

**A Curriculum
To Help
Young People
Understand**

The Roots of Prejudice

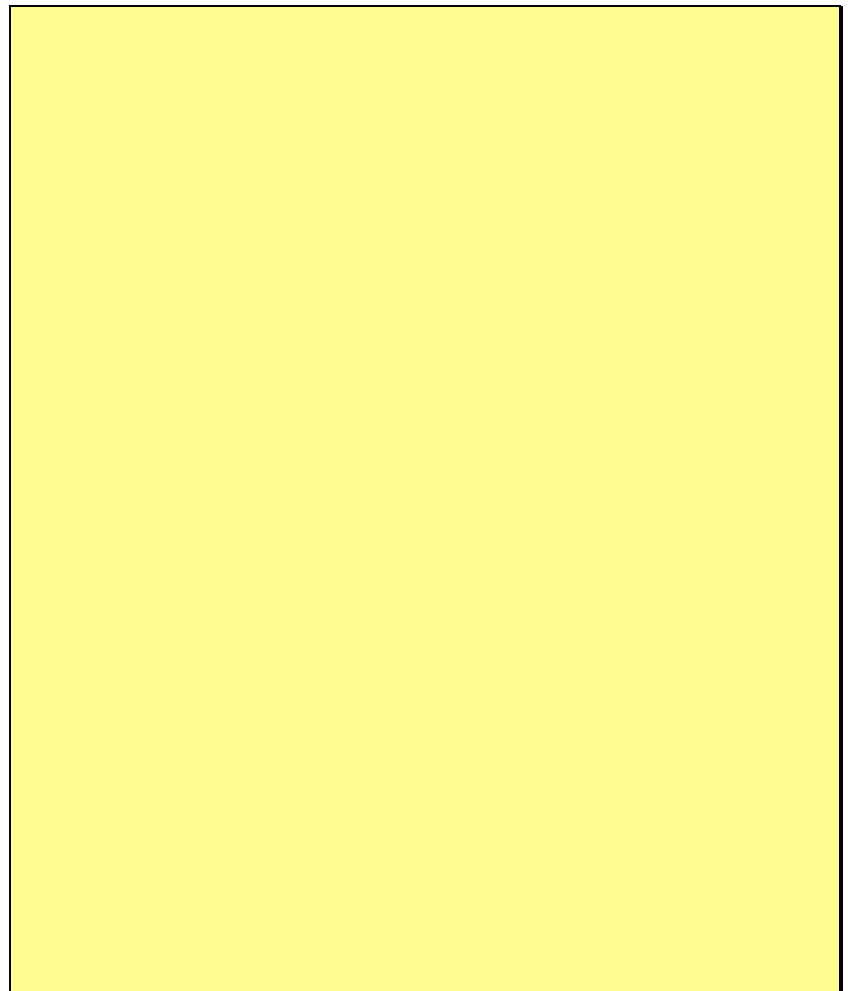
Ages 8 - 14

Teacher's Guide

By
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Based on the award-winning
Education for Peace Books

Why Is Everybody Always Picking on Us?



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Some Things Don't Change

The following song is from a musical play called *South Pacific*. It was written more than 50 years ago. The words — most often called lyrics — are by Oscar Hammerstein, II. There is music for these lyrics written by Richard Rogers. In many ways, the world has changed a lot in the last 50 years, and in other ways it hasn't changed at all.

You've Got To Be Carefully Taught

You've got to be taught to hate and fear,
You've got to be taught from year to year,
It's got to be drummed in your dear little ear,
You've got to be carefully taught.

You've got to be taught to be afraid
Of people whose eyes are oddly made
And people whose skin is a different shade,
You've got to be carefully taught.

You've got to be taught before it's too late
Before you are six or seven or eight
To hate all the people your relatives hate
You've got to be carefully taught...
You've got to be carefully taught.

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LESSON #1

Where Did Prejudice Begin?

Breakdown of Lesson #1:

The Roots of Prejudice
What Does It Mean to Survive?
A New Threat to Survival

Materials & Tools Needed:

Tool 1A: Prepare additional questions to ask students.
Tool 1B: Create chart: “Words I Use When I’m Prejudiced”
Tool 1C: Consider possible meanings of the quote beforehand.

Note: Welcome students to this new curriculum. As you ask questions, encourage ALL responses. Help students understand that there are no “right” or “wrong” answers. A “mistake” means there’s something to learn.

