



COEXISTENCE

Coexistence Activities

Table of Contents

- Activity 1: Examining the Thoughts of the Exhibit’s Curator
- Activity 2: Working with Quotations
- Activity 3: Defining What “Coexistence” Will Ask Us to Think About
- Activity 4: Coexistence – What Does It Look Like Today?
- Activity 5: The Word Tolerance – Are There Problems?
- Activity 6: Coexistence and the Arts
- Activity 7: Peaceful Coexistence in Politics?
- Activity 8: Coexistence in Poetry
- Activity 9: Using Art to Enhance Students’ Knowledge of Coexistence
- Activity 10: Group/Class Projects



Activity 1: Examining the Thoughts of the Exhibit's Curator

According to Raphie Etgar, curator of the Coexistence exhibition, "Coexistence is more than a concept and more than a popular idea for our new global culture. It involves changing our lives and changing the way we think. Coexistence is not necessarily learning to live together but perhaps learning to live side by side."

Etgar is deeply committed to promoting greater peace and justice in the world. He has expressed concerns that humans have relied on violence to resolve their interpersonal differences. It is his opinion that violence is not an effective problem solving approach as it stimulates greater destruction, hostility, and division. He contends that violence usually breeds greater contempt, fear and hatred of others. As the Holocaust has shown us, Hitler's use of violence to solve the economic and social ills of Germany caused the death of many innocent people, led to the physical destruction of many countries, tore families apart, and pitted one neighbor against the other.

As a result of Mr. Etgar's concerns, he organized an international art exhibit which he hopes will help educate more people about the need to develop less violent ways to resolve human conflicts, whether they occur locally, nationally, or internationally. He is extremely hopeful this art exhibit will help people learn more respectful ways of interacting with one another.

As he puts it, "People build walls to protect themselves. Perhaps there was a time when walls were useful, but today concrete walls cannot protect people from each other. More so, sometimes we need to protect ourselves from ourselves. I am even more concerned about the walls people build in their hearts, walls that are built in the hearts of children, when their world is destroyed, mental walls that are built in a moment of fear and hate and incitement. Many years of education and a great deal of effort will be needed to break down these walls. What we need today in many places in the world is more consideration, kindness, modesty and love."

Explore as a research project a time in history such as the Holocaust. How is coexistence achieved in the aftermath of such traumatic events? Can the same people live together with each other, or do they need to separate?

Activity 2: Working with Quotations

Choose one or two quotations from the Coexistence posters. Examine how the quotes have been used in the past, and how their meaning may have changed in the 21st century. Can words that had a positive meaning in the past lose this connotation over time?

Examples:

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal. I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood. I have a dream that one day even the State of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom of justice...

– Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

For we have learned certain lessons. We have learned not to be neutral in times of crisis, for neutrality always helps the aggressor, never the victim. We have learned that silence is never the answer. We have learned that the opposite of love is not hatred, but indifference. What is memory if not a response to and against indifference?

– Nobel Prize Laureate Elie Wiesel

Activity 3: Defining What “Coexistence” Will Ask Us to Think About

Examine the meaning of the following words and phrases that relate to this international art exhibit:

Coexistence	Conversation
Tolerance	Justified intolerance
Intolerance	Liberty
Indifference	Democracy
Equality	Universe of Obligation
Equity	Upstander
Legal equality	Hero
Religious equality	Shero
Economic equality	Free market
Love	Free market of ideas
Other	Civil disobedience
Othering	Zero tolerance
Us and Them	The difference between “zero tolerance” and “intolerance”
Conflict	Good
Race	Evil
Respect	Helping
“Love thy neighbor as thyself”	Civil Discourse
Rights	Dialogic
Human Rights	Ambidextrous Thinking
Utility	Social Justice
Harmony	

Establish a discourse about these words and others that students brainstorm, and their relationship to this exhibit. As a project, create an artistic image that conveys the meaning of the word or phrase.

Activity 4: Coexistence – What Does It Look Like Today?

