

The Israel-Palestine Conflict

Searching for a Just Peace



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Foreword

Preface

The Israel-Palestine conflict is one of the most controversial issues in our contemporary world. This unit approaches the conflict through the vehicle of narrative constructed through the judicious use of facts and perspectives. The unit materials include a broad spectrum of resources that will produce multiple narratives based on individual perspectives.

The unit, which was initiated by the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) Representative Assembly, closes with a critical thinking exercise that asks students to identify the obstacles to peace and write their own narrative about the conflict.

This unit contains a variety of lesson activities, resources, and student assignments. While this is not an exhaustive compilation of materials on the Middle East, it is also recognized that there may be too much material here for a teacher to use in any given year. Teachers should feel free to pick and choose what will work for them and their students, and to adapt lessons based on the learning needs of students in their class.

There are some key concepts and skills used throughout the unit (see appendices for full documents and reference sources) that will be helpful to keep at the forefront of all the lessons in this unit.

1. Addressing controversial issues in the classroom

Students need to develop the skills and tools to help them make sense of a complex and confusing world. The lessons in this unit offer them opportunities to practise identifying issues, separating facts from opinions, recognizing manipulative arguments and assumptions, and understanding that the *issue* should be controversial, not the *people* tackling it.

2. Cautions and guidelines when working with bias, point of view, and critical thinking

All of us, even teachers, have biases. Identifying and working to mitigate biases is aided through the presentation of a variety of materials, points of view, and “what about” questions.

The objective is to offer a learning resource that does not inherently prejudice the students' thinking. We should encourage students to avoid simple answers to complex questions. We can do this by challenging “it was inevitable” thinking, translating statistics into people, distinguishing between reliable and questionable source material, and consciously creating a safe learning environment.

3. Engaging in courageous conversations

Teachers are asked to introduce students to new ways of engaging in discussion involving complex and controversial issues. There are five parts to engaging successfully in a courageous conversation:

- Be open to new information that challenges pre-learning or knowledge.
- Stay in the moment of the conversation.
- Actively listen to the other person.
- Exhibit trust and respect for differing views.
- Don't expect to wrap things up neatly.

4. Using the Social Justice Lens

The BCTF has outlined the four components to social justice action: **access, agency, advocacy, and solidarity action**. These components differentiate social justice activities from charity or social service work, as they engage people in transformative practices that endeavour to bring about systemic change in both institutions and civil society. For a backgrounder on the BCTF Social Justice Lens, see Appendix 3: A Social Justice Lens: A Teaching Resource Guide.

Lesson 1: Bias, fact, perspective, narrative, and your truth

Background

This lesson will introduce students to a process that allows engagement in complex and divisive issues using the method outlined by Dr. Samia Shoman in her article, “Independence or Catastrophe? Teaching Palestine through multiple narratives,” from *Rethinking Schools*, vol. 8, no. 4, summer 2014 (www.rethinkingschools.org/archive/28_04/28_04_shoman.shtml). It is recommended that teachers read this article before teaching the lesson and is included as Appendix 2.

Before students tackle the specificities and complexities of the Israel-Palestine conflict, it will be useful to give them opportunities to work with documents that contain bias. This will help them to recognize it and reimagine ways to portray the facts in narratives that convey their own truths. The process of identifying and demarcating facts from perspectives and creating their own stories (narratives) from the facts, while consciously weaving in their own perspective, will be explored and practised in this lesson.

Objective

To help students gain an understanding of how bias is transmitted, and to give them an opportunity to create narratives that—if not completely free from bias—are self-aware of the biases held.

Big ideas

- Apply critical thinking skills to a range of social justice issues, situations, and topics.
- Assess how belief systems can affect perspectives and decisions in relation to social justice issues.
- Conduct a self-assessment of attitudes and behaviours related to social justice.
- Demonstrate attributes and behaviours that promote social justice, including the following:
 - recognizing injustice
 - being fair-minded
 - embracing diversity
 - empathizing
 - taking action.

Lesson activities

Part One: Recognizing bias in language

1. Show students the following pairs of words:

rainforest/jungle	speedy/breakneck
seamstress/tailor	conservative/hidebound
multitudes/hoards	vigilant/watchful

Have them discuss the meaning of each pair in partners, small groups, or with the whole class. Draw the conclusion that while technically both words in each pair have the same meaning, one word evokes a very different feeling, atmosphere, or image from the other. Depending on our purpose, our choice of words will impact the message being received by the listener or reader.

