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Teaching Conflict Transformation Through Stories

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Teaching Conflict Transformation Through Stories

Pablo Reyes

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts
in TESOL degree at SIT Graduate Institute, Brattleboro, Vermont.

January, 2015

IPP Advisor: Dr. Leslie Turpin

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Pablo Reyes

January 16, 2015

Abstract:

This work consists of a didactic compilation of 10 stories, which include fables, folktales, and one true story. These stories have been adapted into lessons and they focus mainly on the themes of conflict transformation and conflict resolution. Through a series of steps, structured by activities, learners will be able to experience working with several diverse scenarios of conflict. Part of these activities will require learners to relate and apply the issues in the stories both to themselves and to pertinent contexts of reality. Thus, this material constitutes a practical and experiential guide to the development and application of skills on promoting and implementing alternative ways to address conflict resolution. Its main objective is to prepare and equip learners and instructors alike to take an active part and be instruments in the task of furthering the so desperate and needed efforts towards peace.

Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) Descriptors:

Class Activities

Culture Conflict

Folktales

Instructional Materials

Intercultural Communication

Peace

Social Values

Teacher Developed Materials

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Introduction

About the material

This project came as a result of an endeavor of self-learning and exploration on how to use stories for both conflict transformation¹ and conflict resolution². This material contains a series of 10 stories including fables, folktales, and one true story. These stories come from different parts of the world. Each presents its own style and flavor, and each teaches us a lesson, thus accomplishing the purpose for which it was intended. While most of these stories state an author, some do not. In the case where there is no author, it might be because the story is old and in the process of passing from generation to generation, identifying its origin has been difficult to do. Likewise, some of the stories have morals; some do not. In the latter case, if not suggested in the activities already, students can write the morals for the stories themselves.

While most of the stories were new for me, I included some I already knew. Examples of these are “La Rosa y el Sapo” and “Asamblea en la Carpintería”. I learned about these two stories from the culture of oral tradition in El Salvador. For these two particular stories, a translation was required because they were in the Spanish language. Their author or origin, however, is still uncertain. What is true about them is

¹ ... “Conflict transformation is an ongoing process of changing relationships, behaviours, attitudes and structures, from the negative to the positive. It requires timely interventions, respect for cultural context, patience and persistence and a comprehensive understanding of the conflict.” (Hakim et al., 2003).

² This term usually refers to the process of resolving a dispute or a conflict permanently, by providing each sides' needs, and adequately addressing their interests so that they are satisfied with the outcome. (“Conflict Management and Constructive Confrontation: A guide to the Theory and Practice,” 1998).

that they are renowned in El Salvador, and probably in most of the Spanish-Speaking world.

This material is not prescriptive; that is to say that teachers and facilitators can modify it and adapt it, as their objectives and necessities so require. With regard to how the material is organized, there is at the beginning of each story its corresponding text and an illustration of it. After that, there is the development of the story. This starts with the “word focus” section, which highlights vocabulary that is relevant to the better comprehension of the story. This vocabulary can be taught in different ways. One way is through descriptions —providing a simple description for the words. A second way is by providing easy and practical dictionary definitions. A third way is through the use of antonyms —words that mean the opposite. Yet another way is through illustrations —guessing the meaning of the words by seeing pictures. After the vocabulary section, a series of activities follow. The number of these activities ranges from 3 to 5.

The organization and design of the material presented is arranged in such a way that, first of all, students may become acquainted with the story itself. The vocabulary section is intended to help this purpose. Then, through the development of the activities, students, guided by a sequence of steps, will be able to deepen their understanding of the stories. The activities will invite students, for example, to ask and answer questions, engage in dialogue and conversations, relate the stories to their own life, share similar or related experiences, apply their learnings to different contexts of reality, and give advice and propose solutions to problems. By doing this, students will undoubtedly discover, nurture, and improve on practical, effective, and necessary skills for the transformation of conflicts. The ultimate two objectives, however, are these. First, that students can use the learning acquired and apply it for the resolution of conflicts in their particular contexts: community, home, and in their own lives, for

example. Second, that they can teach others about the importance of fomenting and keeping respectful and harmonious relations toward one another.

Finally, in the appendix section, there is a tree diagram worksheet. This worksheet is provided so that students can identify the theme and the conflict presented in each of the stories, as well as the effects and the causes lying underneath these conflicts. While this additional page can be used as a way of complementing and reinforcing learning, it could also be used as a final activity for any of the stories. In addition, the picture for each story, presented after the text, has no suggested usage, except for the one in “The Fox and The Grapes”. Therefore, teachers can likewise use those pictures for activities that they may choose. The illustrations for the stories are the generous collaboration of Sonia García.

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How the material came to be

There are several reasons that explain the creation of this material. First and most importantly I have been impacted by what is happening in the world. I believe that the often and prevalent state of chaos and turmoil in the world has become more intense, and sadly enough, there is not a good sign for the time to come. But I became even more aware of this reality in the world when, in 2014-2015, I participated in the Conflict Transformation Across Cultures, CONTACT, program at School for International Training, in Brattleboro, Vermont.

While on my first year in the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, TESOL, program, I endeavored into the field of peacebuilding and had an intense,

transformative, and tremendously meaningful personal experience through the CONTACT program. This experience has deepened and broadened my horizons about other people and their cultures. Getting to know and being surrounded by people from around 25 countries allowed me to learn from them and their contexts firsthand. Yet, I also have developed more interest and concern for my own country. My views of the many issues that tremendously affect and impact El Salvador also have become more critical. In addition, I have also developed more empathy and appreciation for my own culture. As a result of all of this, a more persistent and intense sense of responsibility has grown in me as an individual, first, towards my own culture, and second, towards the rest of humanity. It is this sense of responsibility that compelled me to do something where I could relate my teaching skills to conflict transformation. Yet, while I had some knowledge and experience about teaching, I didn't have much knowledge about peacebuilding. Thus, it was the CONTACT experience that allowed me to acquire fundamental and important knowledge on this subject. This is how the connection between these two areas became possible and how this material came to be.

Given the conflict and lack of peace in my own country, El Salvador, the idea of designing a teaching material about conflict transformation became more relevant for me. Since in El Salvador we struggle much with youth violence and gender violence, for example, I first thought about creating a series of lessons on both how to deal with and resolve conflicts. This teaching material is the result of those efforts and objectives.

My learning from the CONTACT program has been extensive and diverse. I have learned about the strategies through which effective resolution to conflicts is many times possible. I have learned about mediation, intervention, and dialogue, for example. It has been my goal to use and apply as much of this knowledge as possible in the

development of the contents presented. While this guide does not present an explicit and structured teaching about the theories of peacebuilding and the mechanisms through which it works, students will come to know about them in an implicit way because they are present throughout the material. Since the focus of this teaching aid is on the practical and experiential aspect of peacebuilding, no emphasis has been given to the theoretical part of it.

The lessons in this compilation address various themes around conflict and related subjects. Some of these themes are: promoting encouragement and a positive attitude towards adversity, avoiding judgment based on preconceptions, loving and valuing people as who they are, realizing the consequences of revenge, discovering the good in people, developing self-awareness, improving self-knowledge of strengths and weaknesses, developing patience, fomenting good human relations, asking for forgiveness and reconciliation, offering service and help, and acting with mercy and compassion. Certain stories may share similar themes. Connecting these stories and building upon their learning could very effectively reinforce learning.

My hope is that teachers, educators, facilitators, instructors, leaders, churches, schools, education centers, peace-promoting and conflict-resolution centers, religious, and laic institutions, students and the general public alike, could benefit from this didactic compilation of lessons on conflict transformation, whether they use it as a tool for teaching or for self-learning.

A Turkish Folktale

Nasreddin Hodja was an educated, literate man, and one day an illiterate farmer came to him and asked him to write a letter for him.

“Where will you send it?” asked Hodja.