Ask your students what a world based on peaceful coexistence might look like. Using two columns, have students list peaceful and non-peaceful descriptions of coexistence.

Next, ask the students to create a visual collage of pictures, quotes, newspaper clippings, or photos that represent what peaceful and non-peaceful coexistence look like. Have a group discussion about the visual images. In what ways are they similar? Different?

Activity 5: The Word Tolerance – Are There Problems?

Consider these two recent quotes from two well-respected educators:

I propose that the opposite of intolerance is not tolerance. It is understanding. It is acceptance. It is compassion.

- Jean Zeldin, Executive Director, The Midwest Center for Holocaust Education, Overland Park, Kansas

Tolerance is, of course, an extremely intolerant idea, because it means “I am the boss: I will allow you some, though not all, of the rights I enjoy as long as you behave yourself according to standards that I shall determine.”

- Historian Bernard Lewis, Princeton University Professor of History, *The Atlantic Magazine*, May 2003

Create questions for discussion that address these quotes. When creating your questions, address how these quotes relate to modern-day issues and events. Choose two posters from the exhibit that address these quotes.

(Source: <http://www.geocities.com/giselaburger/anda.htm>)

Activity 6: Coexistence and the Arts

The coexistence of music and poetry is almost natural. Poetry originates in song. On the other hand, the coexistence of poetry with painting is stranger for me, because poetry was born before painting, as a spoken language, and painting took an altogether different path. I see poetry and painting as running parallel; they don't touch, but they can collaborate. The relationship is not as clear. But music and poetry can be one and the same.

- Enric Casassas

Think about poetry and painting "running parallel." Examine the Coexistence posters and write a poem for one of the posters, reflecting its meaning/themes into poetic form.

Choose three posters from the Coexistence exhibit and find an appropriate song that fits each poster. Name the song and the artist(s) that perform it along with the name of the songwriter.

Activity 7: Peaceful Coexistence in Politics?

Examine the concept of “peaceful coexistence” that was developed in 1956 by the leader of the Soviet Union, Nikita Khrushchev. Despite being peaceful on the surface, the USSR continued to have destructive ideas about foreign policy and attitudes toward capitalist countries. Is “peaceful coexistence” a loaded phrase too reflective of the Cold War?

And, of course, we can use the current political climate in the United States as a basis for this conversation, as well.

Which two posters best reflect the theme of “peaceful coexistence”? How so?

Activity 8: Coexistence in Poetry

Read the following poem, then complete the exercise that follows:

And a moth cannot be killed twice
This is a truth which is simon-pure
A truth uniface like the cast dice
Mind you, once you kill there is no cure
These aren't any mystic definitions
Of things that are irreversible
These are crystal clear exhibitions
Of laws of nature that are invincible
So, why live amidst fears of wars
By building arsenal that are nuclear
Let us coexist like the eternal stars
Only peace unifies us all into near and dear
-- Mallik Bulusu

What is one theme that could be identified from this poem?

What thoughts, images and ideas contribute to the theme you identified?

Respond to the poem in some creative form:

1. Compose a short song response.
2. Create a movement piece about how you feel after considering the poem.
3. With another person, write a six line poem in response.
4. Use one word from each line of the poem, write a poem in response.
5. Select twelve words from the poem, add five more and use these to create a new poem.
6. Write an essay on the theme of coexistence, reflecting on your reading of this poem and the viewing of the posters in the exhibit. Consider what your thoughts on coexistence will be. Before you begin writing your essay, it is a good idea to think about the argument you will present. Outline the major points that support your argument. Remember to use examples from the poem and the art in the exhibit to support your argument.

Activity 9: Using Art to Enhance Students' Knowledge of Coexistence

Choose one poster and explore with students what it might symbolically represent.

1. What does this image tell you about how people have historically interacted and treated one another?
2. What does it tell you about how people's lives may be similar or different?
3. What does the art suggest people could do differently to live in greater harmony and peace with one another?

