



Visualising Peace

A research and education project based at the University of St Andrews

<https://peacemuseum.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk>

Peace Education Approach to Fairy tales

This resource has been designed with two goals in mind:

1. To encourage a critical approach to popular moralising stories, in a way that promotes empathy and a peaceful resolution of conflict.
2. To explore the potential of re-examining popular stories as a method of peace education, alongside techniques such as peer listening and peer mediation.

It is aimed at young people aged 5–7 (First Level Education).

It may be used to target the following [experiences and outcomes](#) of the Curriculum for Excellence in Scotland: LIT 1-06a; LIT 1-07a; LIT 1-08a; LIT 1-14a; RME 1-09b.

How to use this resource

Total Duration: 45 - 50 minutes

This teaching resource is divided into three sections:

1. Introduction and discussion about the topic
2. Teacher-led storytime
3. Student exercise

In advance:

1. Depending on the age of your students, you might like to set them some preparatory research and reading. This could involve:
 - *Asking them to reflect on any fairy tales they know of*
 - *Asking them what kinds of lessons, if any, fairy tales tend to teach*
 - *Asking them what they think conflict resolution and peacebuilding involve*

2. Teachers may find the following resources useful:

- <https://peacemuseum.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/2024/02/06/peace-in-disneys-fairy-tales-the-little-mermaid-1989/>
- <https://vpp.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/2024/02/09/useful-peace-fiction/>
- <https://vpp.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/2024/02/16/once-upon-a-time-there-was-peace/>

As our team members discuss in the links above:

‘Fairy tales are one of the most well-known literary forms amongst children, and have occupied this space for centuries around the globe. With their simple forms and magical characters, they manage to appeal to a variety of children. Fairy tales are some of the most significant texts in influencing children and adolescents’ habits of thought and behaviours all the way into adulthood. They include first teachings about morals, empathy, understanding and peacebuilding.’ (Kim Wahnke)

‘Children in Disney’s target demographic have a habit of viewing movies repeatedly, suggesting a higher absorption of the ideas conveyed in these films compared to their adult counterparts. This raises the question of what narratives of peace and conflict are being perpetuated in these stories; in particular, what ideas of individual, social and collective peace are being absorbed by children in this way?’ (Tao Yazaki)

Important note: fairy tales contain many different forms of conflict and many different kinds of conflict resolution and representations of peace. We would encourage you and your students to discuss everything from inner conflict and peace to conflict/peacebuilding between communities and nations.

Set up:

1. If possible, the first two sections could be set up as a circle time activity
2. For the third section, it may be easier for the pupils to be seated in groups, and for individual worksheets and pencils to be handed out.

Introduction and discussion about the topic (5-10 minutes)

Discuss some common fairy tales that students may have heard of or have covered previously in class. Are there any common themes shared? What kinds of conflict do they involve? How is conflict usually resolved? How is a happy ending achieved? Do most fairy tale endings bring peace in some way? Who do they bring peace to? Who does that peace-making, and how?

Storytime (10-15 minutes)

Read out a story of your choice from an age-appropriate fairy tale picture book.

Possible prompts to ask while reading:

- What do you think this story is about?
- Can you make a connection between what's happening in this book and something in your own life?
- How do you think [antagonist] is feeling?

Possible prompts to ask after reading:

- How might this story be different if it was told from another character's point of view?
- Is there any conflict in the story?
- What do characters do to resolve conflict or make peace? (Peace can be everything from inner peace to peace between communities and nations)
- Why do you think [antagonist] did [action]?
- Do you think that was the best way to fix the problem?

Exercise (20-25 minutes)

The worksheets are based around imagining what different antagonists are like as people, and what their goals and motivations might be. They also invite students to think about the kinds of conflicts that the antagonists navigate, what impact conflict has on them, and how they go about resolving it. If you teach peer listening or peer mediation in your school, you could encourage students to make connections or comparisons with what they see in the story and what they do as peer listeners or peer mediators.

Students choose two different antagonists and fill out the sheet as if they were the antagonists themselves.

Go through the question prompts on the worksheet with the student groups. Walk around to help if needed. Encourage discussion about the antagonists' motives and feelings, and about alternative conflict resolution methods for the final prompt such as negotiation and compromise.