- a. Click on the article “Why that word?” by the 21st Century Information Fluency Project (www.21cif.com/wsi/bias_training.html). Go through the text as a whole class. Discuss points raised as you go, and follow up with a teacher-led, whole-class discussion on the manipulative uses of language.

Part Two: Fact, perspective, narrative, your truth

1. Show students the following words: **fact**, **perspective**, **narrative**, and **your truth**. Ask them to brainstorm definitions for each word/phrase, share their ideas with the class, and compare to the following descriptions. Were there any discrepancies? If so, what were they?

Fact	Information that can be independently verified; data that is generally accepted as reliable.
Perspective	A particular attitude toward or way of thinking about something; point of view.
Narrative	The stories we tell and/or believe to explain how a set of facts or events are connected to each other. Our perspective underlies the narratives we tell.
Your truth	Something every person creates for oneself; an interpretation of facts based on one’s own perspective.

Excerpted from “Independence or Catastrophe? Teaching Palestine through multiple narratives” by Dr. Samia Shoman, *Rethinking Schools*, vol. 28, no. 4, summer 2014 (www.rethinkingschools.org/archive/28_04/28_04_shoman.shtml) Appendix 2.

2. Using the facts to create a narrative, complete the following tasks:
 - a. Ask students individually to create a fact list, or hand out the following fact list sample for the students to work with.
 - b. Once the fact list (no more than ten facts) has been written, students should share their lists with another student who will turn the facts into a short narrative (story) that expresses a particular point of view and may have a definite bias. Students can embellish, but cannot change the basic facts. Once writing has been completed, students should give back the list with the story and discuss where the story differentiated from the author’s point of view and truth.

Sample fact list

- A 21-year-old man was walking on Maple Street at 10:00 p.m.
- A couple, aged 63 and 60, were walking along Maple Street at the same time.
- They passed each other around 10:05 p.m., the couple heading east and the 21-year-old heading west.
- Two- to three-minutes later, the couple was attacked from behind and pushed to the ground.
- The couple’s wallet and purse were stolen.
- The police arrested the 21-year-old man as a suspect.

If the sample list is being used, have students write their individual narrative, share it with a partner, and see where the stories differ.

3. Follow with a whole-class discussion framed around the following questions:
 - How were the facts shaped to create a point of view for the narrative?
 - What were the embellishments?
 - Why were they used?
 - What words (if any) were changed and why?
 - Were there different truths that emerged?
4. Hand out the partially completed **Facts, perspective, narrative, and your truth** worksheet on the Japanese Internment Camps in BC (see Appendix 4). Walk the students through the worksheet and highlight the differences between fact and perspective. Discuss the printed narratives. Ask your students, “Could there be other narratives?”
5. Have students complete the **Your truth** section of the **Fact, perspective, narrative, and your truth** handout. Once completed, have students respond to the following questions either in writing or orally in pairs.
 - a. Was there anything that made you feel uncomfortable about this assignment?
 - b. Do you think others in your class would feel uncomfortable about this assignment?

In small groups, have students discuss the parts of their responses they feel comfortable sharing. Debrief as a large group.

Assessment for Lesson 1

Have students complete a three-minute write* using the following statement as a prompt: “Analyzing a document for how bias and point of view affect the narrative is...”

The written piece is collected by the teacher and read, allowing the teacher a window into the students’ thinking. If graded at all, it simply receives a completion mark.

*A three-minute write is an opportunity for students to disclose their feelings, questions, and related thoughts on an issue. The time allotted is flexible. It should only be long enough to push the students to complete the task. The writing is meant to be informal and free-flowing.

Lesson 2: Geography of Israel-Palestine

Background

Many students may not be sure exactly where or what the Middle East, Israel, Palestine, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, or the Occupied Territories are. This lesson locates the geographic territories under discussion.

Objective

To give students a sense of the human and physical geography of the Middle East.

Big ideas

Use effective research skills including:

- accessing information
- assessing information
- collecting data
- evaluating data
- organizing and presenting information.

Lesson activities

1. The Middle East today—a Google Earth perspective

Zoom in on the Middle East and ask students to comment on what geographic factors they see. Note that geography is more than physical formations.

Start with an overview of the region.

- What features do they see?
- Locate Israel, Tel Aviv, the Gaza, Jerusalem, the Dead Sea, the West Bank, the Mediterranean Sea, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon.
- What are the lines on the hillsides? (terraced farming areas)
- Where are the sources of water for drinking and farming in the area?
 - Where do they start and end?
 - Is this important?
- What is the red line running through the region? (Israeli “security barrier” or Palestinian “wall”—two names for the same thing. Why?)
- Find closer images of the wall/barrier.
 - Where is it built? On the border between the West Bank and Israel, on internationally recognized Israeli territory, or on the claimed Palestinian West Bank?

2. Population/demographics of the area—backgrounder for teachers

There are three major sources for Israeli population figures: Wiki, the Israeli government, and World Factbook. These sources are now all using the Israeli government figures.

Wiki and the Israeli government

Population of Israel: 8,462,000 (December 2015)

- 6,335,000 Jews (74.9%)
- 1,757,000 Palestinian-Israelis (20.7%)
- 350,000 other (4.4%).

World Factbook

Population of Israel: 8,049,314 (July 2014)

- 75% Jewish
- 25% non-Jewish.

For the purpose of these calculations, Israel includes all Jewish settlers living in the West Bank, Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights (Syria), and all Palestinians living in East Jerusalem. They include the Palestinians in East Jerusalem because the Israelis annexed East Jerusalem in 1981. (Note: this annexation has not been recognized by the United Nations, the United States, or Canada.)

Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics

Palestinian population in the Palestinian territories (end of 2014)

- West Bank: 2,790,331
- Gaza: 1,760,037
- **Total: 4,550,368.**

Have students type into a search engine, “population of Israel and Palestine/West Bank/Gaza.” Look at several of the listings.

- Do the population figures differ?
 - Which sources claim which numbers?
 - What is the total number of Jews and Palestinians in Israel?
 - What is the total number of Jews and Palestinians in the Palestinian territories?
 - How many people who are not Israeli, Jewish, or Palestinian live in Israel?
- The current borders of Israel and the Palestinian territories are human constructs. Using the following two sources, look at the changing maps of the area over time. Note the subtle differences between the two sources.
 - www.theguardian.com/world/interactive/2011/sep/14/map-israel-palestinian-territories
 - www.timemaps.com/history/middle-east-1914ad.
 - Using an atlas or online map, compare the geographic size, location, population, and climate (temperatures, average rainfall, etc.) of Israel-Palestine and British Columbia.
 - Compare the size, populations, and locations of Surrey, BC and Gaza. Note the general locations with respect to other municipalities, countries, water boundaries, and transportation routes.
 - Using The World Factbook, compare the health, life expectancy, and economic prosperity of Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza.

Assessment activity for Lesson 2

Ask students to write a narrative that describes the physical, economic, and demographic geography of Israel-Palestine. The description should include discernable facts and perspectives that create a narrative that answers the question, “What does Israel-Palestine look like?”

Assessment scale

1–2 Weak

Little evidence is shown of knowledge of the geographic region and its features. A weak narrative is written with little or no reference to different perspectives. Strong biases could be present with few facts offered to support the biases.

3–4 Average

Some evidence of the geography is used to support the narrative. A narrative is presented that shows some internalization of the facts and perspectives.

5–6 Excellent

An in-depth knowledge of the geographic features of the area is conveyed supporting a strong narrative that has a clear perspective that is fact-based.

Lesson 3: Understanding the history of the Israel-Palestine conflict

Background

Begin this lesson by reminding the class of the cautions, guidelines, and challenges from the preface, and of the potentially biasing role of word choice. Students will research the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and use the **fact, perspective, narrative, your truth** process to make sense of their research.

Objectives

- Understand how words influence perspective.
- Gain a broad understanding of the situation in Israel-Palestine.
- Analyze opposing views in history.
- Analyze causes of social injustice.
- Describe consequences of social injustice.
- Apply systemic analysis to propose solutions to specific cases of social injustice.

Big ideas

- equity and equality
- diversity
- dignity and worth
- human rights
- oppression
- peace.

Describe social injustice based on characteristics including:

- political belief
- race and ethnicity
- religion and faith
- socio-economic status.

Lesson activities

Part One: Revisiting the power of words to create bias

Share the following quote with the students:

...Words are more than they seem; they may possess more than one meaning or have hidden connotations which may change over time and depend on circumstances...it is necessary to examine the meaning of a word or an expression in the context of the conflict, where it may be loaded with different associations and the meanings depend on whom you ask.