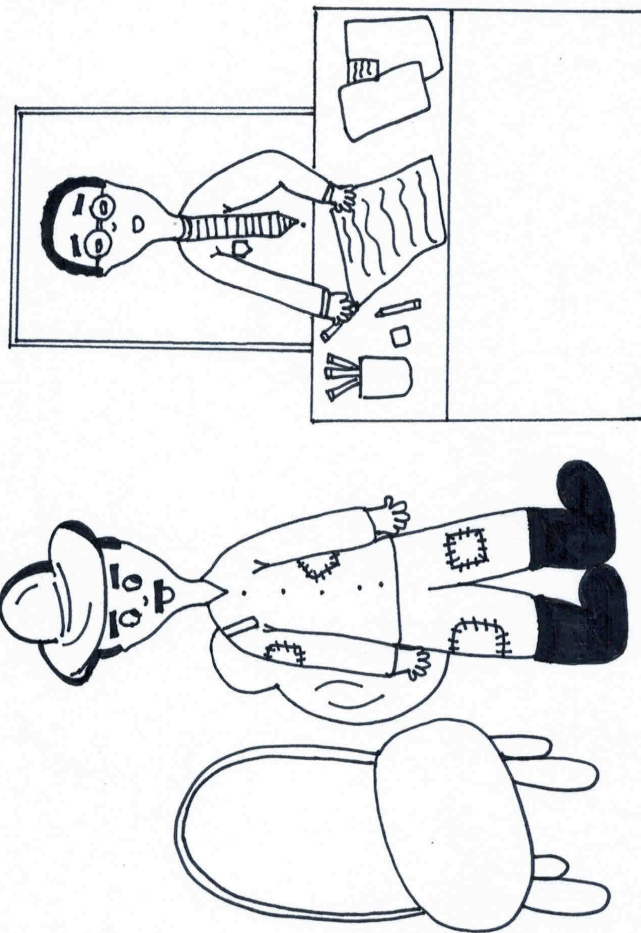
“To Baghdad,” replied the farmer.

“Oh, but I can’t possibly go there,” said Hodja.

The farmer was a little puzzled, and so he said, “I don’t want you to go there, I want to send a letter there.”

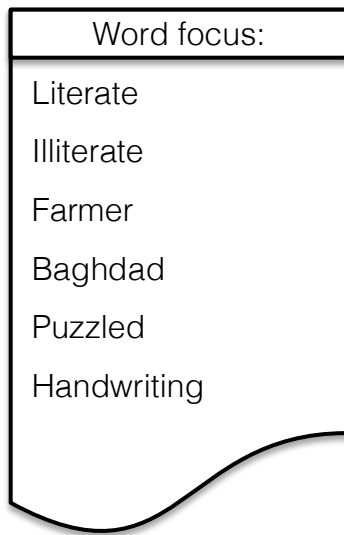
“Ah, yes,” said Hodja. “But you see, my handwriting is so bad that nobody can read it, so I’ll have to go there and read the letter to them.”

(A Turkish folktale, as retold in Clark, 1991, 20)



Objectives:

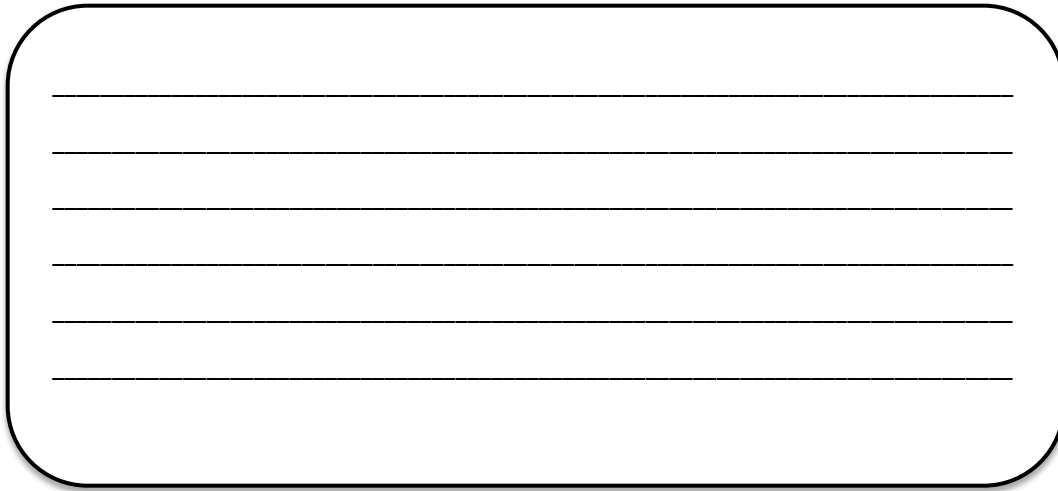
- To reflect on the importance of service and willingness to help.
- To stimulate the thinking of alternative solutions to problems caused by incapacity or powerlessness.

**Activities:**

1. After hearing the story read out loud to the class, students might ask each other and discuss these questions:
 - ❖ Have people come to you for help?, or, have you come to people for help?
 - ❖ How have you helped people?, or, how have people helped you?
 - ❖ What did the farmer need help with?
 - ❖ Why did the farmer come to Mr. Hodja?
 - ❖ Was Mr. Hodja able to help the farmer?
 - ❖ Was Mr. Hodja's kind gesture of writing the letter enough to resolve the situation?
 - ❖ What happened after Mr. Hodja wrote the letter? Did any other problem emerge?
 - ❖ If so, how did Mr. Hodja decide to resolve this new problem?
 - ❖ Did the farmer ask the right person for help?

- ❖ Although Mr. Hodja could not help the farmer in what he needed, what do you think is remarkable about his attitude?
- ❖ How do you think this story ended? Did the farmer manage to send the letter? If so, how?, if not, what might have been the implications of not sending the letter?

2. Now, students write a moral for the story:



3. Then, students write their morals in a quotation-like form on a large sheet of paper and put them on the walls around the classroom. They may or may not write their names on the morals. They take turns reading what every one wrote.
4. Finally, students rotate talking to each other about their learnings from this lesson.

The Farmer's Donkey (fable)

One day a farmer's donkey fell down into a well. The animal cried piteously for hours as the farmer tried to figure out a way to get him out. Finally he decided it was probably impossible and the animal was old and the well was dry anyway, so it just wasn't worth it to try and retrieve the donkey. So the farmer asked his neighbors to come over and help him cover up the well. They all grabbed shovels and began to shovel dirt into the well.

