



Project Ploughshares Teaching Resources on Peace and Disarmament

Do you know a teacher who is interested in curriculum resources on issues of peace and disarmament? Please share this supplement. If you are a teacher, please let us know if these resources are helpful. What needs to be changed? What's missing? Send your comments to plough@ploughshares.ca.

No matter how old I get, or how long it's been since I was a student, the sights and smells of fall always remind me that it is time to go back to school. The lazy days of summer are over. The rhyme is reversed: we return to pencils, books, and teachers' questioning looks—or something like that.

Formal classroom learning is not the only way to learn, but it is a particularly important way to learn for most of us in Canadian society. Many of our ideas, convictions, and attitudes are formed in a classroom as we take the yearly steps up the school ladder.

People committed to the mission of Project Ploughshares, especially those involved in local Ploughshares groups across the country, don't want students to be left out of the quest to create a more just and peaceful world. This insert points teachers to web-based curriculum resources that they can use in the classroom to inform students and to use as the basis of discussions on what peacebuilding and disarmament mean for our troubled world.

But all teachers know that learning is not just about curriculum. The best resource materials in the world don't guarantee student engagement. Anna Jaikaran's article on the next two pages describes the learning curve she and Martha Goodings have been on in talking to high school students in Toronto about nuclear disarmament.

The questions they asked themselves along the way are familiar. Why don't students get it? Why don't they care as much about the nuclear threat as I do? What do we need to do differently to really communicate what we want to say? As a scientist and a communicator Jaikaran looked for and found some answers to these questions.

John Siebert

DIMENSIONS OF WAR AND PEACE: A TEACHING UNIT FOR GRADE TEN

ploughsharosedmonton.org/dimensions.pdf or ploughshares.ca/about-us/students-educators

For a number of years members of Project Ploughshares' local group in Edmonton, some of whom lived through the Second World War, spoke to grade seven classes in Edmonton when they were studying a unit on Japan. They gave guest talks on the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. The children showed great interest. More recent discussions with teachers at a workshop sponsored by the Alberta Teachers Association resulted in a request for further curriculum resources. Social studies teachers suggested that materials aimed at the high school level would be welcome and would fit the curriculum.

As a result, Project Ploughshares Edmonton partnered with the John Humphrey Centre to develop a resource on war, nuclear war, and taking action through nonviolence and peacebuilding. The 40-page online guide provides four lesson plans:

Lesson Plan 1 - Why War?

Lesson Plan 2 - Nuclear Warfare

Lesson Plan 3 - Children and War

Lesson Plan 4 - Action through Nonviolence and Peace.

The lesson plans include videos, suggested learning activities, and questions to address.

Cont'd on back page

Lessons from the classroom

By Anna Jaikaran

We are not experts. We're activists—our group is called no-2-nuclear-weapons. When we started, we had vaguely imagined that most students were in favour of nuclear disarmament. Now we realize that most students never think about nuclear weapons; if they do, they see them as only one of a number of looming threats. As a friend in her twenties told me, “People have been telling me the world was going to end my whole life.”

Teenagers meet nuclear weapons

We have been giving presentations about nuclear weapons in high schools for four years now and have spoken to over 2,000 students. After almost every talk we ask the students to fill out a feedback sheet to give us an idea of what they picked up and what they thought about it. So we talk and test, talk and test.

The school board did not give us free rein to convert their students into anti-nuclear-weapons activists. The board has guidelines for dealing with controversial and sensitive issues, which state that “controversial material must be treated in a fair manner that is thorough, balanced, and free of unfair biases.”

We begin every presentation by telling the students what a nuclear weapon is. We show a diagram of the structure of an atom and explain that the energy for a nuclear explosion comes from disrupting the nucleus. We do this not because it is important that they know how a nuclear weapon works, but because it is crucial that they understand that nuclear weapons are distinct from conventional weapons.

Of course, nuclear weapons *are* the most powerful weapons, but we also emphasize some of the other consequences: radioactive fallout and nuclear winter. We sum up the section on basic facts by quoting the International Court of Justice on the unique characteristics of these weapons: *only* nuclear weapons “have the potential to destroy all civilization and the entire ecosystem of the planet” (ILPI 2013). This statement was made by a panel of 14 judges from different countries, elected by the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council, after listen-

ing to months of expert testimony. We believe the inevitable conclusion is that nuclear weapons must be abolished.

