing the grandeur of war. Depending on my class makeup, I select different examples to engage all my children. This year, one of my girls was born in Russia and adopted into the United States. In addition, I have several first generation United States citizens whose parents are natives of China, Venezuela, Poland, and India. Several of my children were born in the north and have moved south with their families. I choose examples of child soldiers that relate to my children's lives and experience.

Part III

In Part III, we conclude by reviewing the consequences of fighting and war. We look at the historical choices and what followed. We discuss making wise choices and considering the consequences. We learn about unmet needs that cause people to act to protect themselves, sometimes in mistaken ways. We analyze the actions of the characters we meet. We analyze our own actions. Following the guidelines for class meetings proposed in *Positive Discipline in the Classroom* by Jane Nelson, Lynn Lott, and H. Stephen Glenn, I lead my students to understand reasons that people act the way they do. I help them understand the beliefs behind the behavior. Nelson, Lott, and Glenn note that we all seek ways of being important and belonging. Sometimes our ways work, but often they are misguided attempts to meet real needs. Nelson, et al, refer to them as mistaken ways or, as Rudolf Dreikurs called them, "mistaken goals."^{xviii} They refer to the four hidden goals as "Undue Attention," "Misguided Power," "Revenge," and "Assumed Inadequacy."^{xix} After activities and discussions and gaining a better understanding of these goals, we look toward solutions and consequences. We seek ways to provide encouragement and to help people meet their own needs.^{xx} We delve into "What Would/Could You Do?"

On-Going Display

As an ongoing visual aid to help the children track the development of the unit theme, I post a bulletin board with the six types of fighters who will visit the class at the end of the curriculum unit. I put up the six categories: the righteous warrior, the grand and valiant soldier, the verbal fighter for rights of all, the soldier defending nation and home and all he has, the child soldier forced to fight and given no choice, and the child who has lost all and fights for revenge and/or survival.

The children actively engage in creating the Concept/Question Board. As we study different children involved in fighting, I add a picture and name to the label describing what type of fighter he/she is. As we continue through the curriculum unit, we add more characters and more student input.

Keeping this bulletin board before the children focuses their attention on the theme of the unit. It helps them remember the characters studied and why they did what they did. It provides the children a way to compare and contrast the characters as we encounter each new person. By the end of the unit, these pictured characters are the ones who come alive to visit my classroom and retell their stories. With this culminating activity, I have each child choose which one of the six posted characters he/she is most like and explain why. By studying the characters individually and seeing them on the bulletin board every day, the children are able to identify with at least one of the child fighters. As they learn more about the characters and identify with them, the children learn more about themselves. As they see what propels the characters to act in the way they act, they see what influences in their own lives impact the way they themselves respond.

LESSONS

Novel Study

I begin this unit with a great fourth grade novel, The War with Grandpa, by Robert Kimmel Smith.^{xxi} In this novel, Pete's grandpa, whom he loves, is sad and lonely in Florida and comes to live with Pete. Pete is happy that Grandpa is coming until he discovers that Grandpa will be moving into *his* room and Pete will have to move upstairs to a new room. Pete has lived in *his* room all his life and is very attached to it. He talks to his dad to ask for another solution, but Dad tells him this arrangement is the only way. Pete is unhappy. The drama begins when Pete confides in his friends. They immediately urge Pete to go to war with Grandpa. Pete is very resistant, but his friends goad him into seeing the necessity of war. Throughout the book, Pete is angry about the loss of his territory; he is disappointed that Grandpa (who has a bad knee) does not choose to give Pete his room back and move upstairs; he desperately wants his room back, but he hates being mean to his beloved grandpa. Pete feels many internal conflicts over fighting with his grandpa, but his friends push him on. At the end of the novel study, I have my children reflect on the story, analyze the cause and effect of the various events, and evaluate the choices made by the characters: How was Pete's war with Grandpa like a real war? Explain. How do you think it was different from a real war? Was Pete right to go to war with Grandpa? Why or why not? Was Grandpa right to go to war with Pete? Explain. What would you have told Pete to do? Why? What would you have told Grandpa to do? Why? What would you have done? Would you ever go to war with someone over something you owned? Would you ever go to war with someone you love? Do you think Pete thought he would ever go to war with his grandpa? Do you think something or someone might change *your* mind? How did Pete get embroiled in the war—he was angry and upset, but what propelled him into actual war? What would you do if your friends tried to convince you that fighting with a loved one was the only way to

get what you wanted?

North Carolina Native Americans on the Trail of Tears

In our study of the history of North Carolina, we encounter groups of oppressed people. We study one oppressed group of people in our Social Studies curriculum when we learn about the expulsion of the Native Americans from North Carolina on the Trail of Tears. Students learn of the series of treaties made with the Indian nation and broken, and how the native people are pushed further and further off the land they honored and called home. The children are justifiably indignant over the treatment of these Native Americans. I share the story of one particular Cherokee, Samuel Cloud, who turned nine while traveling the along the difficult journey. "Samuel's Memory" is a story written by his great-great grandson and tells all the emotions of a young boy forced to leave his home and lose his family.^{xxii} I also lead the children in a seminar studying the painting, "The Trail of Tears," by Robert Lindneux.^{xxiii} We consider the fact: "About 4000 Cherokee died as a result of the removal. The route they traversed and the journey itself became known as "The Trail of Tears" or, as a direct translation from Cherokee, "The Trail Where They Cried" ("*Nunna daul Tsuny*")."^{xxiv} How would you feel if you were forced off your land...the land of your ancestors, the land where you had lived all your life? Would you ever force someone else off land that they thought was theirs? Would you ever take something that belonged to someone else?

United States Civil War and African Slaves in North Carolina

We encounter another oppressed group of people in our Social Studies curriculum when we learn about slaves in North Carolina. The stories of African people being taken into slavery and bought to work on Eastern plantations and sold to other landowners raise the questions of value and worth. Why would someone buy and sell another human being? What value do they put on the lives of the slaves? What is right and what is wrong about slavery? Can you think of a situation in which you have treated someone like a slave? Think about a younger brother or sister or a younger or weaker friend that you have do your work or take your side. Do you think you could ever own someone else? Would you ever overpower someone to get them to do something your way? Have you ever been overpowered? Did someone try to make you do something that you did not choose? What did you do? What do you think you would do next time? Would you go along following the leader not making trouble? Would you stand up and refuse to do something that was not right? What might the consequences of following be? What might the consequences of refusing to follow be? How would you decide which way to go?

In our Reading anthology, we study two stories about slavery: "Judith: The Life of a Slave"^{xxv} and "Phillis Wheatley."^{xxvi} Judith was a house servant forced to work long, hard, hot hours to feed her owner's family. Phillis was the the lady's maid for the wife of a

wealthy man. Phillis was smart and learned quickly. She was educated and became a published poet after she was freed. Neither slave woman was required to do backbreaking field work nor was either whipped or beaten physically. However, both were owned, both were controlled, and both were subject to the demands of their owners. After reading both stories, the children discuss questions in their literature groups: Did these women have a good life? Would you want to live their lives? What events in Phillis's life helped her in writing her poetry? What effect did the poetry of Phillis Wheatley have on society? How could a slave make an impact on those around her?

Day of Tears: A Novel in Dialogue by Julius Lester presents horrific stories of the mistreatment of slaves.^{xxvii} I interject these stories sparingly to balance the nonviolent accounts of the people we study. Questions are raised after reading about these slaves: Which slaves suffered the most? Is physical suffering worse than mental and psychological suffering? Which has longer lasting results? Should the slaves have to suffer for their owners' mistakes? Did they? Would you make someone else suffer if you had made the mistake? Have you ever done so? Would you do so again?

For a related seminar, I use the children's book *Pink and Say* by Patricia Polacco.^{xxviii} In this short picture book, a Union boy soldier, Say, is injured and left for dead at only 15 years old. A slave boy soldier, Pink, rescues him in the Civil War and takes him home. Pink's mama, Moe Moe Bay, nurses the boy back to health. In helping Say deal with his fears, Moe Moe Bay tells him, "You a child...a child! Of course you scared. Ain't nobody that ain't." "Child, bein' brave don't mean you ain't afeared. Don't you know that?" She also talks about dying, "They's things worse than death, child." We discuss what Moe Moe Bay might mean. What might it mean to Say? ...to Pink? ...to us?

World War I Short Stories

Next I use the stories of children getting involved in World War II. We meet the boys in stories written to convince the young of the need for war, the necessity of their support, and the glory that can be theirs. We discuss how these stories might influence the children that read them. My students are divided into two groups to study one of two stories about boys helping the German soldiers in the war.^{xxix} The groups consider why the boys wanted to help. One boy was small, teased about his size, not valued. He desperately wanted to be important and to matter. After he helped the soldiers, the soldiers came to his school to thank him in front of all the other children. The other story glorified war by portraying the action of two boys who led their town in support of the German troops. Each group analyzes their story and character(s) and evaluates the motives. Then I regroup the children with participants from each story group forming new discussion groups. They each present their characters, and the new group compares and contrasts the characters, the reasons for getting involved, the results. There are no good characters vs. bad characters; yet they all help in the war. However, they are

helping opposite sides of the war effort. They are enemies. Are the boys good? Are they bad? Are the boys right? Are they wrong? Would you help one side over the other?

Child Soldiers from my Students' Countries of Origin

If possible, I try to include examples of war and involvement of children in my children's countries of immediate ancestry. "Voices of Child Soldiers" highlights case studies from around the world. Maung Zaw Oo, forced into the Tatmadaw Kyi Army in 2005 in Myanmar (Burma), recalled being slapped and forced to fill out the form with 18 years old not his true age of 16. Htun Myint described his training in the Tatmadaw Kyi. He was only 11 but was forced to carry a heavy backpack on short and long runs. He had to march 30 miles and run 5 miles a week. He could not carry his gun the whole way, and other child soldiers tried to help him. In Nepal, Ram was recruited in 2004 by the Maoists when he was 14 years old and was captured by the Royal Nepal Army one year later. In Uganda, a child soldier who had been abducted into the Lord's Resistance Army, remembered the rebels beating him unmercifully whether he made a mistake or not. He had to carry heavy loads on his head for long marches often beginning again at 5 am.^{xxx} Ishmael Beah wrote of his great loss of his home, family and friends, his abduction into the army of Sierra Leone, his anger, his revenge, and his reluctance to be rescued from his army family.^{xxxi} Zaw Tun told of being recruited by force from his village because his family could not pay the 3000 kyats the recruitment team demanded. He was sent to Mingladon, an army training center.^{xxxii} Girls and boys from many countries describe their involvement in war. Sometimes they tell the horrors of forced recruitment and abuse. Sometimes they tell of willing involvement in the war to better their lives. Always they tell of the reasons why they had no other choice.

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES

1. NOVEL STUDY on *The War with Grandpa*

Concluding Activity for the Novel Study

Objectives—Create a new way of experiencing the lessons of *The War with Grandpa*.

Make connections between the story and your own life.

Analyze the situation and offer advice.

Lesson—Read the novel and discuss the chapters and questions.

Independent Activity—Reflect on the events and questions in your novel study journal.

Students reflect on what made Pete go to war with Grandpa. Whose idea was it?

Would Pete have gone to war without his friends telling him he had to? Did Pete like being at war with Grandpa? Did Pete think of any other way to solve his problem?

Group/Independent Activity—Choose one activity to do alone or with your group:

Work with your novel study group to create and act out a scene showing why Pete goes to war with Grandpa. Include parts for all the people who encourage him. Be sure to show what Pete really thinks throughout the process.

Write a letter to Pete. Tell him you understand his struggles and thoughts. Summarize all the reasons Pete went to war and what he wanted and did not want to do. Offer Pete your advice. Tell him what you would do in his situation.

Assessment—Journal responses and concluding activity

2. CLASS SEMINAR on *The Trail of Tears*

Objectives—Analyze the content of the painting.

Make connections between the painting and the historical information studied.

Create your own expression of the sorrow on the Trail of Tears.

PRE-SEMINAR

Content

Post a copy of the picture, *The Trail of Tears*, which was painted by Robert Lindneux in 1942. Allow children time to study the picture.

Have students write a descriptive paragraph about one thing they each notice in the

painting.

Readiness

Seat students in a circle. Review expectations for seminar participation.

Have class set class goal and students set individual goals.

SEMINAR

Opening Questions

What is the most important detail in the picture? (Round Robin response)

Why did you choose that detail? Why do you think it is so important?

Core Questions

From whose perspective is the scene painted?

Look at the faces of the Cherokee. What emotions do you see?

Do these people look happy to be traveling? Why or why not?

Closing Questions

Which person do you think would most likely be Samuel Cloud, if he were in the painting? Explain why you think so.

If you had to travel on the Trail of Tears, which person would you want to be? Explain your choice.

Do you think that the people who forced the Cherokee off their land and away from their homes were evil? Did they have another choice?

What would you have done?

POST-SEMINAR

Process

Review process and participation goals.

Project

Evaluating Lindneux's painting based on our study of the Indian Removal Act and the Trail of Tears in North Carolina history, select the elements that you think belong in the painting. Notice the details that you think do not belong.

Draw a picture from your perspective to capture the meaning and emotion of the Cherokee being removed from their home.

OR

Write a description of the journey to capture the meaning and emotion of the Cherokee being removed from their home. OR Write a poem to capture the meaning and emotion of the Cherokee being removed from their home

3. *"WHY CHILDREN FIGHT" CULMINATING ACTIVITY*

Objective—Analyze characters.

Compare and contrast characters' lives and motivations.