Palestinian and Israeli media have adopted terms that suit the needs of journalism but also the needs of their respective sides of the conflict. Words that are regarded as incitement in Israel would be considered patriotic on the Palestinian side, and vice versa. As is commonly the case in actively conflicted regions, one society's terrorist is another's freedom fighter.

None of us are naive, and we all understand that words can only mediate reality, not define it. But words are also powerful, and they play a major role in shaping our consciousness and perceptions. They can inflame the conflict, and may become a weapon more destructive than rockets, tanks, or aircraft. As the proverb says, “life and death are in the power of the tongue.”...there are words that can cause some audiences to simply shut down or stop listening.¹

Once the quote has been read and questions of clarification have been answered, have students work in pairs or triads to decide which of the following words or phrases would most likely be used to support a point of view that could be attributed to a) a Palestinian nationalist or b) a Zionist. How might these words and phrases be used? Is there a more neutral word or phrase that could be used instead?

terrorist	freedom fighter
assassination	targeted killing
security fence	apartheid wall
occupied territories	disputed territories
Palestine	West Bank and Gaza
illegal settlers	Jewish settlers

Have students share their answers with the class. Discuss the impact of the use of these words in news articles. From the geography lesson, students should now be aware that Israel is not only composed of Jews. There are Christians, Palestinians, and other non-Jews living in the country. Therefore, it is often necessary to identify who is actually being referenced when talking about Israelis.

For reference, the students may want to refer to the BBC Academy’s subject guide *Israel and the Palestinians* (www.bbc.co.uk/academy/journalism/subject-guides/israel-and-the-palestinians/article/art20130702112133696) where the above words and phrases are discussed.

Part Two: Historic timeline

Selected dates that give a general representation of the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have been outlined in the short chronology of Israel-Palestine (see Appendix 5). Have students answer the following ten questions from reading the chronology.

1. When did the Zionist immigrants first go to Palestine, and what part of Europe were they from?
2. What was the population of Palestine at the time, and how was it divided by religion?
3. What is Zionism? Do you have to be Jewish to be Zionist? Are all Jews Zionist?
4. When was the Balfour Declaration? Why was it significant?
5. What was happening to the population in Palestine from 1882–1945? In particular, what were the main factors that motivated European-Jewish immigrants to move to Palestine from 1922–1940?
6. How did the Holocaust affect what happened in Palestine after the war?
7. How did the United Nations divide Palestine in 1947?
8. What events happened in 1948 in Israel-Palestine? What name does each side give them? Why?
9. What are the names of the occupied Palestinian territories?
10. What are the social justice issues that arise in Israel-Palestine today?

¹ Taken from: *Use with Care: a reporter’s glossary of loaded language in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict*, by six anonymous Israeli and Palestinian journalists and media experts. (2013). International Press Institute (IPI), Austria. (www.ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/assets/docs/197/150/4d96ac5-55a3396.pdf).

Answer Key

Most of the questions can be answered directly from the external timelines, except for 3, 4, 6, and 10.

3. Zionism is the national movement of Jews and Jewish culture that supports the creation of a Jewish homeland in the territory defined as the land of Israel. You don't have to be Jewish to be a Zionist; there are also Christian Zionists who support a Jewish state or homeland in Palestine. Not all Jews are Zionists either. Some Jews are not in agreement with the idea of a Jewish state in Palestine.
 4. The Balfour Declaration was a letter dated November 2, 1917. It was significant because Great Britain was the major power in the world at that time, and was later mandated by the League of Nations to administer Palestine. This was the first great power to support Zionism.
 6. The Nazi genocide against European Jews provoked tremendous sympathy for Jews who had fled to Palestine and were now demanding a safe place to live. The United States and the Soviet Union both supported the partition of Palestine in 1947 by the United Nations General Assembly, and the subsequent declaration of statehood by Israel in May of 1948. Palestinians and other people in the region felt the West-dominated United Nations was paying its debt to European Jews with other people's land—a people who had nothing to do with the Holocaust.
10. Open-ended question.

Part Three: Researching the causes of the conflict and creating narratives

If the students have not had much practice in demarcating fact from opinion or point of view, this pre-research lesson should be done first. First, the teacher will model with the students how to delineate fact from point of view. Then, using the following excerpts from *The Wall Must Fall* (2007), a CUPE BC publication, students will underline sections that are facts and **highlight** sections that are perspectives. Remind students that opinions can be true, and facts aren't necessarily irrefutable. *The Wall Must Fall*, 2007.

