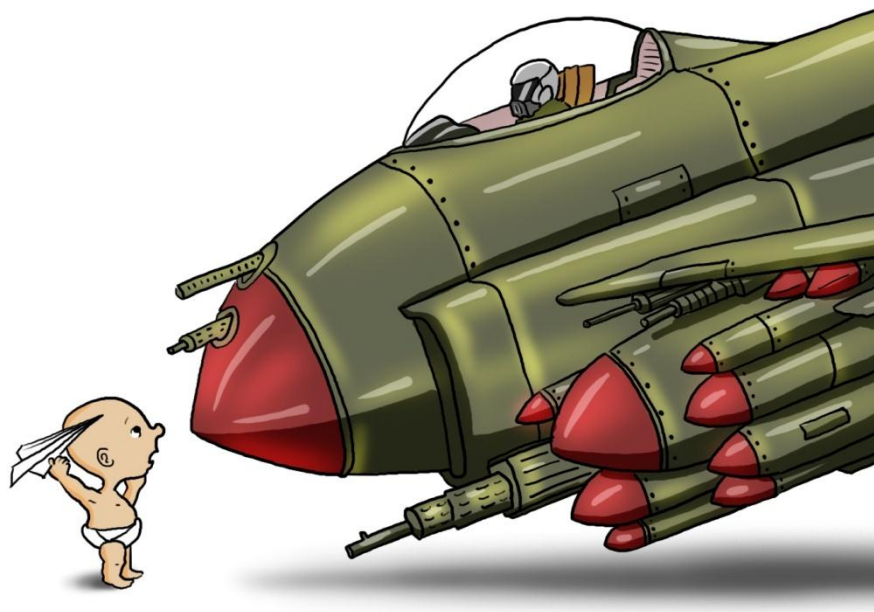


Finding Peace in Class and Outside

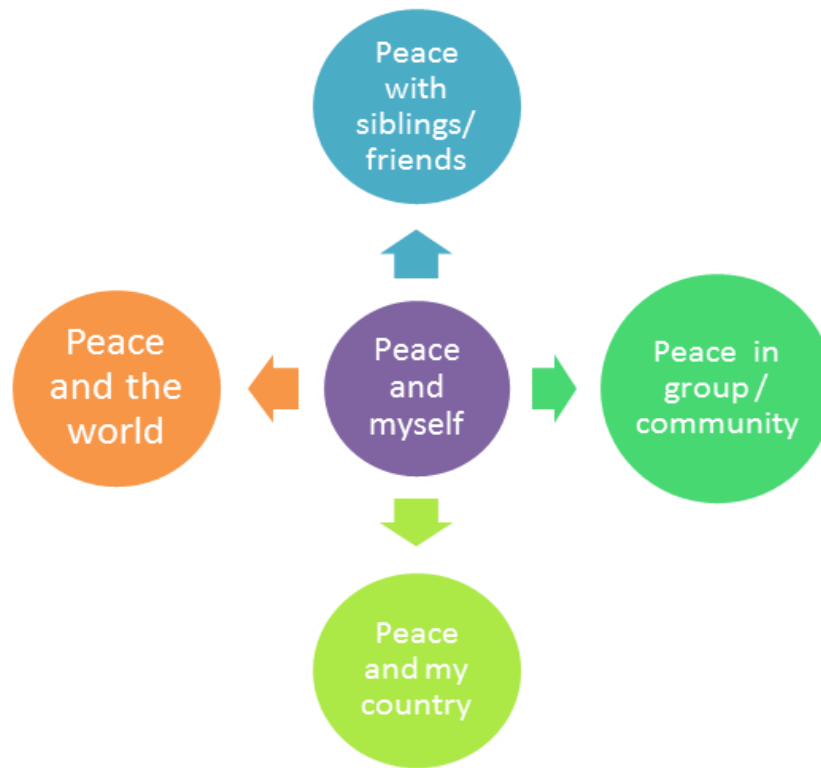
Sujata C



Guns have entered schools in America and violence has permeated the safe walls of Indian schools — we don't need more reasons for introducing peace education in primary schools. Half the world is strife-torn at any given point in time. Parts of the Middle East are a permanent war zone and places like Hyderabad have become a safe haven for families from Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan as they can lead peaceful lives here.

