

Teach Peace Pack

Assembly: Barriers to peace



Aim: to learn that walls are built to keep the peace but also divide people.

Planning/Preparation: a PowerPoint presentation is available from www.peace-education.org.uk.

The orange squares ■ in the text refer to these slides.

As children arrive show ■ slide 1 – a series of images of barriers (the slides will scroll through automatically).

You may find it useful to use a 'valuable' object such as a watch/trophy.

1 Introduction: Walls

- Show slide 2: A brick wall. *Ask the children:*
 - *Why do people build walls?* [to feel safe, to protect their belongings/land, for privacy etc].
 - *Has anyone seen any famous walls, or really tall walls?*

2 Invite one volunteer to the front

Give her/him your valuable object, and explain they need to keep it safe. *Ask what they can do to keep it safe, perhaps they should keep it close?* Explain that you trust everyone here, but what if you were somewhere where you were worried that you couldn't protect your valuable object? What if you thought people were going to come and take it from you, what could you do? Might you build a wall for protection?

3 Create a human wall

Invite other children to come up to gradually form an outward-facing human wall around your first volunteer until she/he is more or less out of sight. Ask if he/she feels safer now they are surrounded by a human wall. *Ask: are there any problems with being protected in this way?* [You may or may not feel safer, but will it be difficult to move around, get to lessons, go home and watch TV, chat to friends? Might the wall become damaged, could someone climb over it? Ask if she or he would like to stay inside the human wall forever.] Thank your volunteers – they can sit down again.

4 Musk oxen

■ Show slide 3: A group of musk oxen defending their young.

What are these animals doing? Click to explain using the PowerPoint:

- Reveal the young oxen – the most precious thing they have.
- Reveal the wolves – a predator.
- Show how the adult animals make a defensive wall.

5 Hadrian's Wall

Like the musk oxen, people build walls between each other to keep safe. Sometimes these are little walls; sometimes they are huge walls to divide whole communities, but what happens to them in the end?

■ Show slide 4: Hadrian's Wall. This was built by the Romans to defend southern Britain, which they had invaded, against Scotland, which was not part of Roman Britain. The wall was abandoned when Emperor Hadrian died, and today England and Scotland are (mostly!) friends.

6 Peace walls in Northern Ireland

Slide 5: The peace lines/walls in Northern Ireland. These are a series of barriers that separate Protestant and Catholic neighbourhoods because there has been a lot of fighting between them. The first peace lines were built in 1969 to reduce the violence, and were only meant to last 6 months. They have multiplied over the years and became wider and longer. They have meant that people in the neighbourhoods on either side live very separate lives. They are still there, but may disappear in the future as some neighbourhoods want to work towards removing the walls and building peace.

7 Separation barrier

Slide 6: Separation barrier around the Palestinian West Bank. This is another barrier which divides two communities who are in conflict. It is being built by Israel. Some of it is an 8 metres tall concrete wall; some of it is a fence. Israel says it is needed to protect its community, on one side, from Palestinians on the other side. Some people think that the barrier is effective at stopping attacks. Others people say that it isn't, and that it makes life very hard for ordinary Palestinians living nearby the wall. It makes it more difficult for them to get to work and to get to the land they own. This barrier is still being built today, we don't know if it will last forever.

8 Conclusion

We might feel safer while we are behind a wall. We might not get hurt and there might not be fighting. So we might *keep* the peace but what do we lose? Would we *enjoy* the peace? Not necessarily. *Rather than build walls to feel safe, what can we do to build peace?* [Get to know each other, build trust, and communicate]. We need to learn to build peace between ourselves, and overcome differences, rather than have to build barriers between ourselves.

Follow up activities/resources:

- Circle Time Discussion: Do the children agree that “Good fences make good neighbours”? (Robert Frost’s poem *Mending Wall*). Begin with a ‘feelings line’ – standing at one end indicates you agree, standing at the other means you disagree. Let the students think, then take their position. Back in the circle discuss the advantages and disadvantages of fences/walls. Repeat the feelings line to see whether students have changed their mind.
- Read *The Kites are Flying* by Michael Morpurgo, in which Said, a Palestinian boy who never speaks, makes kites to fly over the wall near his home, or *Child’s Garden: A Story of Hope* by Michael Foreman, in which a boy who nurtures a plant in a war-torn country watches it grow until it becomes a symbol of hope. Available from the Quaker Centre: 020 7663 1030 or email quakercentre@quaker.org.uk.
- Order a free copy of *Learning about human rights in the primary school* from Amnesty International. See: <http://tinyurl.com/TPP-AmEd>
- Become a Rights Respecting School – The Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA) recognises achievement in putting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) at the heart of a school’s planning, policies, practice and ethos. To find out more about gaining a RRSA go to: www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools.