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# CHAPTER 10

## PROMOTING PEACE THROUGH ACTION

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This chapter continues the study and discussion of the life and work of Mahatma Gandhi that was introduced in [Chapter 9](#) of this volume. Students have read about Gandhi life and work and have prepared a written summary of a short reading text about an aspect of his life. Students will use this background knowledge as a resource for the tasks in this chapter.

In this chapter, discussion of the summaries of the reading texts will be followed by [Classroom Activities](#) that ask students to consider a personal response to the topic and to share this response with their classmates. Activities in this 60- minute lesson include discussions, critical thinking tasks, and responsive writing. A short reading text about Gandhi's philosophy provides background information for the activities in the lesson. Teachers are encouraged to expand on the lesson by choosing other materials from the numerous Internet resources available and from the extensive print resources of Gandhi life and work.



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### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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#### Gandhi's Philosophy

To better understand Gandhi's life, one should know the following Hindi terms: *satyagraha*; *ashram*; fast; ascetic; compromise.

The central concept of Gandhi's philosophy is *satyagraha*, which means following the Truth in a non-violent way. It is sometimes translated as non-violent resistance or as passive resistance. It means that people try to make change happen without using violence. For example, they could resist a law by not cooperating with it or by actively breaking it. They do not, however, fight or resist violently when police or soldiers try to arrest them or attack them. They simply do what they think is right and accept the consequences of their actions. This kind of resistance takes much courage and self-control.

An *ashram* is a kind of commune, a community where people agree to live according to certain rules and principles. In 1904, Gandhi set up an ashram in South Africa, the Phoenix Farm, where he trained his followers in the principles of *satyagraha*. In India, his Satyagraha Ashram in Ahmedabad (founded in 1915) became an internationally famous place, attracting not only Indian but also British, American, European and Asian disciples. In 1936, when the government forced him to close the first ashram, he opened the Sevagram Ashram, where he concentrated on education and civil rights for the Untouchables.

Life on the ashram consisted of a simple, self-sufficient, and ascetic lifestyle, with meditation. An *ascetic* lifestyle is a way of living that does not include many material comforts. For example, Gandhi ate a simple diet of rice and vegetables. When he became older and suffered more from his frequent *fasts*, doctors persuaded him to add a little bit of goat's milk to his diet. In addition, he slept on a mat or on the ground, and owned no clothing except a simple peasant-style garment that he made himself. Gandhi focused always on spiritual, not material, wealth.

Gandhi realized that fasting was not only a way to pressure an opponent, but also a way to show support for the poor workers who might lack food or money while they were on strike. To '*fast*' means to stop eating. Throughout his life, Gandhi fasted many times, pressuring governments into negotiating with him. To avoid mass riots, the governor would agree to negotiate with Gandhi.

Gandhi had strong beliefs and wanted to reach his goals, but he was also willing to compromise with his opponents. To '*compromise*' means for each person to agree to modify his or her goals slightly, changing them to adapt to what the other person wants. Gandhi felt that compromise was a practical method for avoiding violence.

Sometimes his followers became angry when he compromised with the British government, but he always felt that the most important thing was to avoid violence whenever possible. In the end, Gandhi was killed by a Hindu who did not believe that any Hindu, even a great leader like Gandhi, should ever compromise with the Muslims, who wanted a separate country for themselves.



## CLASSROOM APPLICATIONS

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### PRELIMINARY LESSON PLANNING

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#### *Materials:*

- For the Warm-up Activity, students will need their reading text and prepared summary from [Chapter 9](#).
- For Activity #2, make copies of the reading text *Gandhi's Philosophy* from the [Background Information](#) section of Chapter 10 for each student. Choose seven quotations from the list of quotations from Gandhi's writing in [Appendix A](#). Prepare a handout of these seven quotations for each student.
- For Activity # 3, choose three quotations from the list in Appendix A and put these on the chalkboard. Students will choose one of the quotations for a short five-minute free-writing task.



### WARM UP ACTIVITY

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**(approximately 10 minutes)**

#### *Purpose:*

- To review the background knowledge of Gandhi's life
- To check reading comprehension and selection of important points in the texts

#### *Materials:*

- Reading text from [Chapter 9](#) about an aspect of Gandhi's life
- Summary of the reading text that was prepared out of class

#### *Procedures:*

1. Ask students in their previous reading groups to compare their summaries of the text. Ask what information all groups included in the summaries and what things only a few people included? Should these points have been included, or could they be omitted because they were less important details.
2. Have the students revise their summaries by adding, deleting, or reordering information as necessary.



## ACTIVITY #1

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**(Approximately 15 minutes)**

*Purpose:*

- To share information about different aspects of Gandhi's life and work
- To practice presenting information orally to a small group

*Materials:*

- Prepared summaries of reading texts (optional)
- Notebooks for students

*Procedures:*

1. Regroup the students so that each group has someone who has read one of the four texts. Ask the students to report on their texts to the group. The summary can be used as a guide for the presentation but the report should not be read.
2. Encourage students to ask questions of each other and to take notes on the different aspects of Gandhi's life and work. The information from the reports will be useful for activities later in the lesson.
3. When the discussions have been completed, review and answer any remaining questions the students might raise.



## ACTIVITY #2

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**(approximately 20 minutes)**

*Purpose:*

- To become more familiar with Gandhi's philosophy
- To link life experiences and personal beliefs.

*Materials:*

- Copies of [Gandhi's Philosophy](#) for each student
- Worksheets for each student with seven quotations that the teacher has chosen from the list in [Appendix A.](#)

*Procedures:*

1. Ask students to read the short text *Gandhi's Philosophy* and discuss the five terms presented in the reading.
2. Give students copies of the worksheet developed from Appendix A. Ask students to rank seven of Gandhi's statements in terms of how strongly they agree with them (1=strongly agree; 7=most strongly disagree).
3. After students rank the statements, have the students discuss their choices in small group.
4. Students relate experiences from their lives that influenced their #1 choices.



## ACTIVITY #3

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(approximately 15 minutes)

*Purpose:*

- To stimulate and think about Gandhi's ideas
- To start a more formal written assignment (optional)

*Materials:*

Three items from the list of [Quotations](#) are written on the board

*Procedures:*

1. Put three items from the list of Quotations on the board
2. Ask each student to choose ONE and free-write about it (non-stop writing, without editing or revision) for five minutes.
3. Depending on whether the class has done free-writing before, the texts thus generated can be used for various purposes:
  - a. the written texts are read aloud or shared silently in small groups;
  - b. one sentence is selected from each student's text and read aloud as a stimulus for small-group discussion;
  - c. one phrase from the first free-writing text is copied at the top of a new page and used as a basis for further free-writing; used in this way, free-writing sequences can be used to develop ideas for more formal writing assignments or oral presentations.



## EXTENSIONS

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**Personal Symbols:** Gandhi was an ascetic, and was so non-materialistic that his few possessions came to hold great significance for his followers. First, ask the students what associations they have for these objects: a pair of glasses, a watch, a spinning wheel, a loin-cloth. (This can be a class or small group discussion). Then, discuss the significance each probably had for Gandhi. Finally, as a third step, ask students to decide the objects (3 to 5) they would keep if they had to throw away most of their personal belongings. In small groups, discuss their decisions: Which objects would they keep and why? What will those objects symbolize about them to people who meet them for the first time?

1. **Current news stories** Choose a current news story that involves a struggle between a relatively less-powerful individual or group, and a relatively more-powerful individual or group. Ask students to suggest possible actions that the less-powerful group might take if they wanted to follow Gandhi's non-violent principles of non-cooperation and peaceful resistance.
2. **Role-playing** Dramatize an imaginary discussion between a young activist who wants to use violent means to resist a particular injustice and a follower of Gandhi who wants to convince the younger activist that non-violent resistance is the best course. After the role-play is performed, the audience may discuss how well Gandhi's principles were presented, and to offer suggestions for improving the argument. The role-play can be performed again, incorporating these suggestions.



**List of Quotations from Gandhi's Writings**

1. The good of the individual is contained in the good of all.
2. Civilization in the real sense of the term, consists not in the multiplication, but in the deliberate and voluntary reduction, of wants.
3. It is the quality of our work which will please God and not the quantity.
4. Affection cannot be manufactured or regulated by law.
5. Non-cooperation with evil is as much a duty as is cooperation with good.
6. The method of passive resistance is the clearest and safest, because, if the cause is not true, it is the resisters, and they alone, who suffer.
7. The more one gives to society, the more one gains personally.
8. Non-violence ... must begin at home.
9. Affection cannot be manufactured or regulated by law.
10. All sins are committed in secrecy.
11. It is sinful to buy and use articles made by sweat labor.
12. Man often becomes what he believes himself to be.
13. One's everyday life is never capable of being separated from one's spiritual being.
14. Discipline knows no rank.
15. Where there is fear there is no religion.
16. One cannot do right in one department of life while he is occupied in doing wrong in any other department.
17. Golden shackles are far worse than iron ones.
18. I object to violence because when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary; the evil it does is permanent.
19. A flag is a necessity for all nations.
20. True knowledge is impossible without a guru.
21. Non-violence is not merely a personal virtue.

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