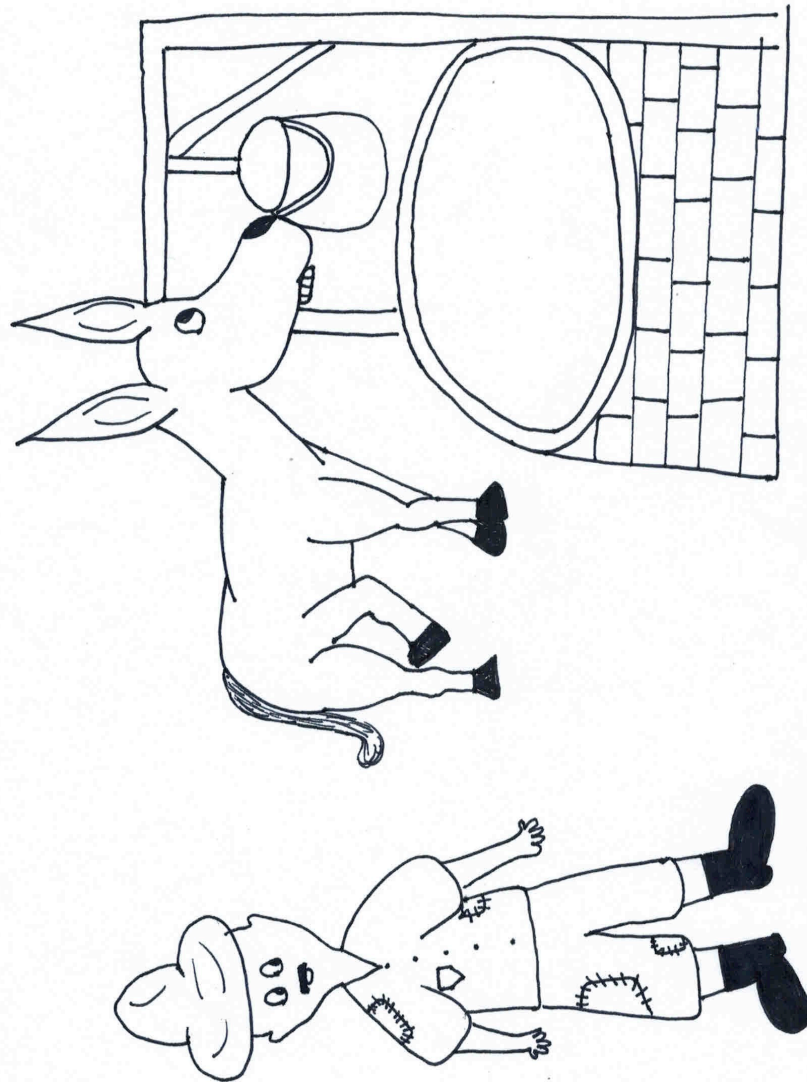
At first, when the donkey realized what was happening he cried horribly. Then, to everyone's amazement, he quieted down and let out some happy brays. A few shovel loads later, the farmer looked down the well to see what was happening and was astonished at what he saw. With every shovel of dirt that hit his back, the donkey was shaking it off and taking a step up (Shifting).

As the farmer's neighbors continued to shovel dirt on top of the animal, he continued to shake it off and take a step up. Pretty soon, to everyone's amazement, the donkey stepped up over the edge of the well and trotted off!

Moral: Life is going to shovel dirt on you. The trick to getting out of the well is to shake it off and take a step up. Every adversity can be turned into a stepping stone. The way to get out of the deepest well is by never giving up but by shaking yourself off and taking a step up.

What happens to you isn't nearly as important as how you react to it.

(The Farmer's Donkey, n.d.)



Objectives:

- To learn about the fruits of ingenuity and resolution.
- To understand how the attitudes we adopt towards life circumstances can help us overcome difficulties and obtain positive outcomes even in the midst of the greatest adversity.

Word focus:		
Farmer	Dirt	A stepping stone
Donkey	Amazement	Adversity
Well	Bray	To give up
Piteously	Load	
To figure out	Astonished	
Dry	To shake off	
To retrieve	Step	
Neighbor	Edge	
To grab	To trot off	
Shovel	Trick	

Activities:

1. After taking turns reading the fable as a whole class, students organize into groups and share with one another about the following prompts:
 - ❖ How do you understand the story?
 - ❖ How do you familiarize yourself with the story? Could you share a personal experience similar or related to that of the fable, regardless of whether you succeeded or not?

- ❖ What was your attitude toward the particular situation you faced?
 - ❖ Why do you think you succeeded?, or, why did you not succeed?
2. Then, students reflect on the stories by making the connection between attitudes and results.
 3. In the end, students write a letter to a friend, summarizing their learnings from this class.

[illegible]

The Rose and the Toad (fable) **(La Rosa y el Sapo)**

There was once a beautiful rose. Being the most beautiful flower in the garden made her feel wonderful. However, she noticed that people only looked at her from afar.

The rose realized that there was always a toad next to her. She thought that because of that people did not come close to see her.

Full of indignation, the rose requested the toad to go away. Obediently, the toad abandoned her.

Shortly after, the toad came by the rose. The toad was very surprised when he saw the rose. The rose was dried and withered. She had no leaves or petals.

“You look devastated”, said the toad. “What happened to you?”, he asked. “The ants have been eating me ever since you left me”, answered the rose. “I will never be the same”, she added.

“Well, when I was here I ate all the ants that came around to attack you. In that way it was easier for you to be the most beautiful flower in the garden”, said the toad.

(La Rosa y el Sapo, n.d.)



Objectives:

- To learn to value people not by what they are externally, but by what they are internally.
- To appreciate people just as they are, putting our preconceptions, prejudices and judgments aside.

Word focus:		
Beautiful	To request	Ant
Rose	Obediently	To attack
Garden	To abandon	
Wonderful	Shortly after	
To notice	Surprised	
Afar	Dried	
To realize	Withered	
Toad	Leave	
To think	Petal	
Indignation	Devastated	

Activities:

1. Students act out the story after having heard it or read it themselves. There are two characters and a narrator. The characters are The Rose and the Toad. They choose the characters from the class. The better the personification of the characters, the better.
2. After the dramatization of the story, students, individually, reflect and respond to these prompts about the story:

First, what did you...

see?	feel?

Next, what do you think the problem was?

--

Then, how do you think this problem could have been avoided?

--

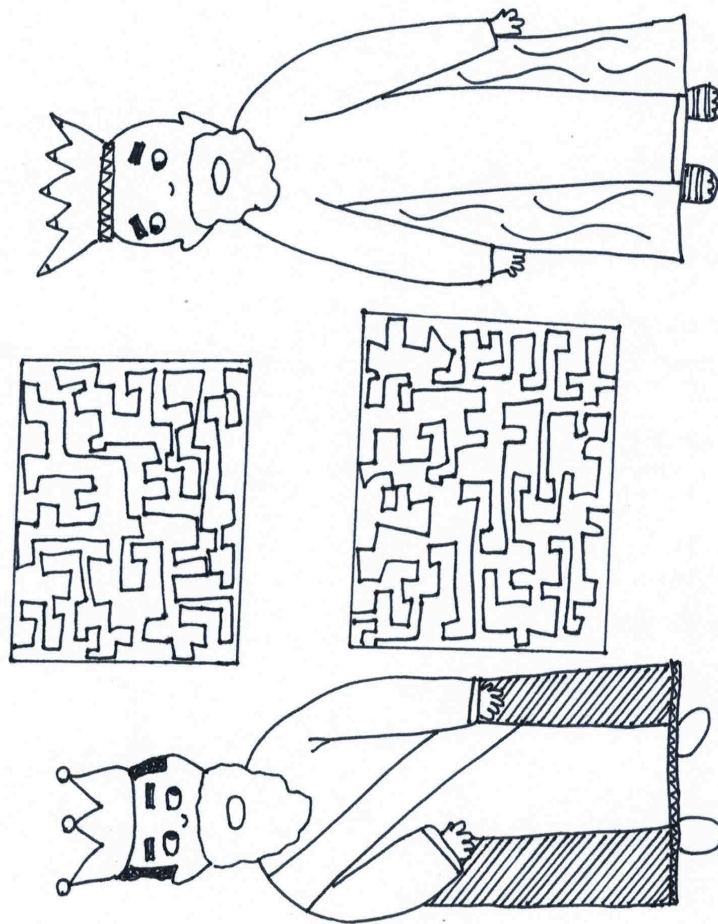
3. After this, students share and compare what they wrote with the whole class.
4. Finally, in a big circle, each student says what lesson they learned from the story.

The Two Kings and the Two Labyrinths (folktale)

It is said by men worthy of belief (though Allah's knowledge is greater) that in the first days there was a king of the isles of Babylonia who called together his architects and his priests and bade them build him a labyrinth so confused and so subtle that the most prudent men would not venture to enter it, and those who did would lose their way. Most unseemly was the edifice that resulted, for it is the prerogative of God, not man, to strike confusion and inspire wonder. In time there came to the court a king of Arabs, and the king of Babylonia (to mock the simplicity of his guest) bade him enter the labyrinth, where the king of Arabs wandered, humiliated and confused, until the coming of the evening, when he implored God's aid and found the door. His lips offered no complaint, though he said to the king of Babylonia that in his land he had another labyrinth, and Allah willing, he would see that someday the king of Babylonia made its acquaintance. Then he returned to Arabia with his captains and his wardens and he wreaked such havoc upon kingdoms of Babylonia, and with such great blessing by fortune, that he brought low his castles, crushed his people, and took the king of Babylonia himself captive. He tied him atop a swift-footed camel and led him into the desert. Three days they rode, and then he said to him, "O king of time and substance and cipher of the century! In Babylonia didst thou attempt to make me lose my way in a labyrinth of brass with many stairways, doors, and walls; now the Powerful One has seen fit to allow me to show thee mine, which has no stairways to climb, nor walls to impede thy passage."

Then he untied the bonds of the king of Babylonia and abandoned him in the middle of the desert, where he died of hunger and thirst. Glory to him who does not die.

(Borges, 1939/1999)



Objectives:

- To reflect on the consequences of revenge.
- To not underestimate or disregard the intentions and capacity of other people.
- To consider and meditate on our decisions before taking action towards them.

Word focus:			
Worthy	To strike	Fortune	The Powerful One
Belief	Wonder	To bring low	To see fit
Allah	Court	Castle	Thee
Knowledge	Arabs	To crush	To climb
Isle	Mock	Captive	To impede
Babylonia	Guest	To tie	Thy
Architect	To wander	Atop	Passage
Priest	Humiliated	Swift-footed	Bond
To bid	To implore	Camel	To abandon
Labyrinth	Aid	Substance	Hunger
Subtle	Complaint	Cipher	Thirst
Prudent	Acquaintance		Glory
To venture	Captain	Century	
Unseemly	Warden	To attempt	
Edifice	To wreak	Brass	

Activities:

1. Each student read the story.
2. Next, in pairs, students take the roles of the main characters in the story, the two kings: the king of Babylonia and the king of the Arabs. They discuss and explain why they acted toward each other the way they did.

King of Babylonia

King of the Arabs

3. Then, in groups, students reflect on what was wrong in their attitudes.
4. After that, students write a letter of apology to the other king. In the letter, they express recognition, show regret, demonstrate repentance, reconcile their differences, and harmonize their relations.

Dear King _____

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, leaving small margins at the top and bottom. There are no vertical margin lines, text, or other markings on the page.

Sincerely yours:

5. In the end, students summarize their learnings from this class in a short conversation with a peer.

The Fox and the Grapes (fable)

A Fox one day spied a beautiful bunch of ripe grapes hanging from a vine trained along the branches of a tree. The grapes seemed ready to burst with juice, and the Fox's mouth watered as he gazed longingly at them.

The bunch hung from a high branch, and the Fox had to jump for it. The first time he jumped he missed it by a long way. So he walked off a short distance and took a running leap at it, only to fall short once more. Again and again he tried, but in vain.

Now he sat down and looked at the grapes in disgust. "What a fool I am," he said. "Here I am wearing myself out to get a bunch of sour grapes that are not worth gaping for." And off he walked very, very scornfully.

There are many who pretend to despise and belittle that which is beyond their reach.

(Aesop, 1919, 20)



Objectives:

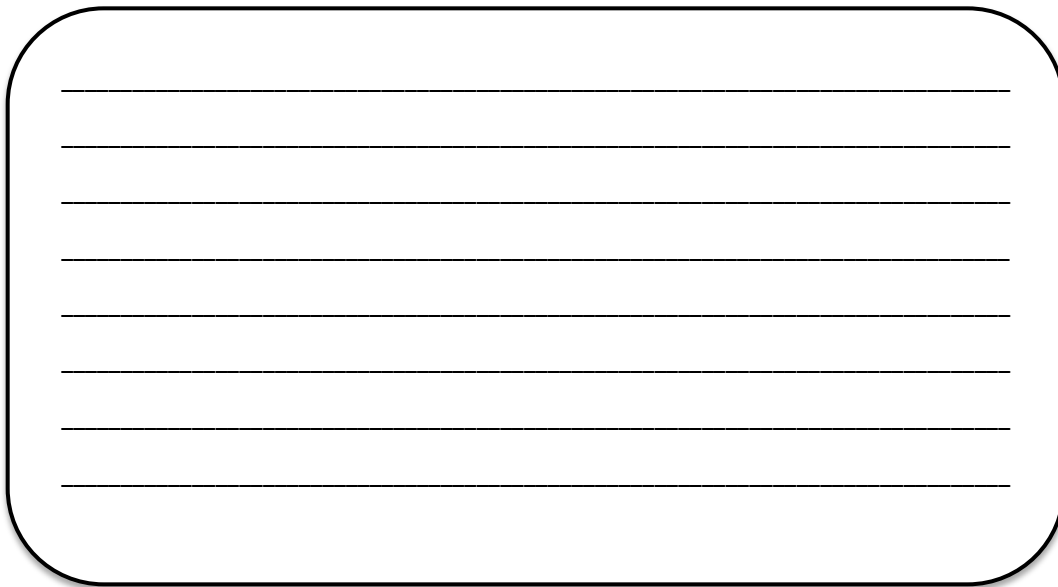
- To be able to recognize our shortcomings and human incapacities, instead of blaming other people.
- To emphasize the importance of taking responsibility for what we do, regardless of the result.
- To develop a more realistic concept of the self.

Word focus:		
Fox	To water	To wear out
To spy	To gaze	Sour
Bunch	Longingly	To gape for
Ripe	To hang	Scornfully
Grapes	To jump	To pretend
Vine	To miss	To despise
To train	Leap	To belittle
Branch	To fall short	Beyond
To seem	Vain	Reach
To burst	Disgust	
Juice	Fool	

Activities:

1. Students get a picture of the fable. Then, in pairs, they may discuss and ask each other these questions about the picture:

- ❖ What do you see in the picture?
 - ❖ What things in it can you name?
 - ❖ What do you think the picture represents?
 - ❖ In your opinion, what is the story about the picture? Tell your version of the story.
2. After students have shared their stories, they are given the actual story cut into pieces of paper, not including the moral. The story is not in order. Students need to figure out the correct sequence of the story and arrange it from beginning to end.
 3. Once students have read and reflected on the actual story, they write, on a large piece of paper, a lesson they learned from it. Next, they put it on the wall around the classroom. Then, in their notebooks, they make a list of all the morals.
 4. In the end, students write a paragraph of what they learned in today's class.



A large rounded rectangular box with a black border and rounded corners. Inside the box, there are ten horizontal lines for writing, spaced evenly apart. The box is intended for students to write a paragraph of what they learned in today's class.

The Unicorn in the Garden (fable)

Once upon a sunny morning a man who sat in a breakfast nook looked up from his scrambled eggs to see a white unicorn with a golden horn quietly cropping the roses in the garden. The man went up to the bedroom where his wife was still asleep and woke her. "There's a unicorn in the garden," he said. "Eating roses." She opened one unfriendly eye and looked at him.

"The unicorn is a mythical beast," she said, and turned her back on him. The man walked slowly downstairs and out into the garden. The unicorn was still there; now he was browsing among the tulips. "Here, unicorn," said the man, and he pulled up a lily and gave it to him. The unicorn ate it gravely. With a high heart, because there was a unicorn in his garden, the man went upstairs and roused his wife again. "The unicorn," he said, "ate a lily." His wife sat up in bed and looked at him coldly. "You are a booby," she said, "and I am going to have you put in the booby-hatch.

"The man, who had never liked the words "booby" and "booby-hatch," and who liked them even less on a shining morning when there was a unicorn in the garden, thought for a moment. "We'll see about that," he said. He walked over to the door. "He has a golden horn in the middle of his forehead," he told her. Then he went back to the garden to watch the unicorn; but the unicorn had gone away. The man sat down among the roses and went to sleep.

As soon as the husband had gone out of the house, the wife got up and dressed as fast as she could. She was very excited and there was a gloat in her eye. She telephoned the police and she telephoned a psychiatrist; she told them to hurry to her house and bring a strait-jacket. When the police and the psychiatrist arrived they sat

down in chairs and looked at her, with great interest.

"My husband," she said, "saw a unicorn this morning." The police looked at the psychiatrist and the psychiatrist looked at the police. "He told me it ate a lilly," she said. The psychiatrist looked at the police and the police looked at the psychiatrist. "He told me it had a golden horn in the middle of its forehead," she said. At a solemn signal from the psychiatrist, the police leaped from their chairs and seized the wife. They had a hard time subduing her, for she put up a terrific struggle, but they finally subdued her. Just as they got her into the strait-jacket, the husband came back into the house.

"Did you tell your wife you saw a unicorn?" asked the police. "Of course not," said the husband. "The unicorn is a mythical beast." "That's all I wanted to know," said the psychiatrist. "Take her away. I'm sorry, sir, but your wife is as crazy as a jaybird."

So they took her away, cursing and screaming, and shut her up in an institution. The husband lived happily ever after.

Moral: Don't count your boobies until they are hatched.

(Thurber, 1940, 65)



Objectives:

- To be cautious in our judgment of situations.
- To reflect on the results of our impressions, especially when they are wrong.
- To be reminded that what we do, either good or bad, can always return to us.

Word focus:		
Nook	Rouse	Seize
Unicorn	Coldly	Subdue
Golden	Booby	Put up
Horn	Booby-hatch	Terrific
Crop	Forehead	Jaybird
Wake	Gloat	To curse
Mythical	Psychiatrist	To scream
Beast	To hurry	To shut up
Tulip	Strait-jacket	Institution
Lily	Solemn	
Gravely	Leap	

Activities:

1. Students read the story to themselves silently.
2. Next, in pairs, students take roles: one takes the role of the wife and the other takes the role of the husband. Then, they provide some explanation behind their particular behavior in the story. They write it down.

Wife

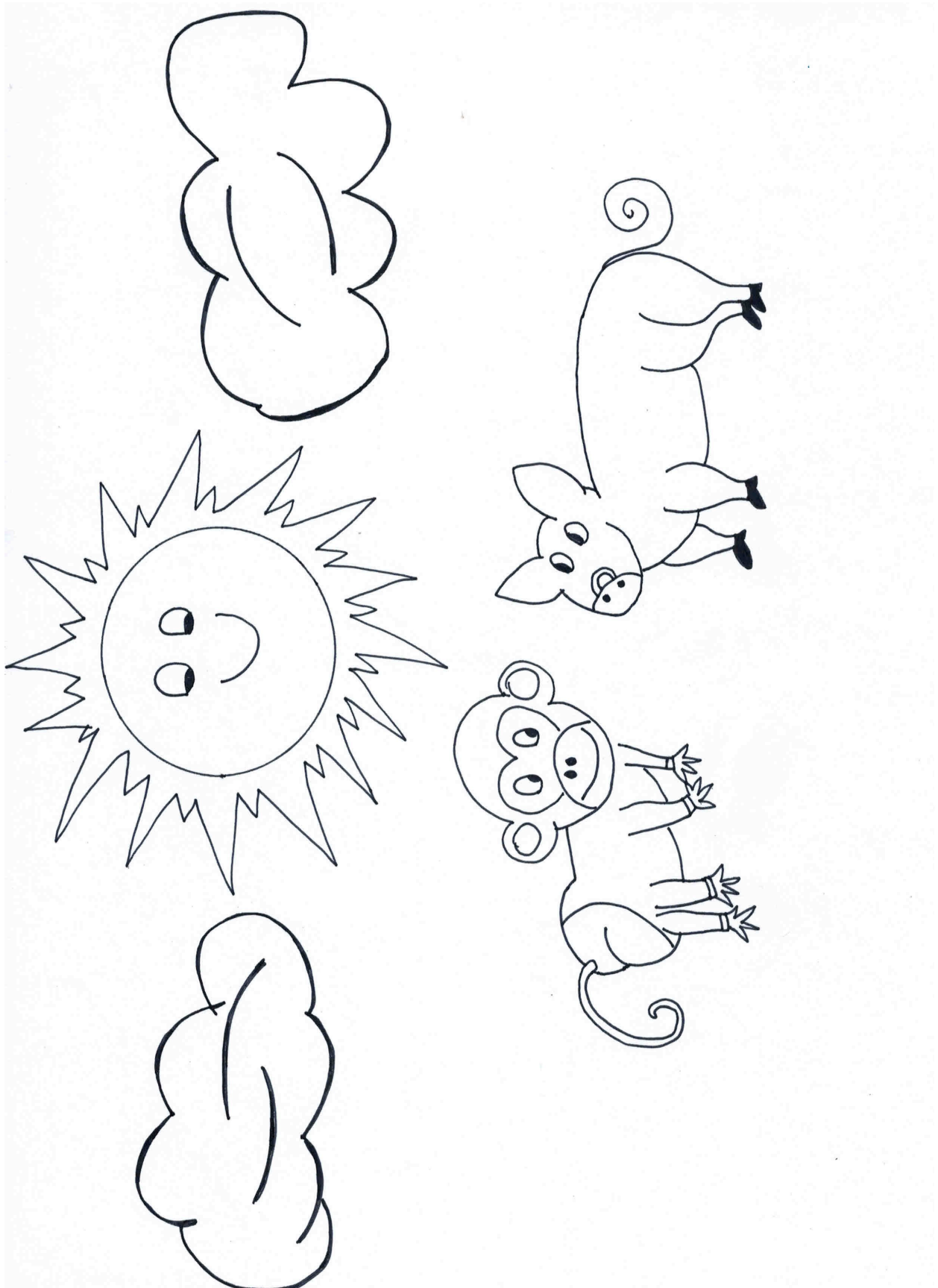
Husband

3. Then, the two people in each pair share their notes with each other.
4. After that, students think about both the decisions they made, and how these decisions might have been influenced by judgment based on impressions.
5. Finally, students share what they learned from this lesson with the rest of the class.

The Pig's Nose and the Baboon's Rear (folktale)

Long ago, the pig and the baboon used to live together on the hillsides. One day, it was very cold and a cutting wind was blowing. As the pig and the baboon sat in the sun trying to get warm, the baboon turned to the pig, and said, "This wind is enough to wear the end of one's nose to a blunt point." "Yes," answered the pig, "it's really enough to blow the hairs of one's buttocks and leave a bare, dry patch." "Look here," said the baboon, getting cross, "you are not to make personal remarks!" "I did nothing of the kind," retorted the pig, "but you were rude to me first." This started a quarrel, and they came to the conclusion that neither cared for the other's company. So they parted, and the baboon went up on to the rocky top of the hill, while the pig went down to the plains, and there they remain to this day.

(A Wayao folktale, as retold in Abrahams, 1983, 191)



Objectives:

- To consider the importance of keeping harmonious relations with other people.
- To think about the value and necessity of having friends.
- To learn to ask for forgiveness when we offend people, and forgive them when they offend us.

Word focus:	
Pig	Patch
Baboon	To get cross
Hillside	Remark
To blow	To retort
Cutting	Rude
To wear	Quarrel
A blunt point	To part
Buttocks	Rocky
Bare	Plain
Dry	To remain

Activities:

1. Students take turns reading the fable out loud to the whole class.
2. Next, students think of a personal and creative way of concluding the story in the fable, with the condition that the pig and the baboon need to become friends again.

3. Then, in a piece of paper, students write their endings to the story. These can be anonymous. After that, students put the pieces of paper in a box, and each student takes out one —not his own— and read it to the whole class.
4. Subsequently, students make a list of the words, ideas, and values that they found most captivating.

Words, ideas, values, etc., that I found interesting	

5. Finally, in small groups, students share both what they learned and how they might use this learning in order to avoid negative and unhealthy attitudes that harm cordial mutual relations.

The Big Family in the Little House (fable)

Vladimir does not know what to do. He has a big family. And he lives in a little house. He is not very happy.

One day he goes to town. He talks to a wise woman. "Please help me," he says. "My wife and I have six children. We live in a very little house. Eight people in a few rooms! "We cannot live this way!"

The wise woman listens. She closes her eyes for a minute. Then she asks, "How many animals do you have?"

"We have eight animals. We have a horse, a cow, two pigs, and four chickens," says Vladimir.

"Good. Go home now," says the wise woman. "Take all your animals into the house with you."

"Our animals!" says Vladimir. He goes home and does what the wise woman tells him. The next week, he goes back to the wise woman.

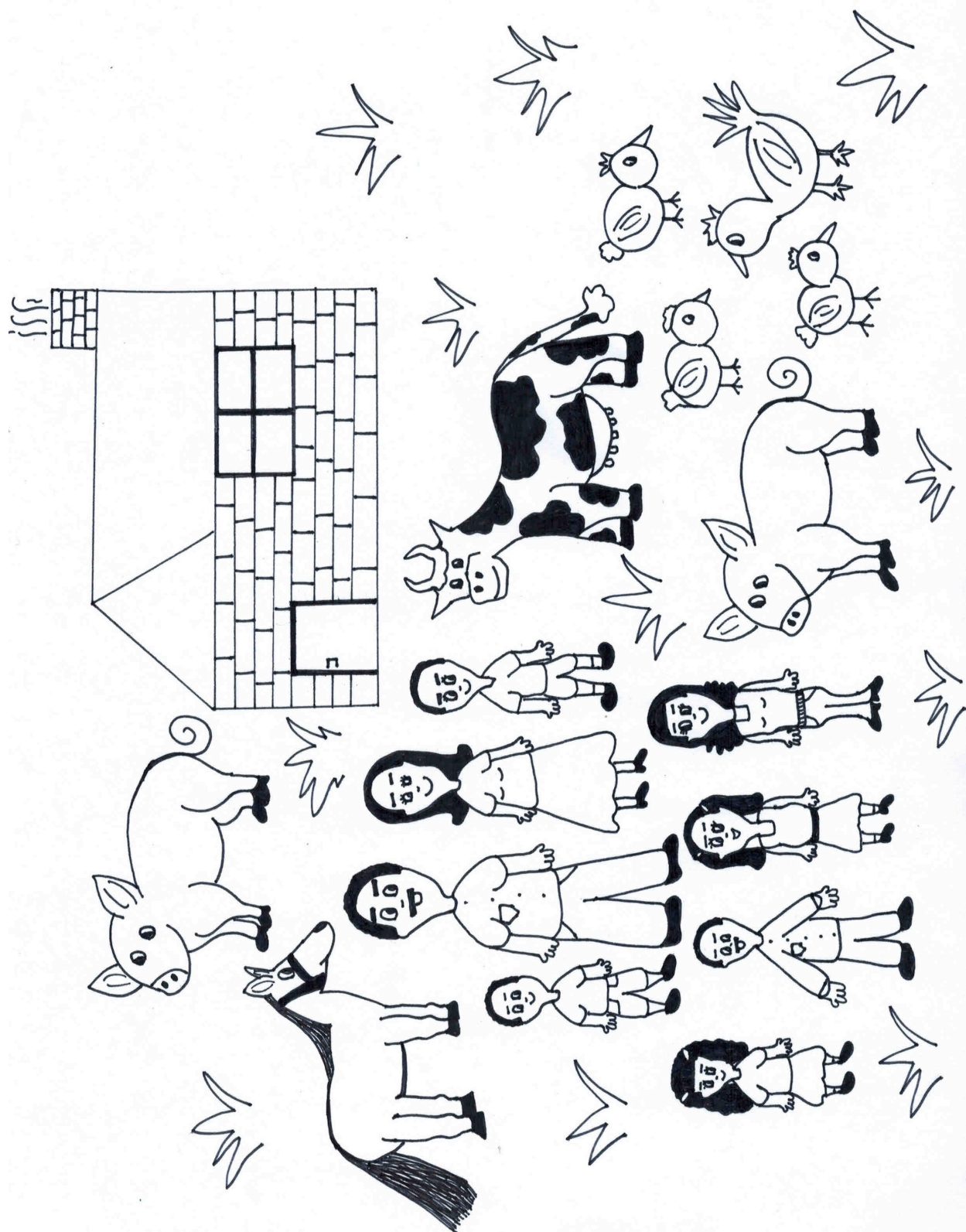
"This is very bad!" he says. "The animals eat our food. They fill all the rooms. They sleep in our beds."

The wise woman closes her eyes again. Then she tells Vladimir, "Now go home. Take the animals out of the house."

Vladimir goes home. He takes the animals out of the house. The next day, he goes back to the wise woman. This time he is happy.

"Thank you, thank you," he says. "It's very different without the animals. Now we can eat. Now we can sleep. Now we like our house. Thank you for your help. You are a very wise woman!"

(A Jewish fable from Eastern Europe, as retold in Jeffries & Mikulecky, 2004)



Objectives:

- To develop deeper appreciation for the different circumstances we find ourselves in, even those that are uncomfortable to us.
- To learn to be patient and hopeful when confronted with hardships and difficulties in life.
- To stimulate the generation of solving-problem ideas instead of just complaining about problems.

Word focus:	
Little	Cow
House	Pig
Wise	Chicken
Few	Bad
Room	To fill
Horse	Without

Activities:

1. Before reading the story, students are presented the issue of a man with a small house, where he lives with his wife and six children plus eight domestic animals. Then, students are asked what they would do to help this poor man. They write their notes about it.

My advice to the man

2. Next, in groups, each student shares his advice with his peers.
3. Then, individually, students read the story “The Big Family in the Little House”. After reading it, students are asked to identify the advice given to the man in the story. They write it down.

Advice given to the man in the story

4. After that, students compare their advice to the man with the advice the man was given in the story. How different was it?
5. Finally, students discuss, in pairs, about the advice the man was given, and share their reactions to it. At the very end, they also share their learnings from this fable with each other.

Assembly at the Carpentry Workshop (fable)
(Asamblea en la Carpintería)

One time, there was an unusual assembly in a carpentry workshop. The carpentry tools decided to gather to resolve their differences.

The hammer was the director of the tools, but the assembly warned him that he should better renounce. They determined that he was too noisy; plus, he spent his time hitting others.

The hammer accepted his fault, but he requested that the screw should likewise be expelled. He argued that it required so much turning work for him to be useful.

To this attack, the screw accepted his failing, but he also suggested the expulsion of the sandpaper. He observed that the sandpaper was rough in treating others, and apart from that, she was constantly generating frictions among the community of tools.

The sandpaper agreed with her dismissal, but only if the ruler was also removed. She protested that the ruler spent his time measuring others, according to his scales, as if he was the only one perfect.

While the discussion was still in progress, the carpenter returned. He put on his apron, and started to work. One by one he started to use the tools: the hammer, the sandpaper, the ruler, and the screw. The wood that once was rough and rustic, he converted into elegant and refined furniture.

When the carpenter left the carpentry workshop, the assembly recommenced their

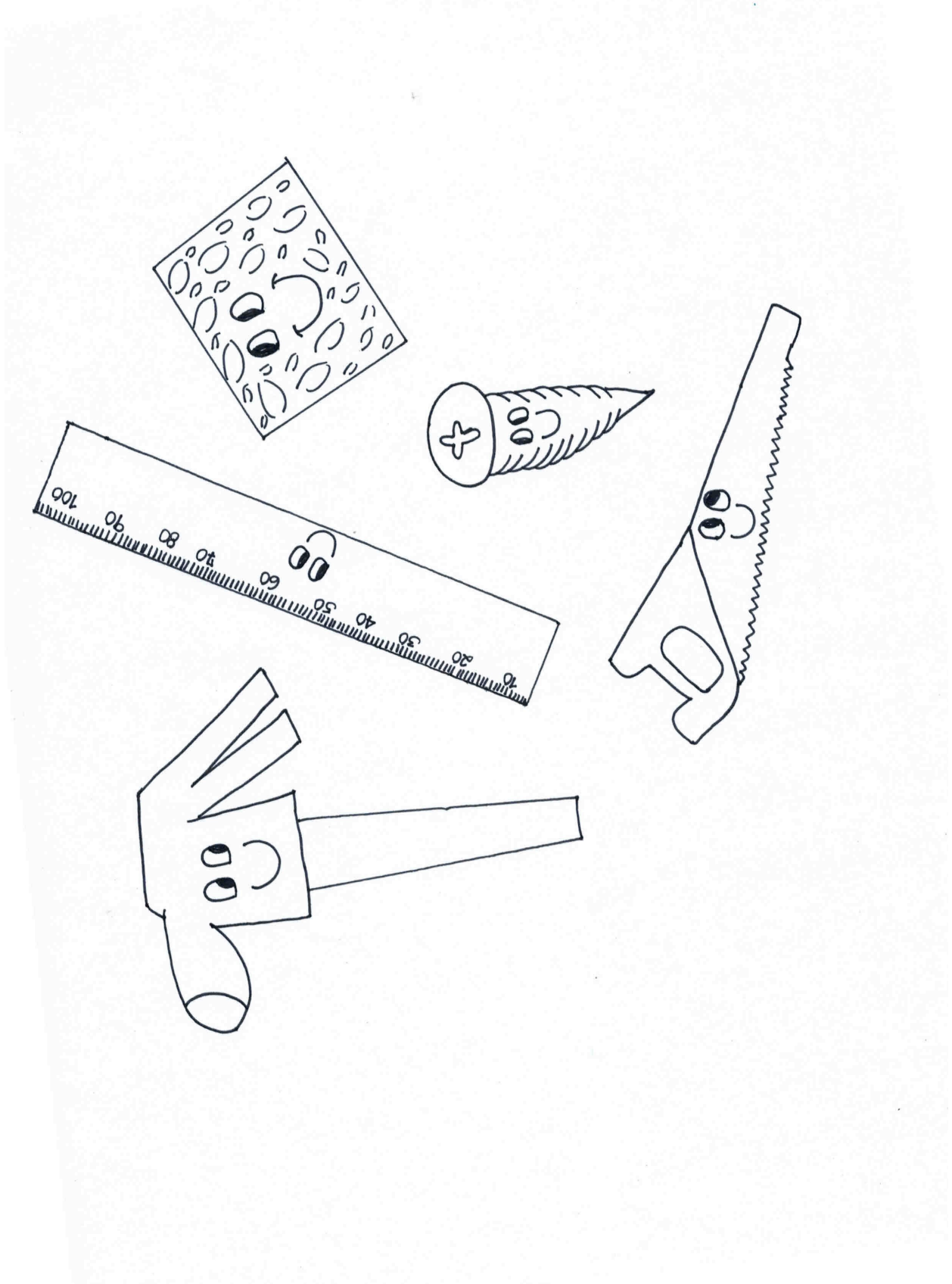
discussion.

After some time, the handsaw spoke and said: “Dear fellows, it has been demonstrated that we all have defects, yet the carpenter works with our skills, and that’s what makes us valuable. For this reason, we should not complain about our deficiencies and imperfections anymore. Rather, let us appreciate the usefulness of our qualities and strengths”.

The assembly was then convinced that the hammer was strong and formidable in his job, the screw was special in its affixing and joining function, the sandpaper was wonderful in the filing and smoothing of surfaces, and the ruler was precise and exact in its measuring task.

In the end, they felt that they were a team able to produce beautiful and exceptional pieces of furniture. They were happy with their strengths and with their collective work as a team.

(Asamblea en la Carpintería, n.d.)



Objectives:

- To learn how to recognize our personal deficiencies and imperfections.
- To explore and discover ways that can help us cope with our own weaknesses.
- To discover the strength and capacity for good both in ourselves and in other people.

Word focus:			
Assembly	Failing	Elegant	Strength
Carpentry	Expulsion	Refined	Formidable
Workshop	Sandpaper	Furniture	To affix
Tool	Rough	To recommence	
To resolve	Friction	Handsaw	To file
Difference	Dismissal	Defect	Precise
Hammer	Ruler	Skill	Task
Noisy	To measure	Valuable	Team
Fault	Scale	To complain	Exceptional
Screw	Carpenter	Deficiency	Collective
To expel	Apron	Imperfection	
To argue	Rustic	Quality	

Activities:

1. Students are given the text of the story. They read it until they have understood it well.

2. Next, from the reading, students are asked to identify both the name of the tools in the fable, and the defects and criticism that they mentioned about one another. They write it down.

Tools	Defects and criticism

3. Then, students list the names of the tools again. This time, however, instead of writing the defects for each of them, they write their qualities and strengths, as stated in the fable.

Tools	Qualities and Strengths

4. After that, students are asked to think about the analogy of the story and how it applies to reality. Students do this in groups.
5. Finally, students share with one another what they learned from this fable, as well as the importance of putting this learning into practice.

Who Will Pay the Piper? (a true story)

In the mountains of Guatemala, near Lake Atitlán, lived a retired American businessman named Sam Green. He had worked in Guatemala for his business career, and had fallen in love with the land and its people. He had learned the language, culture, and reality world of the Indians in his region and spent his evenings in the villages talking with people of their needs and dreams. He discovered that a major problem in meeting their basic needs —health, safety, food, security— was the lack of capital, so he set up a loan process to supply small loans for basic projects —building, digging a well, medical care. The schedule of payments was low, the process was by word of agreement, and the repayment record was 100 percent. He called it the Penny Foundation.

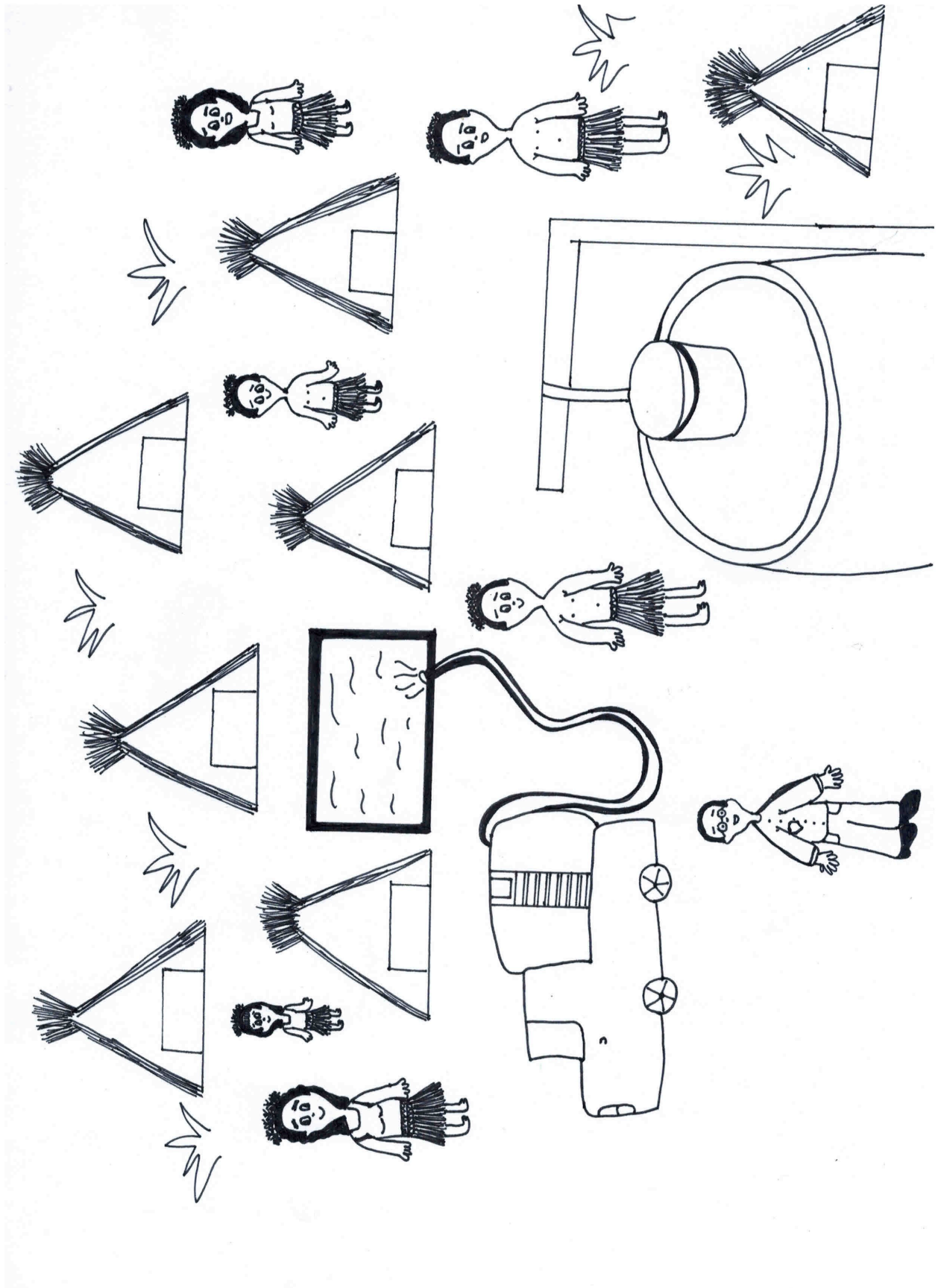
When Green returned from a visit to the United States, he was approached by a Guatemalan official for help in mediating a conflict. A village well had gone dry in an Indian community, so the government had arranged to pipe water from a neighboring village, and imposed a water tax to cover the costs. The villagers who had agreed to pay back the government for its help now refused to pay. Green agreed to mediate and rode out to the village to listen to the villagers' perspective.

