



Language Arts 9 and Social Studies 9 Grade 9

Living
Respectfully

Respecting
Diversity

Preventing
Prejudice

Resolving
Conflict


“Once Upon a Time”: Tearing Down Fences

Contributors

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Lesson Objectives

This humanities (language arts and social studies) lesson provides an opportunity for students to think about how, at its height, the system of apartheid affected South African society until the early 1990s. The lesson is based on the short story “Once Upon a Time” by Nadine Gordimer (see Supplementary Resources). Gordimer’s story provides valuable insights about prejudice and discrimination that can be applied to any society. Students will learn how individuals can take responsibility in reducing societal misunderstandings. The story illustrates the irony in thinking that building fences provides security and solves societal problems. The story asks students to consider the fences that every society builds. Teachers should focus on the elements of the short story throughout this lesson.

 **Time** 120–240 minutes

Getting Started

Knowledge Now

Ask students to brainstorm what they know about South Africa’s policy of apartheid. Use the five W’s (who, when, what, where and why). Discuss the facts relating to South Africa’s historical situation with regard to the policy of apartheid. Make sure that they know about recent changes to the policy and that it was abolished in 1994 when Nelson Mandela’s African National Congress (ANC) was elected to power by citizens of all races in the country’s first free elections.

Break students into groups of four. Have students discuss how the policy of apartheid could have become the legal condition in South Africa. Why? Begin to explore the idea of barricades. How would people who are barricaded feel? Ask them to share their ideas.

Engaging Interest

Ask students to think about similar situations that exist or have existed in the past or present in other countries. Avoid providing too much detail at this time. Leave students wanting to know more.

Learning Activities

Read the story, "Once Upon a Time."

Questions for discussion:

1. "Once Upon a Time" is a story about irony. What is the irony in this situation?
2. Why did Nadine Gordimer title the story "Once Upon a Time?"

Use think-pair-share. Ask students to list the characteristics that this story has in common with other fairy tales.

This story uses the metaphor of barriers or fences to represent the idea of protection or security. Discuss the use of this metaphor and how it is used to tell the story. Why is the use of this metaphor effective in making the point about the ineffectiveness of barriers in truly providing protection? Examples such as private schools, gated communities, exclusive memberships and unwritten rules to memberships can function as barriers. Draw out many more examples from students' experiences.

Discuss the individual's role in the creation of society. Who (or what) is the antagonist in this story?

In groups of two, ask students to write and illustrate a brief how-to cartoon that illustrates how a society might end up like the one in the story. Students should create four or five frames that show the progression that culminates in a similar conclusion to "Once Upon a Time."

Post the cartoons and ask students to share and explain them if necessary.

With the class as a whole, ask students to extrapolate situations in school, both in the past and in the present, that are similar to the ones in this story.

Assessment/Analysis

Students will demonstrate an understanding of an individual's responsibility to his or her society and each member of it.

The how-to cartoon can be used to discuss the ways a society takes that can lead to conflict. In groups of four, ask students to write a charter of rights for a country or school. Share the charters with the class. Urge students to identify the underlying principles important to creating charters that protect all people.

Application

Challenge students to think about ways they can personally take action to avoid building fences. Continue to examine issues related to discrimination, racism and prejudice. Use this metaphor to examine current affairs.

Social Studies 9 Learner Outcomes

Students are encouraged to develop an appreciation

- of the ways in which different economic systems meet the needs of the people,
- of the need for balance between freedom and responsibility,
- of the contribution of individuals and groups to improving the quality of life, and
- of the need for balance between freedom and responsibility.

Students will demonstrate

- empathy for people who have been affected by change,
- understanding that social issues are complex and may take time to resolve, and
- awareness that technology raises many ethical issues.

Language Arts 9 Learner Outcomes

Respond to Texts

- consider historical context when developing own points of view or interpretations of oral, print or other media texts
- compare and contrast own life situation with themes of oral, print or other media texts
- analyze how the choices and motives of characters portrayed in oral, print and other media texts provide insight into those of self and others
- evaluate the effectiveness of different types of oral, print and other media texts, considering the believability of plot and setting, the credibility of characters, and the development and resolution of conflict
- relate the themes, emotions and experiences portrayed in oral, print and media texts to issues of personal significance
- generalize from own experience to create oral, print and other media texts on a theme

Safe and Caring Topics and Concepts

Living Respectfully

Understanding Conflict, Peace, Justice and Violence

Understanding how violence affects individuals, families, schools and the community

Defining Respect

Identifying ways that people show respect and disrespect

Respecting Diversity and Preventing Prejudice

Respecting Different Points of View Builds Community and Helps to Prevent or Resolve Conflict

- Exploring how “standing in someone else’s shoes” helps avoid and/or resolve conflict
Stereotypes Limit Our Perception and Understanding of Other People

- Examining how stereotypes and prejudice keep us from resolving conflicts
Stereotyping Leads to Prejudice, Discrimination and Conflict

- Identifying ways to avoid stereotyping people and situations
Respecting Human Rights

- Examining the meaning of respect for the dignity and rights of all persons . . . without prejudice as to race, religious beliefs, color, sex, sexual orientation, physical characteristics, dress, age, ancestry or place of origin
Analyzing How Prejudice Can Lead to Conflict and Violence

Recognizing and Appreciating that Families are Unique Builds Respect for Diversity

Resolving Conflict Peacefully

Assessing Risk and Avoiding Violence

Identifying conditions that increase the potential for violence

Teaching Strategies

Go to www.sacsc.ca for strategy descriptions	Cooperative Learning	Inquiry Learning	Direct Instruction
	• Think-Pair-Share	• Problem Solving	

Generalization and Transfer	Peer Teaching	Empathy/Affective Education	General Teaching Activities/Ideas

Supplementary Resources

Sightlines 9 Anthology. Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice Hall Literature, Pearson Education (1999), pp. 39 – 42. Order Sightlines 9 through www.lrc.learning.gov.ab.ca

- Gordimer, N. “Once Upon a Time.” In *SightLines 9*, compiled by A. Barlow-Kedves et al., 39–42. Scarborough, Ont.: Prentice-Hall Ginn Canada, 1999.
- Nadine Gordimer <http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/gordimer.htm>
- The History of Apartheid in South Africa <http://www-cs-students.stanford.edu/~cale/cs201/apartheid.hist.html>