Here are sample questions for engaging with the posters:

Coexistence:

1. What objects do you see in this picture?
2. Do you see any letters or words?
3. Where else have you seen these objects displayed?
4. What do these symbols mean to you?
5. How do these symbols relate to your study of the modern world?
6. What happens when coexistence breaks down?
7. Historically, how have these symbols been viewed?
8. Have they been viewed positively? Negatively? Why?
9. Has there been historical conflict as a result of these cultural differences or similarities?
10. How has this conflict usually been resolved? Has it been resolved?
11. What else can you or others do to resolve these types of cultural conflicts in a more respectful and peaceful manner?
12. Why do you think the artist Piotr Mlodozieniec of Poland created this image? Why do you think he produced this image exclusively in black and white? How do you think his image prompts greater thinking about the theme of coexistence?

Non-violent Options of Coexistence:

1. What do you see in this image?
2. What is the essential form used artistically?
3. What is the message?
4. Why would the image take this form?
5. What is meant by the title, "Non-violent options of coexistence"?
6. Is this a positive or negative image?

For further examination:

Divide students into groups of four and have each group examine one additional piece of artwork from the posters. They will work together to answer the following questions. Their responses to the questions will be interactively shared with their classmates using poster boards, magic markers, colored pencils, and other art supplies. The visual diagram they construct can be broken into four general categories, these being:

- a. a description of what is seen in the poster
- b. a summary of what is learned about the artist
- c. a group interpretation of what this poster means
- d. an action statement of how this knowledge can be used by students at school, home, work, etc.

Activity 10: Group/Class Projects

1. Diversity in Your Community

Wherever you live, the wide diversity of your community will probably surprise you. It has been said that a culture is the sum total of all the influences that a region has undergone. Undertake an investigative project on cultural diversity in your town or community. Who lives there? How do they live? Articles, interviews, posters or displays can be designed to highlight the range of identities and cultures. How is this diversity demonstrated in music? Reflect on the number of traditions of music and dance you have come across, and the mutual influences they show. Organize a concert or cultural festival that brings together a range of cultural traditions.

2. Human Rights

How are the rights of persons belonging to national, ethnic, religious, linguistic or other minorities guaranteed in your community, nation, region, etc.? How about indigenous people, migrant workers, asylum-seekers and refugees, and people with disabilities? Are their rights promoted and protected? Do you find that your law enforcement officials are adequately educated about human rights? What can you do to improve attitudes or behavior toward minorities?

3. Do-It-Yourself Coexistence Program

Create your own coexistence curriculum or program. This means deciding what the components of coexistence are, how the concept is the same or different from the idea of “tolerance” and how you think the values associated with coexistence can best be transmitted. Scrutinize your textbooks and television programs, newspapers and magazines for stereotyping, and assumptions about nationalities and ethnic groups. What are coexistence priorities for your town, country, or region? What are the “conflict issues” and how might they be solved?

4. No to Violence

How does violence come into a community, school, or home, and how can it be stopped? Examine the dynamics of coexistence and intolerance through dialogue and problem solving. How do you imagine peaceful coexistence among diverse individuals and groups? What makes it work, and what undermines it?

5. Ecological Diversity and Human Diversity

Every community is based on interdependence. Like the plants and animals, we could not survive if we were all the same. What are some examples of this truth drawn from daily life where you live? What are concrete examples of how a culture of peace and tolerance can promote environmental preservation? Consider starting a project that addresses this issue.

6. Sports and Tolerance

Do sports events foster coexistence, camaraderie, antagonisms, jealousies or hatreds—or is it just a game? What are the possible links between sports and intolerance (such as exclusion of those unable to compete, chauvinism and violence), and how may these be remedied? Can violence ever be healthy in this arena? Would sports events succeed if both sides exchanged half of their players in the middle of the game? The Chinese under early Maoism used to arrange sports events in this fashion so there would be “no winner.” How is winning important, and how does it relate to enmity, even hatred?