Peace education in schools is all about teaching children to forge relationships that are peaceful and harmonious. Teachers handling primary school children aged 6-10 years are dealing with the late childhood period, which is dubbed by psychologists as the *play age*, *gang age*, *quarrelsome age*, *sloppy age*, *troublesome age*, etc. So while the teachers are disciplining, inculcating habits and curtailing misdemeanours, they can do so with the bigger picture of peace education in mind. Since primary school children are still developing their character, the seeds sown then are likely to have a lifelong impact.

What gives rise to non-peaceful conditions? Dishonesty, poverty, hunger, cultural and religious intolerance, pollution, addictions, domination, prejudice, and so on. Experts say peace education must be pursued at several levels starting with *peace at a personal level*, then moving on to *interpersonal*, *community*, *national* and *international levels*.



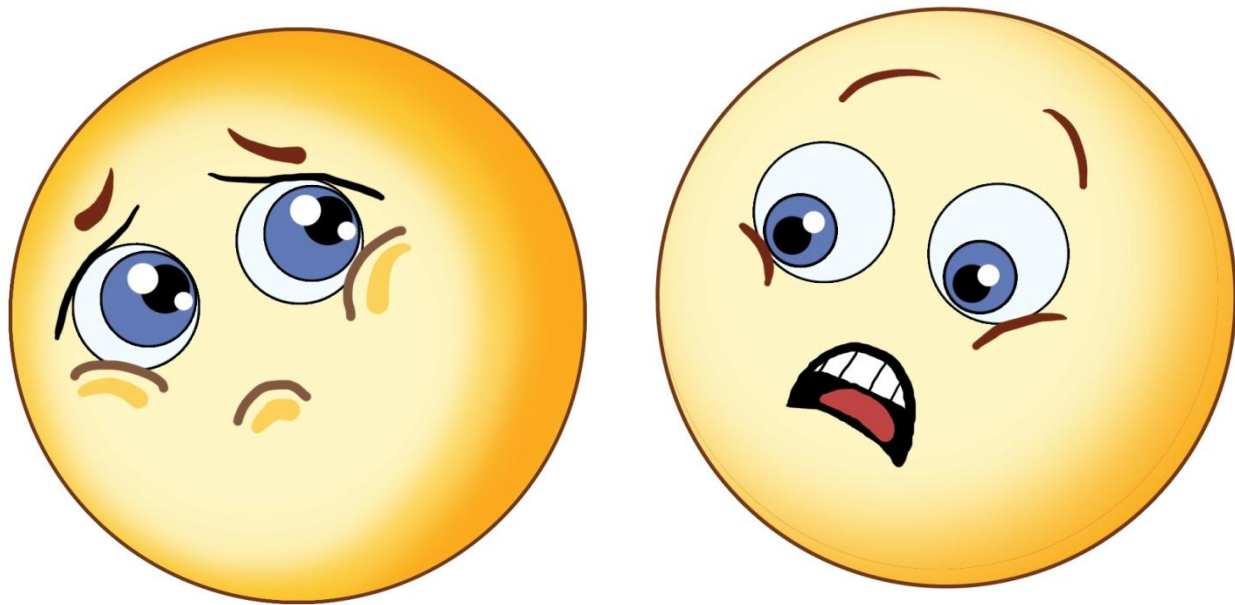
Peace at a personal level:

Television and internet have already robbed childhood of its innocence, so nowadays children are growing up with the idea that violence is a normal part of their lives. Teachers have to proceed cautiously with this in mind. Peace education at a personal level suggests that every individual should be at peace with himself. For 6-10 years old, this means having a healthy self-esteem. Developing good self-esteem is part of growing up and the primary responsibility of parents at home, but teachers can do their bit too as it is a constant work in progress.

