



CONFLICT RESOLUTION ROLE-PLAY USING ENGLISH LITERATURE STORIES

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OBJECTIVES

The lesson integrates two areas of the Israeli High School 5-point English curriculum:

- a) **Speaking / Oral Skills** – introducing oneself / conducting an interview / being interviewed
- b) **Literature** --- this lesson: a) serves to deepen the students' understanding of the characters and conflict in the literary piece; b) can serve as a **Post-Reading Assignment**.

In any negotiation, getting to know and understanding better the perspective of the other side is critically important. Many times, individuals or teams are so caught up in their own perspectives, their own need to win the argument or negotiation that they fail to consider a critically important game changer: trying to understand the perspective of the other side.

In this lesson, which integrates negotiation skills into a literature lesson (Module F-High School Literature) students will practice the skill of learning about the other side and evaluate how it can help them better negotiate a resolution to a conflict.

LEAD-IN / PREP

- The class will have studied a short story in which there is a conflict between two characters.
- Role-play cards which include: a) names of characters; b) the character's conflict. Teachers will prepare these according to the stories the class has studied and the characters in the stories which the teacher chooses for this exercise.
- Student Handout 1 (located in this document, after the teacher guidelines)
- Teacher Reference Page (located in this document, after the teacher guidelines)

ACTIVITIES

This lesson comprises a role-play, utilizing characters in short stories that are part of the Israeli High School Literature program. Note: it is not limited to stories being studied for the literature program, the lesson works with any short story -- with any 2 characters in conflict.

1. **Pair work:** Students work in pairs. Teacher distributes a role-play assignment to each pair. (Students will choose which character they wish to play).

Example of a Role Play card:

Short Story: "Rules of the Game" by Amy Tan

Characters: Waverly, Mrs. Jong

Conflict – The final scene after Waverly returns home from the market after she was embarrassed her mother and her mother stopped talking to her.

2. The teacher distributes **Student Handout 1**. Students complete exercise 1 **BEFORE** beginning the pair activities. They will use this as a basis of comparison at the end of the lesson.

3. The teacher explains to the students that they will role-play literary characters who are in conflict. They will work to resolve the conflict by first trying to get to know the other side, the other side's perspectives, desires, needs and interests.

4. Introductions: Introducing your character (5 minutes)

- Each side introduces his/her character to the other (about 2-3 minutes each). Even though the characters will most likely know each other, this is a fun way for the students to begin and will help them gain a deeper understanding of their characters. In addition, it allows the characters to decide what aspects they believe important for the other side to know. Students should include the following information in their introductions (these guidelines appear on the **Student Handout 1**):
 - a. Character's name, profession, relevant background information – job, school, etc.
 - b. Hobbies and interests
 - c. Goals in life
 - d. **Most important:** Your character's perspective on the conflict – this should include what you hope to achieve, how you hope to achieve it, what you are willing to do in order to achieve it. Add anything related to your perspective on the conflict between yourself and the other character.
- **Taking notes on the other side's introduction:** As each side listens to the other introduce him/herself, the person listening will take notes on the other's introduction (See **Student Handout 1** - space provided for notes):
- **Quiet time to formulate questions (5 minutes)**

After completing the introduction, the pair takes up to 5 minutes to formulate questions that relate to what his/her opponent said in the introduction. They will use these questions as a basis for beginning the interview process.

The remainder of the questions in the interview will arise based on the dynamic of the interview and the direction in which it moves.

4. Interviewing: Students interview one another (in character) (15 minutes)

At this point, the interviews should focus on gaining insight into the other side's perspective on **the conflict**. They should ask their opponents lots of questions on his/her perspective. The purpose is to find out as much as possible about the other person's perspective.

5. Reflection (10 minutes):

Students reflect on the exercises and answer the following questions (space provided on **Handout 1**). Upon finishing, students share with full class forum:

- a. What are the important points you learned about the other side?
- b. Think back to what you wrote at the beginning about your perspective and ideas for possible solutions. How has that changed? Explain.
- c. How will learning and trying to understand the other side help you (your character) to negotiate a better resolution in the future?
- d. Did your perspective change? Explain.
- e. Why was this change important?
- f. What will you do differently now that you better understand the other side?

6. Debriefing – Full class forum. Use the following questions to debrief and lock in the learning experience: **(10 minutes)**

- In terms of your character, how does it help you to get to know the other side better? Explain.
- What were some of the points that you learned that will help you?
- Is this a skill that you had thought about before? Explain.
- How can you apply this lesson to your own life? Explain.

TIME REQUIRED IN CLASSROOM

45 minutes

Student Handout 1

Negotiation Skills: Getting to Know the Other Side Introductions / Interviews

1. Before you begin, read your role-play card and answer the following based on the perspective of the character you are role-playing.
 - a) Explain your perspective in the conflict.
 - b) Write down ideas you have for resolving it.

2. **Introductions:** In pairs, take turns introducing yourselves to the other character even if you already know each other well. This is a chance to make important points and ensure that the other side understands your side.

- Include the following information in your introduction:
 - a. Character's name, profession, relevant background information – job, school, etc.
 - b. Hobbies and interests
 - c. Goals in life
 - e. **Most important:** Your character's perspective on the conflict – this should include what you hope to achieve, how you hope to achieve it, what you are willing to do in order to achieve it. Add anything related to your perspective on the conflict between yourself and the other character.

Take notes while the other person speaks. Write down important points here:

2. **Write questions for your interview.** You will use these at the beginning, to help you get started. Afterwards, you will ask questions based on the direction in which the interview goes.

4. Interviewing one another

Your interviews should focus on gaining insight into the other side's perspective on **the conflict**. You should ask your opponent lots of questions on his/her perspective. The purpose is to find out as much as possible about the other person's perspective.

5. Reflection: Answer the questions, then share with the class.

- a. What are the important points you learned about the other side?
- b. Think back to what you wrote at the beginning about your perspective and ideas for possible solutions. How has that changed? Explain.
- c. How will learning and trying to understand the other side help you (your character) to negotiate a better resolution in the future?
- d. Did your perspective change? Explain.
- e. Why was this change important?
- f. What will you do differently now that you better understand the other side?

6. Debriefing – with entire class: (10 minutes)

- In terms of your character, how does it help you to get to know the other side better? Explain.
- What were some of the interesting points that you learned that will help you?
- Is this a skill that you had thought about before? Explain.
- How can you apply this lesson to your own life? Explain.

Teacher Reference Page (for teachers only)

In a 2008 study conducted by Social Psychologist Daniel Galinsky, Psychologist Adam Galinsky from the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University, and colleagues William Maddux (INSEAD), Debra Gilin (St. Mary's U.), and Judith White (Dartmouth), the researchers found significant evidence of the importance of understanding the other side in ensuring a successful negotiation.

The study comprised 150 graduates who were divided into 3 groups and instructed to sell a gas station. The three groups comprised: 1) a Control Group, which was given no specific instructions other than to sell the gas station; 2) an Empathy Group, which was instructed to imagine what the other side was feeling; and 3) the Perspective Group, which was told to try to figure out what the other person was thinking.

The results showed that those in the Perspective Group were much more successful in securing agreements than the other two groups. In addition, their opponents were much more satisfied than those in the Control Group.

The Empathy Group attained the highest amount of satisfaction with the opponents, but they were considerably less successful than the Perspective Group in securing a deal.

This study provides us with important evidence regarding the importance of considering and familiarizing oneself with the other side's perspective in order to ensure a successful outcome in a negotiation and/or conflict resolution process.

<https://www.psychologicalscience.org/news/releases/it-pays-to-know-your-opponent-success-in-negotiations-improved-by-perspective-taking-but-limited-by-empathy.html>



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