

# Peace Partners

**Overview:**

Students research the similarities of historically conflicting cultures and then negotiate and write a peace agreement to promote them.

**Materials:**

- Copies of handouts (for each student)
- News reports of cultural conflicts

**Handouts:**

- [Peace Partners](#)

**Procedure:**

1. Discuss the nature of some of the world's conflicts. Explain that many stem from ancient hatreds passed from generation to generation. Ask students to come up with examples (Hutus vs. Tutsis in and around Rwanda, Kosovars vs. Serbians, Catholics vs. Protestants in Northern Ireland, Sinhalese vs. Tamil in Sri Lanka, Kurds vs. Turks or Iraqis or Iranians, Sunnis vs. Shiites, Turks vs. Greeks, Armenians vs. Azerbaijanis, Israelis vs. Palestinians, etc.). Write these on the board.
2. Ask students what form these conflicts might take. Answers might range from petty insults and caricatures to genocidal wars ("ethnic cleansing"). At your discretion, distribute media reports of such conflicts. Discuss underlying issues such as competition for political spoils and land, racism, religious intolerance, and tribal identity.
3. Point out that while cease-fires have sometimes maintained an uneasy truce over these conflicts, lasting peace has not been secured by outside forces (or guns). Suggest that lasting peace comes from within the communities in conflict through mutual respect and understanding. Ask the students to help explain what this means.
4. Emphasize the importance for different cultures to learn about others' points of view. Say: It takes courageous, long-term commitment to resolve cultural prejudices. And it takes a fresh perspective, either from individuals who can put aside the past or from those without much invested in the past — the kind of perspective that youth provide.
5. Explain that in this exercise, students in pairs will be assigned to rival groups (not their own), which they will research with attention to belief systems, cultural values, and historical enemies.

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Explain that each student will then be paired with the enemy of his or her group (use examples in first paragraph). The enemies will meet to find ways to promote peace by discussing each other's grievances and exploring shared values. Each pair will then write a statement of values and present it to the class.

6. Divide students into pairs and designate groups (or allow them to choose from your list on the board). Distribute copies of handout #1. As you conclude the exercise, distribute and discuss handout #2, "The Bostonian Agreement."

This lesson is from the *Good Ideas* book, available for purchase from the CHARACTER COUNTS! online store: <http://www.charactercounts.org/materials>

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### McREL standards

#### Behavioral Studies

**Standard 1.** Understands that group and cultural influences contribute to human development, identity, and behavior.

**Level IV, Benchmark 7.** Understands that family, gender, ethnicity, nationality, institutional affiliations, socioeconomic status, and other group and cultural influences contribute to shaping a person's identity.

<http://www.mcrel.org/Standards-benchmarks/>