The Roots of Prejudice

1. Ask students:

- Do you believe that you have no prejudices? Would you be surprised to learn that you do?
- If you discovered that you do have prejudices, would you want to keep them? Change them? Talk about them?
- Have you ever questioned the things you learn — at home? From friends? At school? On television? On-line?
- Do you accept as truth the things people tell you, or do you listen to other people’s opinions and then make a decision based on your own thinking?
- If you had prejudices, what do you think would be their roots?

2. Tell students:

- Little children have no prejudices. Their minds are free. They don't see differences between people.
- Somewhere between being a tiny child and becoming a young person, we start to see differences, and we learn prejudice.
- Millions of people have suffered and died because of prejudice — all because they didn't understand it.
- To put an end to prejudice, we must understand what creates it — at its roots — inside ourselves.
- This means that, besides looking at what other people say and do, we have to look at the way WE think and the way WE act, and understand that, too.

3. Read aloud the story “The Roots of Prejudice,” on page 17 of the book, *Why Is Everybody Always Picking On Us?* As you read, make the story come alive with your voice. Afterward, ask students:

- What are some repeated practices that are performed by The Rock Tribe?
- How did these practices become customs and habits?
- How did their habits turn into beliefs and traditions?
- How did the Rock Tribe's thinking become automatic, programmed — “conditioned”?
- Did they stop to ask why they were living by the Tribe's laws?
- Why did Tribe members live by all these traditions and laws? What did these practices give them?
- Do you think, if you'd lived back then, you too would have felt more safe, more secure, having traditions and repeated practices to help you survive?

Go to Tool 1A, "I Am Prejudiced!"
Do this exercise with students. Then return to this page.

What Does It Mean to Survive?

1. Ask students:

- Do you think we still live in tribe-like situations today? What kind?
- Do you belong to any groups or organizations that are like a tribe? Do you think a political party — like the Democrats and the Republicans — are like tribes? In what ways?
- Do you think the tribes we have today contribute to our survival? In what way?
- Would you be surprised to learn that living in tribe-like situations today can give us the opposite of what we need?
- Can you think of a reason why tribe-like organizations today may be a threat to the security and safety of the human race?

2. Tell students:

- Today, the world is a smaller place than it used to be. We can travel around the world in a day, or talk with people around the world in moments.
- As a result, people all over the world depend on one another for survival. Today, certain tribe-like groups may not contribute at all to our safety and may be a *threat* to the security and survival of the human race. The reason? They *separate* people.

- There are two kinds of survival — physical and psychological.

PHYSICAL SURVIVAL. We survive physically when we have enough to eat and drink, clothes to keep us warm and a place to live. Ancient tribes helped members survive physically by guaranteeing them food, clothing, shelter and protection.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SURVIVAL. We survive psychologically when we *feel* safe and secure. Ancient tribe members were required to “identify” with their group and follow the group’s customs and beliefs. This dedication to the group made it more powerful — better able to care for its members.

3. Ask students:

- What are the elements of physical needs?
Are they food, clothing and shelter?
- What are the elements of psychological needs?
Do they include whatever makes us *feel* safe and secure?
- What elements made The Rock Tribe feel safe and secure?
- What are some things that make YOU feel safe and secure?
- Do you think that the best way to get a sense of safety and security is to have BOTH our physical and mental needs satisfied? Why?

A New Threat to Survival

1. Tell students:

- With their physical and psychological needs covered, The Rock Tribe felt safe.

- Over time, individual tribes like The Rock Tribe grew bigger until their territories began to bump into other groups' territories.
- Since everyone needed food, clothing and shelter, each tribe began to see other tribes as THREATS to their physical survival.
- Since their psychological survival was tied to their physical survival, they believed their traditions were also threatened.
- This created CONFLICT between all the tribes. Not only over territory and physical needs, but also over whose beliefs would dominate, whose birthright should rule, and whose laws ought to govern.

2. Ask students:

- Do we still fight today over enough food, enough land, enough clothing?
- Do you think that science has developed tools and technology that now give us the ability to create plenty of food, clothing and housing for our physical needs?
- Do you think science has helped us resolve psychological conflict, too, or do you think science is unable to resolve the different ideas people have about "how life should be"?
- Was it The Rock Tribe's fear that created conflict between them and other tribes?
- Do you think fear we feel today creates conflict between us and people around us? How so?