"Yes, the well went dry," they said. "It was an act of God. Now the government is attempting to charge us for water when everyone knows that God gives the water free."

"Of course the water is free," agreed Green, "but the pipes are expensive. Would you agree to pay the government by installments for the pipes and their installation?"

The villagers had no objection to pay for the pipe, and the conflict was resolved.

(Singer, as cited in Augsburg, 1992, 40-41)



Objectives:

- To help stimulate and generate ideas about problem solving.
- To consider and promote the benefits of mediation in the resolution of conflicts
- To become more aware about the potential that misunderstandings have to create conflicts.

Word focus:		
Mountain	Government	Perspective
Guatemala	To arrange	An act of God
Fall in love	To pipe	To attempt
Indians	Neighboring	To charge
To spend	To impose	Free
Village	Tax	Pipe
To approach	Cost	Installment
Official	Villager	Installation
To mediate	To agree	Objection
Conflict	To pay back	To resolve
Dry	To refuse	

Activities:

1. Students read the fable.
2. Next, students are asked to identify the misunderstanding that caused the conflict between the villagers and the government of Guatemala. Then, in groups, students discuss about the nature of the conflict and the solution to it.

They ask each other these questions:

- ❖ Was the conflict difficult to resolve? What did it take to resolve it?
- ❖ What was the role of mediation in resolving the conflict?
- ❖ Was mediation important? How?

3. Then, students relate this problem to themselves and think of a situation where, just as in the story, they have either seen mediation being applied or, they have applied it themselves to the resolution of conflicts. They write it down.

My example on the use of mediation in conflict resolution

4. After that, students, in pairs, share their examples with each other. They ask and answer questions about their examples.
5. Finally, in groups, students write, on a large piece of paper, their learnings from this fable about conflict resolution. Then, they present to the class.

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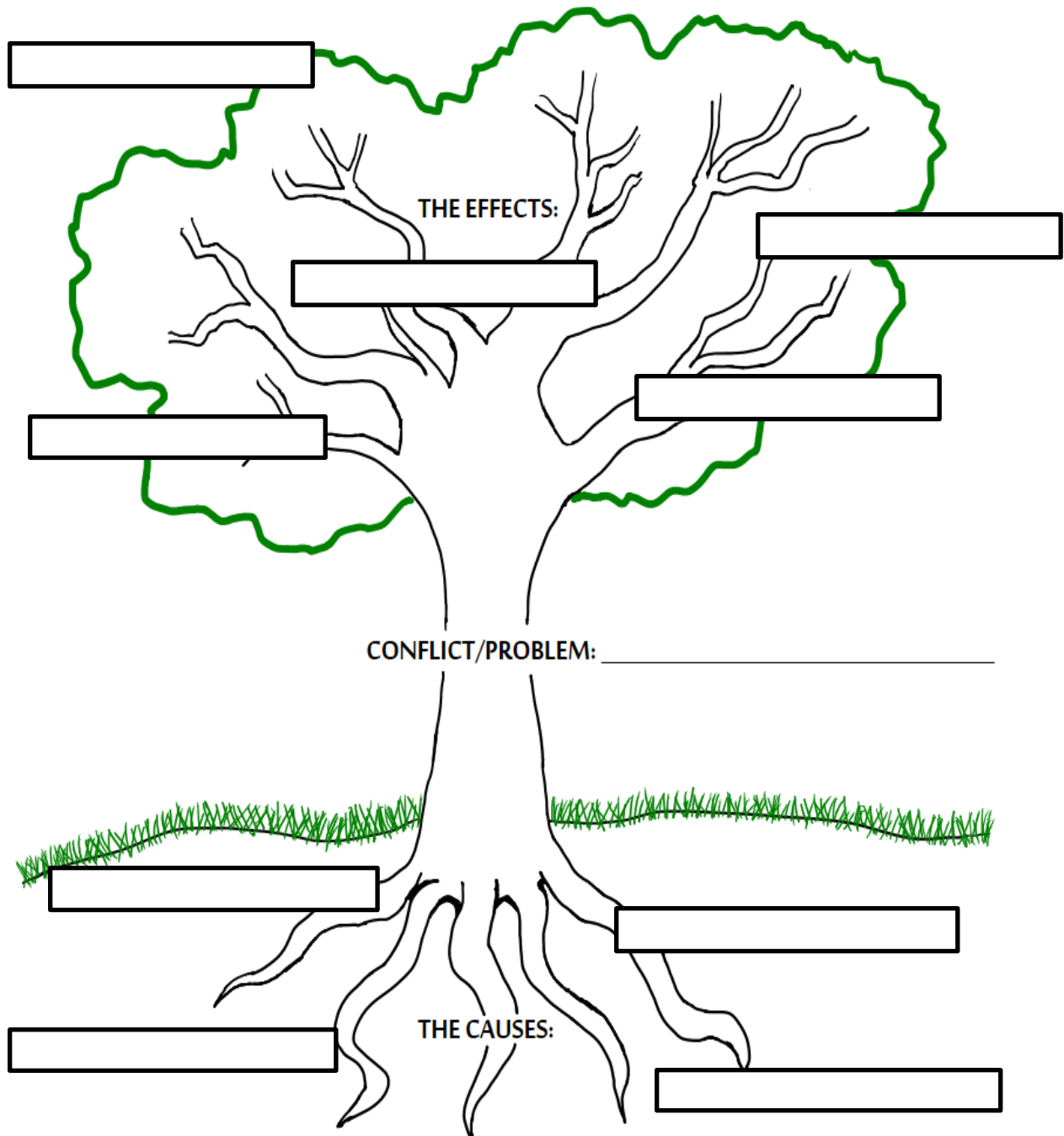
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Appendix

Tree diagram

THEME: _____



Note. Adapted from "Peacebuilding in Divided Communities: Karuna Center's Approach to Training," by P. Green, p. 76. Illustration by Victoria Thompson.