

Unit Two: Peacemakers and Nonviolence

Lesson 2: Dorothy Day

Standards Addressed by Lesson:	CIVICS <u>Standard 4.3</u> Students know how citizens can exercise their rights (d).
Objectives of Lesson:	To introduce and discuss Dorothy Day and nonviolent strategies she used to promote social change.
Instructional Strategies:	Student-led readings / presentation / discussion
Vocabulary:	Precarity, Catholic Worker Movement, intentional communities (These are defined in the quotes students read, discuss and present to the class.)
Suggested Resources to Obtain:	-Military Spending Chart (War Resisters League). Found at: http://www.warresisters.org/ -“Which Path to a Safer World: Balance Sheet”, in Dollars and Sense, May/June 2003.
Suggested Time:	Between 50 and 60 minutes
Materials Needed:	-Newsprint, markers -Copies of quotes from Dorothy Day -“Which Path to a Safer World: Balance Sheet”, in Dollars and Sense, May/June 2003. -Handouts on Dorothy Day and her life -Military Spending Chart (War Resisters League). Found at: http://www.warresisters.org/
Attachments:	A. Dorothy Day Quotes B. Handouts on Dorothy Day and her Life

Lesson Outline

Introduction to Lesson:

This lesson focuses on another peacemaker, Dorothy Day, and her contributions to social change. Also discussed will be some ideas and concepts that were reflected in her work. So that the educator is not doing all the talking, the group can be broken up into 4, each group will have 15 minutes to read and discuss a specific topic related to Dorothy Day and her life.

During this time students should write on newsprint an outline of key points they'd like to emphasize or they can GET CREATIVE and draw pictures to symbolize what their group discussed. At the end of the 15 minutes, each group will then present what they discussed to the larger group. A scribe and a presenter should be chosen. In these same groups, students will then be given a quote to discuss and questions to respond to. Again, each group will share what they discussed.

Activities

Activity 1:

Group Readings

After breaking the class up into 4 groups, give each group some newsprint, markers and the topic that they will be discussing (found in Attachment B). Give them about 15 minutes to read, discuss, and jot down notes they want to share with the group. Give the first group 5 minutes to share their comments then open it up to see if others have anything they want to add. Do the same for groups 2, 3, and 4.

Discussion Questions:

When all groups have gone, some processing questions may be:

1. What does this chart (regarding military spending and social needs) say about the potential for peace?
2. How does the sheet "Which Path to a Safer World?" (see above in Suggested Resources to Obtain) relate to Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement?

Activity 2:

Quotations by Dorothy Day

Keeping the same 4 groups, give each group some newsprint, markers and a quotation and associated questions that they will be discussing. Suggest that they have a different presenter and scribe for this exercise. Give them about 5 minutes to read, discuss, and jot down notes they want to share with the group. Give the first group 5 minutes to share their comments then open it up to see if others have anything they want to add. Do the same for groups 2, 3, and 4.

Helpful Hints / Comments from Previous Facilitators:

As the issues of poverty and military spending are discussed as barriers to peace, it may be a good idea to have some facts on local as well as national poverty levels. Some students may not be aware of the level of poverty in their own communities and this information may make the lesson more meaningful to them. It may even be helpful to do an exercise where they are given a scenario, receive monthly pay of a worker and go to the market and buy food for a family of four, rent an apartment, pay utilities, make car payments, etc.

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"Peace begins when
the hungry are fed."

Is this a true statement?
How can poverty
promote conflict? How
can alleviating poverty
reduce the amount of
conflict in the world?

"No one has a right to sit down and feel hopeless. There is too much work to do."

This statement was made by Dorothy Day. She made it in reference to peace activism and humanitarian work. What work is there to do for an advocate of peace? Where does one begin in his/her attempt to promote peace? What are some good resources to use in order to find direction in one's attempt to become a peace activist?

“It is a strange vocation to love the destitute and desolate. But it is one that keeps attracting the young who come to the Catholic Worker as a place to brew the soup and clean the toilets, which is also the work of peacemakers. They are against the military wars for sure, but their pacifism resists the violence of economic wars. We refuse to fight for a materialistic system that cripples so many of its citizens.”