Speaking the truth is an essential part of peace education as dishonesty and lies destroy peace. Experts say kids begin to lie as early as two years of age. While this may largely be due to individual family moral standards, psychologists are of the opinion that moral immaturity is common in children from affluent as well as poor families, which may prompt lies. Poor kids might lie to quell hunger pangs, but the rich kids might do that for the thrill of getting away with a forbidden act - which probably makes them more refined liars. Teachers need to instill in them the importance of truth, as early as possible.

Peace between two people:

Teaching children about feelings is an aspect of peace between two people. Emotional development is the ongoing process in late childhood. Discuss various emotions like happiness, sadness, anger, jealousy, etc. You can use face masks with appropriate expressions and emoticons like those given below. Help children identify strong emotions like anger and jealousy and teach them to express these in appropriate ways, so that negative feelings do not snowball into something bigger.



At home, peace between two siblings, or other relatives is essential. The relation has to be based on mutual give and take of healthy respect. Resolving sibling rivalry and establishing strong relationships is again a parental responsibility. But teachers too can teach a child to get along better with others to prevent dysfunctional relations.

In school, conflicts can arise due to bullying, peer pressure, domination of one group and so on. The management must arrive at a common approach to tackle bullying. Teachers should be alert to groupism in the class and dominating tendencies displayed by children. In co-educational schools, as children are growing up, rivalries crop up between boys and girls. Girls tend to be more vocal and vociferous in class than boys and boys see girls as apple polishers who flatter teachers for academic favours.



Good manners are essential for harmonious interactions. Young children when taught manners early enough are known to grow up with pleasing personalities.

Peace in a group and nation:

It is important for young children to see peaceful interactions in the community. Whether it is the exchanges of grown-ups in an apartment complex or the camaraderie between elders in a village, it helps children to know that outside their world, peaceful interactions are taking place to resolve problems, discuss issues, and celebrate events. It gives them a sense of one world, one family.

In many war-torn countries, concerned citizens come together to crusade for peace. These groups conduct peace walks, candlelight processions, cultural shows, sports events, etc. to renew focus on peace. Patriotic songs instill a sense of national pride in children. Participation in *Independence Day* celebrations and parades can be encouraged too. The floats of different states in the *Republic Day* parade showcase the diversity of the country and give children a reason to be proud of their country.



Peace with the world:

The world is full of diverse communities and people. When people do not respect others, it leads to evils like exploitation and discrimination. But young children do not see this divide between people. There was this very touching incident that took place in a weekly vegetable market. A leper was sitting and begging with his half worn-out hand extended. A young boy of 7 or 8 years passing by saw this beggar with his stretched-out hand. He simply grabbed his hand and gave it a warm shake. The beggar was shocked as were the onlookers! This incident illustrates how children have a natural ability to transcend the divisions of class, caste and creed. Research also confirms the idea that children are naturally altruistic. Teachers simply need to ensure that this ability is nurtured and strengthened.

Peace with the environment



Children have a spontaneous love for nature. They can be easily made aware of the mindless use of resources, destruction of forests and polluting activities of man. Children can be encouraged to play a watchguard's role and be a green scout. They should be told about the *Chipko Movement*, *Jungle Bachao Andolan*, *Silent Valley* project and *Greenpeace*. Children can be made to understand the impact of man's destructive activities through thought-provoking tools like the posters below.





Peace education involves a lot of internalizing once the message has been given. Let children experience a few minutes of silence every day so that they learn to appreciate it. What's better than silence to bring peace into our lives!

Sujata C is a writer and editor with a portfolio of diversified writing categories like web content, articles, short stories for children, technical editing, etc. She has been a brand consultant and advisor for several companies and has worked with concerns like McCann Erickson, New Delhi, Foundations Advertising Services, New Delhi, Saatchi and Saatchi, Hyderabad, etc.

Lesson plan on Peace Education in the Classroom

Sujata C



Well known spiritual leaders have asserted that inner peace is the key to world peace. We can mould our children into peace-loving citizens, within the class and through everyday things. Here are a few ideas:

Through food: Food is not only the way to someone's heart, but it is also a powerful means to blur boundaries. A dish like *biryani* is made in different ways in different parts of the world. The same basic rice dish evokes so many different flavours in different parts of our country. Teaching children to appreciate different tastes is an easy way to teach respect for other cultures.

Through language: Identify the students from different states in your class. Make a list of the different languages everyone speaks. Now let children learn a few words in all these languages, from each other. They can be simple words of greeting and phrases like '*How are you*', '*I am hungry*', '*Come here*', etc. Knowing many languages gives a person a multidimensional character and makes life easier, in whatever situation they may be.

Through role play: Children in late childhood are still learning the skills of social acceptance. One offbeat way is through participation in other religious festivals. All children can be asked to dress up in the way a community does for Id, Diwali or Christmas, irrespective of their own religions. They will enjoy wearing new costumes and learn to celebrate other cultures. Sometimes erring adults can be shamed into self transformation by innocent acts of children. Let the students identify the peace icons from Indian history and have a fancy dress competition on them.

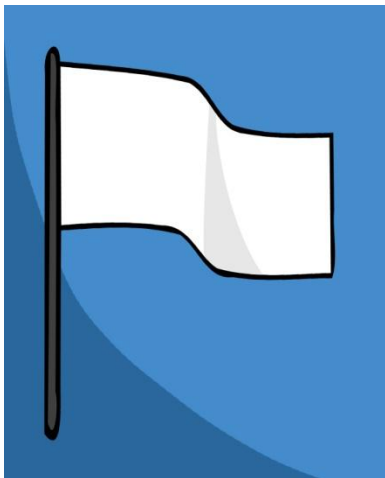


Through geography: Ask children to bring a world map to class. Identify all the conflict zones in the world and help them colour these – **red** for war zones and **orange** for semi-war zones. Let them map out the nuclear-empowered countries and get sense of the current state of the world.

Through arts and crafts: Arts and crafts have ennobling qualities and appeal to the higher senses of mankind. Some thirty years back many schools in North India would teach needlework to girls as young as five or six. It develops patience and appreciation for the variety that exists in nature and so it might be a good idea to revive that practice. Gender stereotypes can be broken here by giving lessons in needlework to both boys and girls. Making things on our own help understand dignity of labour. Conduct a toy-making workshop using everyday materials and let children realize that making one's own toys can give more joy than buying one.

Through flowers: Young children love flowers. Every culture has their own flowers symbolising peace. *White rose* stands for innocence, *peace lily* for peace, as also *apple blossoms* and *white lotus*.

Through signs and symbols:



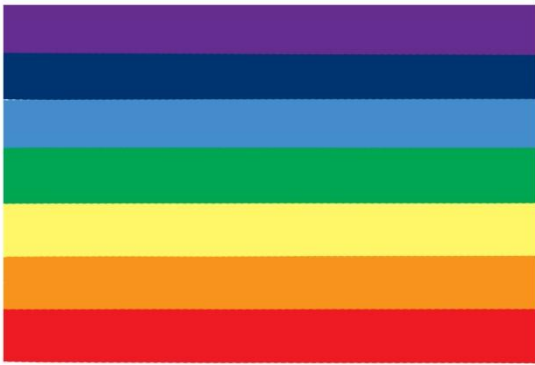
White flag indicates peace



UN Peace symbol



Peace hand symbol/Victory sign



A rainbow flag signifies peace in some countries



Universal symbol of peace - the dove

Children can be asked to prepare a chart using the signs and symbols that stand for peace and have a flag march displaying them.

Through reading and storytelling: Stories can create a shift in the hearts of readers. Include folktales of various countries as also popular ones like *The Cherry Tree*, stories from Indian mythology, and stories of *Leo Tolstoy* in class story-telling sessions. Studies have shown that stories that had negative endings as punishment for dishonest acts, has lesser transformative qualities compared to stories about self-confession to transgressions.