Make connections between own life and life of the character.

Create a letter to the character comparing and contrasting character with self.

Teacher Lesson—At the end of this months-long unit, I pull various characters from our studies to present again to the children:

Pete, from *The War with Grandpa*, is the righteous warrior, fighting to get back what is rightfully his.

Jan from WWI supports the vision of war as glorious. His experience is of the grandeur and praise for the faithful and valiant soldier. He engages in war for

honor and praise.

Phillis Wheatley, the educated slave, communicates the need for all to be free.

She fights her war with words and hard work.

John Lincoln Clem fights in the Civil War to protect the Union, his home, his ideal.

Akello, a Ugandan child soldier, joins the war because he is forced to fight. He has no choice but to fight or be killed.

Ishmael fights out of revenge. He has nothing left, no home, no family, no life, and so he fights. Others have hurt him and his family; now he hurts them.

All these characters come alive to visit my class, to tell their stories.

After each person's visit, I lead the children to analyze the character's life. What did

he/she do? Why? Would you have done the same thing? What else could you do? Once all six characters visit, we compare and contrast their lives, their situations, their choices. Why did they each act the way they did? What influenced their choice? What would you have done?

Student Activity—I have the children select the one character who is most like

him/herself and explain the similarities.

Students compare and contrast self with chosen character using charts, Venn diagram, lists.

Each child chooses one character and writes a letter telling that character what they like about his/her choices and what they recommend that the character do differently. In essence, each child writes a letter to him/herself.

Extension Activities—Children may choose from the following possibilities:

Create a play on the life on the character.

Write a poem about the feelings and problems of the character.

Compose a song to celebrate or to mourn the character's life.

Think of what you could do to help children around the world and to meet the needs of all children.

Assessment—student participation; letters to self; extension activity

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Annotated Reading List of 4th Grade Books on War and Violence

Across Five Aprils—Irene Hunt (Civil War; war affects ordinary people; complex issues)

The Butter Battle Book —Dr. Seuss (Cold War—promoting tolerance, against violence)

Dawn of Fear—Susan Cooper (British boys during air raids, befriend soldier; fight school enemies)

Day of Tears : A Novel in Dialogue by Julius Lester Hyperion Books for Children, 2006
(horrible treatment of slaves in colonial America)

The Devil's Arithmetic—Jane Yolen (WW2/Concentration Camp)

The Diary of Anne Frank—Anne Frank (WW2)

Elijah of Buxton—Christopher Paul Curtis (runaway slave in Canada)

Family Stories from the Trail of Tears

http://www.anpa.ualr.edu/digital_library/indianvoices/family_stories/family_stories.htm

Farewell to Manzanar—Jeanne Watasuki Houston and James D. Houston (US interment of Japanese Americans)

Goodnight Mr. Tom—Michelle Migorian (child evacuee during London blitz)

Lest We Forget: The Passage from Africa to Slavery and Emancipation: A Three-Dimensional Interactive Book with Photographs and documents from the Black Holocaust Exhibit.

My Brother Sam Is Dead—James Lincoln and Chris Collier (American Revolution)

Number the Stars—Lois Lowry (WW2)

The Other Side—Jacqueline Woodson (segregation)

Pink and Say—Patricia Polacco (a Union boy soldier, Say, only 15 years old was injured and left for dead; a slave boy soldier, Pink, rescued him in the Civil War)

Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes—Eleanor Coerr (Japan; atomic bomb)

Shattered: Stories of Children and War—Jennifer Armstrong. New York: Random House, 2002. (Twelve stories of children caught in the middle of war past and present wars to show that all children are affected by war in similar ways.)

Snow Treasure—Marie McSwigan (resistance in Norway to Nazi occupation)

Stepping on the Cracks—Mary Downing Hahn (WWII—two girls with brothers off at war have to deal with a conscientious objector, the loss of life, bullies in their own town)

Terrible Things—Eve Bunting (An Allegory of the Holocaust)

The Trail of Tears—Conrad Stein (account of the removal and the horrors of the exodus)

Twenty and Ten—Claire Huchet Bishop and William Pene DuBois (WW2 French children hide 10 Jewish children from the German soldiers)

The Wall—Eve Bunting (boy and father visit Vietnam Memorial)

White Socks Only—Evelyn Coleman (segregation and discrimination)

Zlata's Diary—Zlata Filipovic (Bosnia)

VIDEO

“What We Learned about Bullying” A Sunburst Title—video on Discovery Education website: <http://player.discoveryeducation.com/index.cfm?guidAssetId=2185DE5B-9F0C-467D-B280-0A76742AEF61&blnFromSearch=1&productcode=US>