What do you think Dorothy Day means by the violence of economic wars. Is this statement still relevant today? Why do you think people are attracted to the work of taking care of the poor? Why are others repelled by it?

“We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community.”

What does community mean?
How far does it extend? Do
you agree with this statement?
What is meant by the only
solution is love?

Attachment B: Handouts on Dorothy Day's Life

Group 1: Dorothy Day

Dorothy Day began speaking out against poverty and oppression as a journalist. She started the Catholic Worker newspaper, a publication that highlighted social issues and criticized public policy and those in positions of power for ignoring societies' basic needs. She continued devoting her life to helping the poor and the homeless by co-founding the House of Hospitality and shelter for the poor. This shelter with its philosophy of living with and serving the destitute led to the Catholic Worker Movement (to be described by another group). She was untiring in her pursuit of peace and social justice. She shared her life and unconditional love with people caught in poverty and destitution. She understood the work that needed to be done and she chose to do it while sacrificing her own comforts. She rejected the culture of capitalism that produced human misery and loss of dignity. Dorothy Day created an example for us in which she integrated political, theological, moral, and social ideals into an effective and powerful model.

Dorothy Day wrote about the present moment - about ministering to the needs of her fellow human beings using the available resources and not stockpiling them for another day. There are people in need now and we have the resources to attend to those needs. Dorothy Day, much like Mother Teresa, took care of the people who most needed immediate intervention in their lives - the poor, the homeless, the destitute, the single mothers, the alcoholics and the children. She made no judgments about their worth. She admonished none for their present situation. She made every attempt to give whatever was at hand to whoever needed it most - food, clothing, attention, money or simply company. And she questioned the societal institutions that legalized such forms of violence like poverty and homelessness, the disproportionate military budget and the lack of spending on social welfare. She pushed the limits of society, and was arrested on several occasions for various acts of civil disobedience protesting issues from poverty to militarism.

Group 2: The Catholic Worker Movement and Intentional Communities

The Catholic Worker Movement was started by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin in 1933. It had its humble beginnings in New York City when Dorothy founded the House of Hospitality, a shelter addressing the basic needs of the poor. Since then, over 185 Catholic Workers Communities have sprouted up all over the United States. People in the Catholic Worker Movement live in shelters and dedicate their lives to living with and serving the poor. The service provided by Catholic Worker homes may be in the form of soup kitchens, immigration services, clothing banks, and shelters. People living in these intentional communities are committed to nonviolence, voluntary poverty, and hospitality to the poor, homeless, and hungry. For Catholic Workers, voluntary poverty was important: "Not taking more than you need, as the world has enough to support everyone's needs, but not everyone's greed." Catholic Workers are also outspoken critics of militarism, conscientious objectors to military service, and many have been jailed for acts of civil disobedience.

Intentional communities, like those in the Catholic Worker houses, are coming of age in the peacemakers' search for community, sustainability and service. The idea of communal living is a foreign one to most people and the words "intentional community" is also foreign in many ways. Intentional means having intent to do something, like being mindful of what you do, where you live, what you consume, what you purchase and with whom you share. For Catholic Workers, the concept of voluntary poverty is an important one when serving the poor. Living in solidarity with the poor truly allows one to share in the lives of others. As Dorothy Day said, "We need always to be thinking and writing about poverty, for if we are not among its victims, its reality fades from us. We must talk about poverty, because people insulated by their own comfort lose sight of it."

Group 3: Precarity

To be precarious, to live with precarity means that life is uncertain, unstable and unpredictable. Tomorrow is not granted to anyone. The people Dorothy Day worked with knew this. The people in homeless shelters, the people on public assistance, the single mothers, the one-fourth of children in our country who live in poverty know this, the people without health insurance know this, the differently abled people know this, the Midwestern farmers know this, the immigrant families know this. The rich and protected in our country do not know that life is precarious. To truly live in precarity means to rely on others for help in daily tasks. To beg for food, for clothes, for human interaction is to live in precarity. Dorothy Day and the Catholic Workers advocate voluntary poverty- not taking more than you need, as the world has enough to support everyone's needs, but not everyone's greed.

Group 4: Tools for peace, Tools for war handout (from War Resister's League, see first page of this lesson plan for more info on handout)

What struck you about the information in this handout?

What does this say about the potential for peace?