3. Tell students:

- The best way to understand the meaning of prejudice is to experience it first-hand.
- In this curriculum, we will put prejudice under a microscope and examine it according to the four stages of learning.

The Four Stages of Learning

- Stage 1:** We *think* about prejudice and what it generally means.
- Stage 2:** We *remember* how prejudice has personally affected us or people we know.
- Stage 3:** We *observe* prejudice as it happens in our brain. This awareness is called “insight.”
- Stage 4:** We *talk with one another* about the prejudice we observe.

**Go to Tool 1B, “Threats to My Survival!”
Do this exercise with students. Then return to this page.**

4. Ask students:

- I have put up in this room a chart called “Words I Use When I’m Prejudiced.” Can everyone see it?
- Do you think it’s possible that we use prejudiced words without being aware that we’re using them?
- How would you define “words of prejudice”?

**Go to Tool 1C, “Words I Use When I’m Prejudiced!”
Do this exercise with students.**

TOOL #1A - ACTIVITY
I Am Prejudiced!

Have as much fun with this activity as you can. It's good for students to catch themselves in the act of prejudice, and it's okay for them to laugh in recognition of their human foibles.

- Tell students that you're going to walk around the room and begin an unfinished sentence which you want them to complete.
- Move around the room quickly; give every student the opportunity to fill in a blank.
- As you cover the room, stop and indicate that a certain student should finish the sentence. Here are some sample sentences:
 1. **"I am prejudiced. Sometimes when I see someone very different from me – I don't think I'll ever actually do this, but I feel I would really like to _____."**
 2. **"It's hard for me to admit that I'm prejudiced, but the last time I remember acting in a prejudiced way was ____."**
 3. **"I am prejudiced. The last time I felt superior to someone was _____."**
 4. **"I am prejudiced. The last time I felt fear toward someone was _____."**
 5. **"I am prejudiced. I like telling people what to do because I feel some people ought to _____."**
 6. **"I am prejudiced. The main thing I really don't like about people who are _____ is _____."**
- Add your own sentences that will apply to your particular students — but make them about prejudice!

TOOL #1B - ACTIVITY

Threats to My Survival

Encourage students to talk about real threats they feel – the threat of an oncoming cold, the school not winning a competition, or the threat of a bully. Allow students to be shy, funny, serious, angry – whatever it takes to give them an opportunity to honestly speak about the subject of threat.

Ask students:

1. Do you think there are threats to your survival?
2. Where are these threats? At home? At school? In the world?
3. What's one threat to your survival that you feel today?
4. Why do you believe this is a threat?
5. If you could do anything, how would you resolve this threat?

Tell students:

1. Let's follow the four stages of learning.
 - Stage 1:** **Think** about a threat you feel. What does this threat mean to you?
 - Stage 2:** **Remember** how the threat has personally affected you or people you know. How has it affected you?
 - Stage 3:** **Observe** this threat as it happens in your brain. Allow yourself to look at it, even if it's scary. What do you see when you let yourself look at this threat?
 - Stage 4:** **Talk about it** as you observe it. What do you want to say about this threat?

TOOL #1C- ACTIVITY

Words I Use When I'm Prejudiced

- Put a chart up in the classroom: WORDS I USE WHEN I'M PREJUDICED.**
Every day invite students to add words and phrases to the list.

- Tell students:**
 - One way to recognize when we're being prejudiced is to examine the words we use.

 - Sometimes our vocabulary gives away our prejudiced feelings.

- Ask students:**
 - Which of the following statements are clear signs of prejudiced feelings?
 1. **"He's stupid!"**
 2. **"She should do what I tell her to do."**
 3. **"All people from his country are jerks."**
 4. **"What they ought to do is change their ideas."**
 5. **"I think that's a really dumb idea."**
 6. **"Can't you ever do anything right?"**
 7. **"No one could possibly understand how I feel."**
 8. **"Anyone who believes that is a fool!"**
 9. **"You'll never amount to anything!"**
 10. **"Your country and my country can never be at peace."**

 - If you guessed all of the above, you're right! What words give away the speaker's prejudice?

- Tell students:**
 - This chart will stay up during our entire course study.

 - Feel free to write an entry on this chart any time!