



Ahimsa Center- K-12 Teacher Institute Lesson Plan

Title of Lesson: Gandhi: A Man of Simple Means		
Lesson By: Maureen Wagers		
Grade Level/ Subject Areas: World History, Grade 11 ELL Students	Class Size: 15 students	Time/ Duration of Lesson: 1 day
<p>After this lesson, the ELL students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand how Gandhi changed as a person from his childhood to adulthood. • Identify, through pictures of Gandhi, how the events of his life shaped him. • Relate how Gandhi’s personal life influenced the independence movement. • Describe what life on the ashram was like. • Make connections between Gandhi’s life and their own experiences. 		
<p>Lesson Abstract:</p> <p>In a world history class for English Language Learners, students will learn about Gandhi and his philosophies with pictures. By looking at pictures that represent Gandhi at different times in his life, students will observe how Gandhi and his lifestyle changed with the satyagraha movement.</p>		
<p>Lesson Content:</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: flex-start;"> <div style="flex: 1;">  </div> <div style="flex: 2; padding-left: 10px;"> <p>Throughout his life, Gandhi was an evolving person. He acknowledged this by commenting that if he contradicted himself on the same issue, that people should take the later idea. If one looks at how Gandhi changed from his childhood to his death, both inwardly and outwardly, they would see a constant transformation of the man who would eventually lead India to its independence. Gandhi’s childhood was relatively traditional. His father was involved with politics, and his mother was a very devout Hindu, who often fasted for spiritual reasons. He was very shy and not the best student, but he was also very conscientious about his actions.</p> <p>Some of the events that might later shape Gandhi included eating meat, stealing from servants, and lying. The guilt he felt over these acts would begin to shape his life later.</p> <p>He was married at the age of thirteen to Kasturba, an arranged childhood marriage. He would later speak against these types of marriages.</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: flex-start;"> <div style="flex: 1;">  </div> <div style="flex: 2; padding-left: 10px;"> <p>After his father died, the family decided to send Gandhi to Great Britain for law school. Gandhi took on British dress and style so that he would be able to fit in. The term “Brown Englishman” matches Gandhi’s appearance at this time in his life. Despite his appearance, Gandhi used much of his time for self-reflection in Great Britain. He joined a vegetarian society, worked to live as simply as he could to save money for his family, and studied religions. After he was called to the bar, he returned to India to practice law. It turned out that Gandhi was still very shy and struggled to speak in front of the court. This made it impossible for him to continue practicing law in India.</p> </div> </div>		

An opportunity arose for Gandhi to go to South Africa to represent a Muslim's business interests there. He intends only to stay for a short time, but ends up staying nearly 21 years. It is in South Africa that Gandhi will undergo the greatest transitions of his life. As he becomes more and more dedicated to Satyagraha and ahimsa, his appearance also changes. The concept of living simply reaches new levels for Gandhi here.



It is in South Africa that Gandhi experiences discrimination for the first time, while riding on a train.

This is an event that will shape the rest of his life, and indirectly the history of India.



Gandhi started a non-violence movement in South Africa to work for equal rights under British rule. He implemented the philosophy of Satyagraha, which is the force of truth and love, in the movement. Anyone who joined the movement was expected to follow certain rules, especially using honesty and non-violence in all their actions.

Gandhi and some of his fellow satyagrahis took vows to live a pure life. This included celibacy, dietary laws, and simple living. It is in South Africa that Gandhi establishes his first ashram. On the ashram, these ideas were a way of life. The ashram epitomized the life Gandhi wanted to live, and from this point on, he preferred to live on an ashram when at all possible. In this environment, everyone was equal, regardless of race, caste, religion, or gender. Everyone was expected to do their share and respect all members of the ashram. Even Gandhi's own wife was called to task when she was reluctant to do the job she considered to be "untouchable."

It was in South Africa that Gandhi changes his outward appearance the most. Instead of dressing in Western style for the time, Gandhi takes on a very traditional Indian style of dress, wearing a white cotton khadi. He will never again dress as the British did.

Gandhi's South Africa experience brought about many changes in Gandhi as he worked to reform the flawed British system. It was here that he took the vows of celibacy, established ashram life, and changed his appearance. He did this all while working to reform the inequity in the system. It appears there are connections between his actions and his lifestyle. Gandhi believed that in order to be a true satyagrahi, a person needed to be willing to make changes to their own personal lifestyle first. He made the changes he wanted to see in himself first, his own experiment in a sense.

Back in India, Gandhi continued along this same path. He and his followers built another ashram to help them live the lifestyle they had created in South Africa. He also started the tradition of using a spinning



wheel to cut down on need for British cloth. The spinning wheel became a symbol for independence across India during the movement. Not only did Gandhi spin his own cloth, he encouraged others to do the same.



Photograph from the M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence

At the time of his death, Gandhi had simplified his life so much that the items on the left were all his possessions – the bare necessities.

A Day in the Life of Gandhi



Gandhi was a man whose lifestyle really represented the type of person he was. He lived very simply. When he was not leading an act of satyagraha, he stayed in an ashram, a spiritual commune for Gandhi and other close satyagrahis. Gandhi's home in the community was small, but always very clean. The hut hardly had any furniture or decoration.

Gandhi's day started sometimes as early as three in the morning. During this time, he would also spend time thinking and reading, while everything was still quiet. Then he would proceed with his day very methodically. One of Gandhi's beliefs that to be late was to be disrespectful to others, so he always pushed people to be punctual with meals and meetings. Then he would start his daily prayers before he could eat breakfast, which was always very small. Gandhi was very careful about what

he ate and how much. For example, he never ate meat or dairy. After that, it would be time for his morning walk.