We have not, however, found the statement to be particularly powerful in the classroom.

We have tried to increase the emotional impact of our message. We explain that radioactive fallout causes cancer and birth defects. We show a photograph of a woman from the Marshall Islands, which were contaminated by fallout from nearby U.S. nuclear testing, and read her description of the most common birth defect in her country, jellyfish babies (Ware 2007). Then we show a photo of a deformed Marshallese child who will die before she is six months old (Nuclear Age Peace Foundation 2013). We explain that her condition is the result of nuclear bombs detonated before she or even her parents were born. Students often mention this image on their feedback sheets. But it doesn't seem to be enough to interest them in nuclear weapons.

Deterrence vs. disarmament

The effects of using a nuclear weapon are not disputed; the disagreement lies in the best way to prevent the weapons from being used—deterrence or disarmament. We often discuss the pros and cons of both approaches and are frequently dismayed when deterrence gets a substantially better reception.

We used the example that convinced former U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara to work for nuclear abolition: the Cuban missile crisis in 1962 (Morris 2003). President Kennedy took his nuclear forces to *defense readiness condition two*, ready to deploy and engage in less than six hours—the only occurrence in U.S. history (FAS 1998). Kennedy and Soviet Premier Khrushchev were drawn closer and closer to a military confrontation neither of them wanted (Kennedy 1969). We told the story of the Soviet submarine, with no communication with Moscow, armed with nuclear-tipped torpedoes while the crew believed that the war had started (Lloyd 2002; PBS 2012). If they had launched their torpedoes, it is almost certain that

the situation would have escalated to nuclear war. Still the students were not impressed.

We usually have to squeeze our message about nuclear disarmament in around the edges of curriculum material in history, civics, or occasionally science. We were given an unprecedented opportunity to speak to a Grade 10 class for four periods over a month. We showed them the entire documentary *Countdown to Zero* (Walker 2010), which focuses on the current threat from nuclear weapons. And then we discussed it.

The students remained skeptical. They wanted to know how the weapons could be eliminated physically. They wanted to know what could be done if countries agreed to get rid of their nuclear arsenals and then cheated. They wanted to know how countries could ever be persuaded to give up the strongest weapon. We could answer their questions, but we could not make disarmament a perfect solution.

We took a closer look at the feedback sheets. We had included a new question: “Do you think nuclear disarmament is realistic?” They did not.

It made sense that people would not get behind nuclear disarmament if they did not think it was possible.

A realistic solution

We now talk about the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and the commitment made by the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, and China to eliminate their nuclear weapons, albeit at an unspecified time in the future (check the Project Ploughshares website for more information about the NPT). We describe the extensive monitoring system already in place for the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty: 321 monitoring stations and 16 laboratories around the world to detect nuclear testing anywhere, including underground (CTBTO Preparatory Commission 2013). We show a map that highlights the six land-based nuclear-weapons-free zones, in which all countries have voluntarily pledged not to possess, develop, or use nuclear weapons (OPANAL n.d.). We point out that the number of nuclear weapons has decreased from a high of almost 70,000 in 1986 (Norris & Kristensen 2010) to 17,300 today (FAS 2013) and that South Africa, Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan have all given up their nuclear arsenals (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament 2013).

Students are much more receptive to the idea of nuclear disarmament when they know about the progress that’s

been made. And each example of a successful arms control agreement—against chemical weapons, biological weapons, or landmines—strengthens the narrative. We invent certain classes of weapons, realize they are too dangerous to use, and negotiate treaties to ban them.

It turns out that we don’t just have to sell the problem of nuclear weapons; we have to sell the solution as well.□

Anna Jaikaran belongs to the Toronto group no2nuclearweapons. She is a member of Science for Peace and the Canadian Voice of Women for Peace, and is a Campaigner for the 2020 Vision Campaign of Mayors for Peace. annajaikaran@gmail.com

To read the full version of this article, visit www.ploughshares.ca.