Worksheets can be found below:

All About Me

Name:

Age:

Can you draw me?

Where do I live?

How am I feeling?



My favourite...

Food:

Color:

Hobby:

Animal:

Sport:

What did I do?

Why did I do it?

How can I do it with kindness?

Will this lead to more problems or more peace?

Print accessible version:

All About Me

Name:

Age:

Can you draw me?

Where do I live?

My favourite...

Food:

Color:

Hobby:

Animal:

Sport:

How am I feeling?



What did I do?

Why did I do it?

How can I do it with kindness?

Will this lead to more problems or more peace?

Ending the session (5-10 minutes)

- Ask students what they think a happy ending involves – and what role conflict or peace-making play in that.
- Ask them what they learnt about seeing things from different antagonists' points of view.
- Then review any conflict resolution methods that they have seen in the story, and what they think of them. Can they work in real life? Are there other conflict resolution methods that might be worth trying?

Review any conflict resolution methods that arise and discuss what students think of as a happy ending.

Following up

If there is time in the class, or you can devote another session to this topic at a later date, you could challenge your students to write a new fairy tale themselves that captures some of the things they have learnt about what motivations and behaviours drive conflict and what actions can help build peace. Or they could rewrite a fairy tale that they already know to include different kinds of conflict resolution and peacebuilding. **We would love to see what your students produce**, and would be happy to feature some stories in our virtual Museum of Peace (<https://peacemuseum.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk>) if your students are keen!

We would be very grateful if teachers could fill out the teacher feedback survey.

Surveys can be scanned and emailed to vispeace@st-andrews.ac.uk or posted to Dr Alice König, School of Classics, University of St Andrews, Butts Wynd, St Andrews, Fife, KY169AL.

Thank you!

Post-session Teacher Feedback Form

The students in my class enjoyed this session on revisiting fairy tales. Rate 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)

| | 1 strongly disagree | 2 | 3 neither agree or disagree | 4 | 5 Strongly agree |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Click to write Statement 1 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

What were the most common emotions that arose toward the antagonist?

Can you write down some key takeaways which your students took from the session?

What aspects of the workshop do think students particularly benefited from?

Is there anything about the workshop which you think could be improved?

Would you describe this workshop as an example of 'peace education'? Rate 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)

| | 1 strongly disagree | 2 | 3 neither agree or disagree | 4 | 5 Strongly agree |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Click to write Statement 1 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Would you welcome more workshops and teaching materials like this to support peace education in your school? (Rate 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)

| | 1 strongly disagree | 2 | 3 neither agree or disagree | 4 | 5 Strongly agree |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Click to write Statement 1 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Thank you very much for engaging with our resources and contributing to our project!

If you would like to be kept informed about our work, please include your contact details below:

What is the Visualising War and Peace Project?

The Visualising War and Peace project at the University of St Andrews is investigating how war and peace are taught in schools. How do history lessons about ancient warfare compare with what pupils learn by reading poetry from the First World War, for example? Which historic wars and what aspects of war dominate the curriculum? What kinds of things are children taught about how wars end? And how much time do they spend learning about peace-building and peace-keeping? Is peace always taught in relation to conflict? What connections do curricula make between inner peace and geopolitical peace? And what media are most effective at generating curiosity and deepening understanding? We are interested in current practice and also in what ideas pupils, teachers and curriculum designers have for how war and peace might be taught differently in the future.

Why have I been invited to take part?

We are keen to find out what pupils and teachers think about how peace is taught in schools across both across the UK and further afield. Your insights will inform the questions which our research project asks and the future research that we do.

Do I have to take part?

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and all data we gather will be fully anonymised so no one will be able to trace responses back to individuals. If you do decide to take part you will be free to withdraw at any time without providing a reason, and with no negative consequences.

Use of your personal data for research and data protection rights

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What should I do if I have concerns about this study?

In the first instance, you are encouraged to raise your concerns directly with the Visualising War and Peace Research project, by emailing vispeace@st-andrews.ac.uk. However, if you do not feel comfortable doing so, then you should contact the University's Ethics Committee. A full outline of the procedures governed by the University Teaching and Research Ethics Committee is available at <https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/research/integrity-ethics/humans/ethical-guidance/complaints/>.

