



Lesson Plan: Conflict Resolution

Find the best route to your destination

Grade level: High School

Approximate time frame: Three to four class periods

Introduction/rationale

In the following lesson students will consider the influence of emotions on thinking and behavior and come to understand how managing one's emotions typically leads to better outcomes. After identifying conflicts among fictional characters and examining how the characters resolve these situations, students are encouraged to think about productive ways of resolving conflicts that occur in their own lives.

Instructional objectives

Students will...

- Describe the purpose of conflict in a work of literature
- Demonstrate understanding of positive conflict-resolution skills
- Apply conflict resolution techniques to conflicts within a work of fiction
- Work collaboratively to develop a skit or video that demonstrates understanding of conflict resolution techniques

Curriculum Standards

Health:

- Identify techniques for handling anger and resolving conflicts
- Demonstrate effective communication, negotiation, and conflict resolution for resolving potentially violent conflicts
- Demonstrate skills for refusal, negotiation, and collaboration to avoid potentially harmful situations.



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English/Language Arts:

- Give oral presentations for various purposes, showing appropriate changes in delivery (gestures, vocabulary, pace, visuals) and using language for dramatic effect.
- Write stories or scripts with well-developed characters, setting, dialogue, clear conflict and resolution, and sufficient descriptive detail.
- Locate and analyze elements of plot and characterization and then use an understanding of these elements to determine how qualities of the central characters influence the resolution of the conflict.

Materials needed

- Classroom copies of work of literature (novel, chapter or short story)
- Dictionary
- Pencils
- Video recording device (optional)

Student activities/handouts:

The Best Route is a Shared One
Adventures in Real Time

Student reading assignment

Brain Driver's Education: Operator's Guide section: "Find the best route to your destination"

Procedures

Anticipatory set:

Ask students to define conflict in their own words. Assign a student to look up "conflict" in the dictionary to check the definition the class developed.

Ask class if conflict is always bad. (No.) If we think of conflict as an opportunity to make sure that all persons involved have their needs met, conflict can be a positive thing. But we have to think strategically.



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Step-by-step instructions/activities

1. Conflict is central to all works of fiction because of the potential for drama but also because conflict has the potential to transform a character, or at least teach him/her valuable lessons.
2. Ask the class to name some of the central conflicts in the novel or short story the class is reading. List class suggestions on the board.
3. Did the characters resolve their conflict(s) in a positive way? How would the outcome of the novel/story be different if they had?
4. Suggest that learning to solve conflicts in a positive way will help students in their everyday lives.
5. Introduce Student Activity handout “Find the best route to your destination.” Read and review strategies for resolving and learning from conflict.
6. Ask the class if these skills could have helped the novel/story characters resolve their conflict. How?
7. Choose a conflict from the list on the board and ask students if this conflict might have been resolved more positively using the strategies from the handout.

Introduce Group Project: This project will help students determine whether collaboratively resolving conflicts could solve some of the characters’ difficulties in the novel/story.

8. Divide students into groups of 4 or 5. Give each group a copy of Student Activity handout “The Best Route is a Shared One.” Students are to create a skit or video to demonstrate what might have happened if the fictional characters had been able to solve their problems using strategies outlined in the section “Find the best route to your destination” in *Brain Driver’s Education: Operator’s Guide*.
9. Monitor students’ work on the project. (It will probably take one or two class periods for groups to complete background work and develop a skit/video.)



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10. Provide students with an opportunity to present and discuss their work.
11. Provide feedback to students on the project's content and presentation.
12. Ask students if they think these problem-solving skills might help them in resolving their own conflicts. How?
13. Introduce and assign journal project using Student Activity handout "Adventures in Real Time."

Assessment

Use class discussion, group project, and journal assignment to assess student understanding.



Student Activity: The Best Route is a Shared One
Find the best route to your destination

Assignment

In this project, your group will get a chance to explore one of the central conflicts in our novel/story by applying collaborative approaches to resolving it. Would these techniques have helped the characters resolve their conflict in a better way?

Step 1: Choose a point of conflict from the novel/story. (Feel free to choose from the suggestions on the board.) Describe the conflict below. (Remember: define the problem in a way that makes it seem fixable.)

Step 2: Below, describe how the conflict was resolved in the book/story. Was there a satisfactory solution for everyone involved?



Student Activity: The Best Route is a Shared One
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Step 3: Imagine that the characters could solve the conflict in a more collaborative way. Use the chart provided (“Resolving Conflicts in a Collaborative Way”) to brainstorm what the two characters want and to suggest possible solutions for addressing their conflict more constructively. Hint: To do this, you must identify what each character wants/needs.

Step 4: What would solving this conflict look like in real life? Working collaboratively with your group, develop a skit or video that shows a more positive outcome based on methods outlined in the “Find the best route to your destination” section of the *Brain Driver’s Education: Operator’s Guide*.

****Don’t re-invent the characters or conflicts!** You must remain true to your understanding of your characters’ motivations. You will be graded on your understanding of the characters, conflicts, and use of conflict resolution strategies as demonstrated in the skit/video you produce.