Lunch time would come early and then it would follow with interviews and appointments with people. Sometimes, as he was meeting with people, he recline with a mud poultice on his abdomen to treat high blood pressure. This is another example of Gandhi's simplicity, using an earth treatment to treat a health concern. An hour later in the day would be devoted to spinning. To Gandhi, the spinning wheel is both the symbol of his village reconstruction movement. It was a way to rely more on the Indian people and less on the British monopoly on cloth.

Gandhi believed that the evening meal always needed to be served before sunset, so it was usually in the early evening. It would once again be a simple meal, consisting of fruits and nuts. Then came the evening walk, which he usually used as time to play the children of the ashram. The evening prayers, which included all members of the ashram and surrounding villages. Gandhi would often deliver a sermon, which could be on a variety of subjects, about an ill member or a mistake Gandhi's wife made or even the announcement of a nationwide struggle the Indian people were to take on.

Gandhi preferred to sleep out in the open, partially because of all the nights he spent in prison. This way he could stargaze before he fell asleep. His day ended as simply as it began, which was what Gandhi believed was best for human beings.



Gandhi's life had not always been so simple. He had struggled with his conscience as a child and teenager. But, during his early adult years, the experiences he had began to truly shape his lifestyle. In London, he became very dedicated to budgeting and vegetarianism. After that, he began to develop his ideas of satyagraha based on the non-violence of ahimsa in South Africa. With that, he really began to eliminate the ideas of possession and greed. The life on the ashram exemplifies how austere Gandhi's way of life was, along with his movement for change.

Wisconsin Content Standards: (Grade 12 History Standards)

- B.12.1 Explain different points of view on the same historical event, using data gathered from various sources, such as letters, journals, diaries, newspapers, government documents, and speeches.
- B.12.2 Analyze primary and secondary sources related to a historical question to evaluate their relevance, make comparisons, integrate new information with prior knowledge, and come to a reasoned conclusion.
- B.12.8 Recall, select, and explain the significance of important people, their work, and their ideas in the areas of political and intellectual leadership, inventions, discoveries, and the arts, within each major era of Wisconsin, United States, and world history.

Guiding Questions:

- What does it say about Gandhi that he died with very few possessions?
- How did Gandhi change from his childhood until his death?
- What was life on the ashram like?
- How did Gandhi's experiences shape him?
- Would it be possible to live as simply as Gandhi did? Would it benefit people today to live this way?

Materials Needed:

- LCD projector to show digital picture book about Gandhi's life
- Observation/response picture guide for students to fill out when going through picture book

Lesson Context:

- This one-day lesson is part of a segment on the Indian Independence movement. The segment fits into a six-week Indian history unit. Prior to the lesson, the students will have heard two presentations about Gandhi, his philosophies, and the independence movement, and seen several scenes from Attenborough's *Gandhi*.
- The goal of the lesson is to teach students how Gandhi was able to use ahimsa for himself, for his community, and for the nation of India.
- The use of visuals with an English Language Learners class will enhance their ability to remember the events and ideas of Gandhi. To combine the lesson with writing and a discussion will help establish a good method throughout the year.

Teaching Activities:

- The day before, the students will have heard a presentation about Gandhi and his philosophies, so they will come in with background information. Presentation should also include key vocabulary.
- Create a picture guide for the students to follow along with as you are going through the digital picture book with them. An observation/response guide would allow them to take notes and then relate the pictures to Gandhi's lifestyle and ideas.
- At the beginning of class, ask the students to recall what they remembered about Gandhi. The refresher should be useful to starting the lesson.
- Show the picture book in chronological order. Give the students time to take notes. Also, stop every few minutes to discuss as a class to help the students keep focused by using the guided questions from above.
- The last ten minutes of the class, ask the students to discuss what they learned about Gandhi's lifestyle and ideas from the picture book and collect their guides. Brainstorm ideas about how Gandhi's personal example could work for India's independence movement.
- Storybook guide should be turned in the following class.
- Some follow up the next class time to recall what they remembered from the lesson would be useful. What do they remember about Gandhi? What do they remember about the independence movement? Wrap up with discussion of how Gandhi's lifestyle could work today.

Assessment/ Evaluation:

- Observation/response guide: will see how well students followed the activity and how they understand the progress that Gandhi made in life.
- Unit exam: 5-10 multiple choice/matching questions

Vocabulary:

- Equality
- Ahimsa: a religious concept which advocates non-violence and a respect for all life.
- Fasting: choosing not to eat and/or drink as a means of persuading a group of people or

achieving a goal.

- Boycott: to refuse to buy a product or take part in an activity as a way of showing strong disapproval.
- Satyagraha: the policy of nonviolent resistance initiated in South Africa and applied in India by Mahatma Gandhi in order to oppose British rule and to hasten political reforms.
- Ashram: a community system used by Gandhi where everyone was equal and worked together to attain self-sufficiency.

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The Mahatma's Earthly Possessions. <http://www.gandhiinstitute.org>

Mahatma Gandhi. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Mahatma_Gandhi

Sabarmati Ashram. <http://www.ahmedabadline.com/travel/sabarmatiashram.html>

Name _____

Directions: Take notes in the boxes below as you watch the picture book on Gandhi. Look at how he and his lifestyle change from beginning to end.

I. Childhood and Family: What was his childhood like? What were his parents like?

II. Law School and South Africa: Who did he dress like? How did he change?

III. India's Spiritual Leader: What kind of person was he? How did he live?

Based on how he lived, what were Gandhi's main ideas?