Poetry also works very effectively in creating lasting impressions on the minds of young readers. Select simple yet powerful poems to read aloud or create powerpoint presentations with pictures using the poem as a scrolling text.

Through music: Songs of national pride and universal oneness can be taught for the school assembly. Classical music, Western or Indian too has a quality of transcending all boundaries. John Lennon is the original peace ambassador of the pop music world. Many of his songs like *Imagine* and *Let it be* are peace anthems. There are many such songs in popular cinema also where powerful lyrics and the music combine to create a hard-hitting impact like no other.

Through rights awareness: Gynecologists across the world are confirming that girls of this generation are maturing physically almost two to three years ahead of the scheduled time. Along with physical maturity comes the fear of sexual abuse which has taken demonic proportions in India. Teaching children about abuse is a way to empower them. Good touch, bad touch, from known and unknown people should clearly be explained to children so that they are cautioned beforehand.

Through animals and pets: There are many real life stories of unlikely friendships between two animals who might be enemies by nature. Pets give lessons in loyalty and trust. Also the act of looking after the pet's needs develops nurturing qualities in children. Animals give lessons in compassion like no one else.



Through history: History is a subject that is replete with instances about struggle for peace. The lives of peace activists can be a theme for playacting workshops. **Mahatma Gandhi's Satyagraha**, **Nelson Mandela's** struggle for the black South Africans, and other inspiring episodes from the lives of national leaders can be used as drama themes.

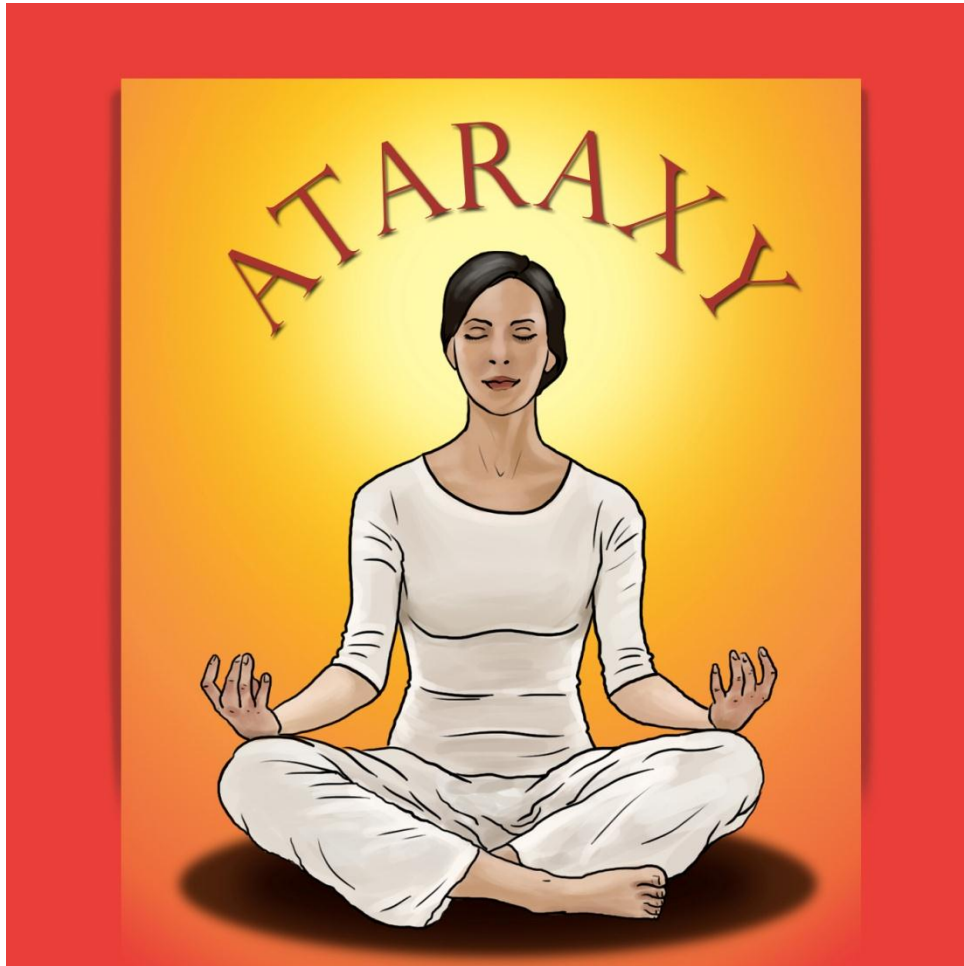
Through popular cartoons and cinema: Watching a good movie or a cartoon show can sometimes achieve desired results and transform heart because the silver screen commands that level of attention. The super heroes of children's movies (*Superman, Batman, Spiderman, Captain America*, etc.) are good role models of peace as they show their heroes fighting injustice and tyranny and inspire the viewers to act and behave like them.