You will also receive a grade for working collaboratively as a group.



Student Activity: The Best Route is a Shared One
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Resolving Conflicts in a Collaborative Way

Character 1 (name)		Character 2 (name)
Character #1's wants/needs.... (list)	List of possible solutions	Character #2's wants/needs...(list)



Student Activity: Adventures in Real Time
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Assignment

In class you've learned about conflict and how it makes for drama and transformation in literature. You've also learned some practical techniques to resolve real-life conflicts.

For the next week, *keep track in your journal of the conflicts you experience*. Maybe you and your mother end up fighting over the same thing every day, or your little brother is driving you crazy. Maybe you've had the same argument three times with your best friend, or you just can't get along with your English teacher ☺

Choose one of the conflicts from your journal and use the techniques you've worked on in class to attempt to resolve it in a positive way. *Detail your conflict resolution "adventure" in a short composition.*

Your composition should have four parts:

Part 1: Describe the conflict.

Part 2: Detail the way you've tried to resolve the conflict. (Hint: Use the same techniques we used in class!)

Part 3: Describe the outcome of your attempt(s) and what you learned from it.

Part 4: Reflect upon the process. How did it feel to try to solve the conflict in this way? Will you use these strategies again? Why or why not?



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Conflict resolution

Conflicts with other people tend to come about when two people have trouble seeing the other's perspective. In contrast, mindful problem solving involves shifting your focus from getting what you want from someone else (a battle), to getting what you want while the other person does, too (a collaboration).

Before engaging in a conflict, decide what is most important to you – getting your own way or preserving the relationship. If the conflict is with a person who matters to you (including an authority figure who has say over important things such as punishments or rewards), it makes sense to put the effort into finding an effective way to preserve the relationship and find a mutually acceptable solution to the conflict. Here are some strategies:

- **Recognize there's a conflict, and define it**
 - Figure out what you really want in this situation. Since others can't read your mind, you may need to describe what you want.
 - Figure out what the other person really wants (you may have to ask the person to state this clearly).
 - Figure out what it is that you both want that doesn't "fit" together.
- **Empathize with the other person**
 - Recognize the other person's point of view. The other person needs to trust that you are not considering just your own interests.
 - Let the other person know that you understand his/her point of view. For example, if someone says "I hate having you as my lab partner," consider saying in response, "I get it...it doesn't feel like we're working well together and that's really annoying to you."
 - Find the "good intent gone awry." Usually people do things with good intentions, so finding that intention makes it easier to connect with that person. For example, if a good friend says, "Those shoes look awful on you," realize that the person is probably trying to help you look good for the other kids.
 - Use "it" to describe what you think the other person is feeling; instead of saying, "you seem mad," or "you're annoying me," consider "it's frustrating,"

- since “it” doesn’t seem like you’re blaming or accusing the other person, and “it” suggests that you both share this feeling.
- **Agree on what the problem is**
 - First, try to define the problem in a way that makes it seem fixable. Then generate multiple solutions and consider the consequences and logistics of each one. Seek the other person’s view. Ask, “How do you understand our situation?”
 - Invite the other person to help generate and then invest in solutions. Consider phrases such as, “Let’s see if we can come up with a way that works okay for both of us,” rather than, “You’re not being fair,” or “I have an idea.” (“I have an idea” is the better of these two, but it still positions the other person to argue against your idea.)
 - Offer solutions that would be hard for anyone to disagree with. For example, “Sounds like it was pretty complicated last night—maybe we could just do something that we both enjoy to relax together.”
 - **Collaborate on a solution that’s workable for both people**
 - A potential solution must be feasible, doable, and helpful for both people.
 - Consider saying something like: “How would it work if we tried _____?” This helps both people predict what will happen if a particular solution is attempted.
 - People operate on their own timelines. Even though you and the other person may have considered the same information and same solutions, it may take the other person some time to completely grasp and enact a solution, even when you’re both in agreement on the solution. So revisiting the solution, and patience, are sometimes very important.
 - Allow the other person to save face. Consider solutions that don’t embarrass the other person, or result in one of you looking like the bad guy.
 - **Recognize that there may not be a solution**

Sometimes even the best solution may not feel like a solution to you. If that happens during a conflict, probably the best thing to do is to “agree to disagree” or agree to “let it be.” When people are in this situation, if they indicate by what they say and by the way they say it that they respect each other, it doesn’t feel so bad to have had a conflict. Agreeing to make due with the situation leaves the

door open to arriving at a better resolution in the future, and provides a way out of the conflict in a way that doesn't blame anyone.

- **Offer a sincere apology if you've said or done something hurtful to someone**
If the other person apologizes first, try your best to put any bad feelings behind you and accept the apology. If you apologize first, think carefully about your words. "I'm sorry you're mad," implies that you're not sorry about what you did; you're just sorry the other person reacted. "I'm sorry for what I said," shows that you're taking responsibility for your contribution to the problem or conflict.

Most kids in high school don't find it easy to apologize. (Some adults struggle with this, too.) But you might find that if you apologize, the other person may apologize to you – either in the moment or at some future time.

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