References

- Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. 2013. Nuclear weapons: who’s got them? cnduk.org/campaigns/global-abolition/nuclear-armed-countries.
- Federation of American Scientists. 2013. Status of world nuclear forces. fas.org/programs/ssp/nukes/nuclearweapons/nukestatus.html.
- _____. 1998. DEFCON DEFense CONdition. fas.org/nuke/guide/usa/c3i/defcon.htm.
- International Law and Policy Institute. 2013. The ICJ advisory opinion. nwp.ilpi.org/?p=1218.
- Kennedy, Robert. 1969. *Thirteen Days: A Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis*. New York: Norton.
- Lloyd, Marion. 2002. Soviets close to using A-bomb in 1962 crisis, forum is told. *The Boston Globe*, October 13. latinamericanstudies.org/cold-war/sovietsbomb.htm.
- Morris, Errol. 2003. *The Fog of War: Eleven Lessons from the Life of Robert S. McNamara*. Documentary film.
- Norris, Robert & Hans Kristensen. 2010. Global nuclear weapons inventories, 1945-2010. *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, July. thebulletin.org/2010/julyaugust/global-nuclear-weapons-inventories-1945%E2%80%932010.
- Nuclear Age Peace Foundation. 2013. Marshall Islanders affected by US nuclear weapons testing.. NuclearFiles.org. nuclearfiles.org/menu/library/media-gallery/image/testing/marshall-islands.htm.
- OPANAL. n.d. Nuclear-weapon-free zones around the world. opanal.org/NWFZ/nwzf.htm.
- PBS. 2012. The man who saved the world. *Secrets of the Dead*.
- Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. 2013. Verification regime. ctbto.org/verification-regime.
- Walker, Lucy. 2010. *Countdown to Zero*. Documentary film DVD.
- Ware, Alyn. 2007. The human factor—revising Einstein. *SGI Quarterly*, July. sgiquarterly.org/feature2007Jly-7.html.

TEACHING RESOURCES

CREATING A CULTURE OF PEACE

projectpeacemakers.org/content/resources

As a peace education organization, Project Peacemakers in Winnipeg is committed to raising public awareness about children and war, nuclear abolition, violent video games, and building peace through play. Project Peacemakers has a number of teaching resources on its website, including:

Creating a Culture of Peace: Early Years – Grades 1 to 4 (142 pages)

Theme 1: Peace and conflict

Theme 2: Peaceful play

Theme 3: Children around the world

Annotated resource list

List of teacher resources

Creating a Culture of Peace: Senior Years 2013 (245 pages)

Theme 1: Creating a Culture of Peace

Theme 2: Power, Conflict and Cooperation in the Global Village

Theme 3: Media Literacy

Annotated resource list.

GEEZ MAGAZINE: THE RISE OF THE UNRECOGNIZED PEACE ACTIVIST (SEPT. 2013)

geezmagazine.org (for limited article selection)



Project Ploughshares and *Geez* magazine out of Winnipeg collaborated on an issue devoted to peace in September. *Geez* styles itself as a bit of “holy mischief in an age of fast faith.”

This irreverent but not irrelevant take on peace and the pursuit of it will appeal to students in high school, college, and university and to learners of any age who have a sense of humour and an open mind.

Project Ploughshares has a limited number of complimentary copies of this issue of *Geez* for Ploughshares’ supporters in return for the \$5 cost of shipping. Order by sending a message to plough@ploughshares.ca. Or go directly to *Geez* and purchase a subscription.

ARMED CONFLICTS REPORT

ploughshares.ca/programs/armed-conflict/armed-conflicts-report

Project Ploughshares has been monitoring armed conflicts worldwide since 1987 and publishing the annual *Armed Conflicts Report*. The *Armed Conflicts Report* consists of a 22 x 34-inch poster, which includes a map and accompanying graphs that provide a visual representation of the impact of global armed conflict. Expanded conflict descriptions are updated annually and published on the Ploughshares website with links to graphics and background information. The ACR can be used as a primary source of information about current wars and how the international community through the United Nations is responding to these conflicts.