Through sports and games: Many games that children across the world play have similarities e.g., *hop scotch, hide and seek*, etc. which show that basically mankind is one at heart wherever we may live. Make children aware of this similarity and then they will naturally embrace it. Sports give invaluable lessons in teamwork and cooperation that no amount of lecturing or preaching from textbooks can achieve.



Sujata C is a writer and editor with a portfolio of diversified writing categories like web content, articles, short stories for children, technical editing, etc. She has been a brand consultant and advisor for several companies and has worked with concerns like McCann Erickson, New Delhi, Foundations Advertising Services, New Delhi, Saatchi and Saatchi, Hyderabad, etc.

Words Section for September Issue of OUP Newsletter



Ataraxy (noun)

Meaning ~ A state of serene calmness, and a sense of freedom from emotional disturbance and anxiety; tranquility or peacefulness. (*Oxforddictionaries.com*)

Origin (and additional information) ~ The term's first known use was in early 17th century (1595-1605): it is derived from French *ataraxie*, from Greek *ataraxia* meaning 'impassiveness', from *a-* i.e. 'not' + *tarassein* i.e. 'disturb'. *Ataraxia* was then Anglicized as *ataraxy*.

Ataraxia or *Ataraxy* is a Greek term used by *Pyrrho* and *Epicurus* for a lucid state of robust tranquility, characterized by ongoing freedom from distress and worry. For the *Epicureans*, *ataraxy* was synonymous with the only true happiness possible for a person. It signifies the state of strong serenity that derives from

eschewing faith in an afterlife, not fearing the gods because they are distant and unconcerned with us, avoiding politics and vexatious people, surrounding oneself with trustworthy and affectionate friends and, most importantly, being an affectionate, virtuous person, who is worthy of trust.

For the *Pyrrhonists*, given that neither the sensual impressions nor the intellect, nor both combined, is a sufficient means of knowing and conveying truth, one suspends judgment on dogmatic beliefs or anything non-evident. It is from this suspension of belief that *ataraxy* arises as one realizes one thing is 'no more' than that. No more up than down, no more wet than dry, no more hot than cold, no more night than day, no more even than odd, no more left than right, no more black than white, etc. Most important of all, in enunciation of '*no more*' or '*I determine nothing*', in uttering these expressions, one is merely stating how things appear to them, at the time and in an un-dogmatic way, without making any assertion of truth regarding external reality.

The *Stoics*, too, sought mental tranquility, and saw *ataraxy* as something to be highly desired and often made use of the term, but for them the analogous state, attained by the *Stoic* sage, was *apatheia* or absence of passion.

Usage ~

- i. *Instead of finding yourself in a state of stoic ataraxy, you might find yourself catatonic or enraged beyond the point of recovery.*
- ii. *The ideal is ataraxy, freedom from disturbance.*
- iii. *Perhaps he has attained the sort of blissful state of ataraxy that his characters so long for.*

Derivatives ~ *ataractic*; *ataraxic*, adjective