(www.archive.cupe.ca/updir/WallMustFall2007-eng.pdf.) Appendix 6.

Answer key for pre-research guided practice

- Facts are underlined.
- Perspectives are **highlighted**.
- Note: this suggested answer key is also open to discussion.
 - Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, summed up the Palestinian position in *The Jewish Paradox*:
"Why should the Arabs make peace?" he asked. "If I was an Arab leader, I would never make terms with Israel. That is natural: we have taken their country. Sure, God promised it to us, but what does that matter to them? Our God is not theirs. We come from Israel, it's true, but two thousand years ago, and what is that to them? There has been anti-Semitism, the Nazis, Hitler, Auschwitz, but was that their fault? They only see one thing: we came here and stole their country. Why should they accept that?" (page 8).

- In 1949, the Fourth Geneva Convention was passed. Article 49 states: “The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer part of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies.” This Convention was adopted to prevent a repeat of the Nazi Germany settlements in Eastern Europe in the Second World War and was signed by virtually every country in the world, including Israel (page 9).
- Israel continued to control 78 per cent of Palestine until the six-day war in 1967 when Israel now occupied 100 per cent of historic Palestine including the West Bank and Gaza. In response, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted resolutions 242 and 338, calling on Israel to withdraw to its previous borders in exchange for peace (page 9).
- But Israel never withdrew. Instead, it started building settlements in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem on Palestinian land with unprecedented support and financing from the US government. The occupation began in contravention of the Fourth Geneva Convention (page 9).
- Hundreds of thousands of Jews from Israel and around the world poured into the illegal settlements in the Palestinian territories where they were protected by the Israeli army, governed by Israeli law and voted in Israeli elections (page 9).
- After 9/11, Israel depicted its project of occupying Palestinian land as part of the war against terror, portraying the Palestinians as terrorists. Playing on this destructive racial profiling, in 2003, the Israelis rushed to build a new six-metre-high Separation Wall inside the West Bank. The wall is about 700 kilometres long as it snakes its way through the West Bank. The Berlin Wall by comparison, was three metres high and 155 kilometers long (page 10).
- The Israelis claimed that they needed the wall for security, that is, to prevent suicide bombers from entering Israel. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled the Wall illegal in 2004. As Amnesty International in its June 7, 2007 report entitled “Enduring Occupation” said: “The Wall is not constructed on Israel’s border with the West Bank (the green line) but right inside the West Bank itself annexing yet more land to Israel” (page 10).
- Dov Weinglass, top advisor to Ariel Sharon explained: “The Gaza disengagement is actually formaldehyde, so that there will not be a political process with the Palestinians. The political process is the establishment of a Palestinian state, the evacuation of settlements, the return of refugees, the partition of Jerusalem. And all that has now been frozen” (page10).
- For the Palestinians, the occupation is a daily grind that dominates all aspects of life in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Israeli activist Jeff Halper calls it “The Matrix of Control,” a massive apparatus of checkpoints, roadblocks, military bases, Jewish-only settlements and by-pass roads that prevent movement by Palestinians in order to protect the illegal settlements (page 14).

- The checkpoints, according to Halper, increasingly resemble and function like International border crossings, yet they are not crossings between Israel and the Palestinian territories but are erected deep in Palestinian territory dividing communities, not nation states (page 14).
- John Dugard, the UN special envoy to Palestine relates:
“The number of checkpoints, including roadblocks, earth mounds and trenches, was 540 in December 2006. These checkpoints divide the West Bank into four distinct areas: the north (Nablus, Jenin and Tulkarem), the centre (Ramallah), the south (Hebron), and East Jerusalem. Within these areas further enclaves have been created by a system of checkpoints and roadblocks. Moreover, highways for the use of Israelis only further fragment the Occupied Palestinian Territory into 10 small cantons or Bantustans. Cities are cut off from each other as a permit is required to travel from one area to another and permits are difficult to obtain” (page 14).
- Desmond Tutu, the renowned Anglican bishop of South Africa, said:
“I’ve been very deeply distressed in my visit to the holy land; it reminded me so much of what happened to us Black people in South Africa. I have seen the humiliation of the Palestinians at checkpoints and roadblocks, suffering like us when young white police officers prevented us from moving about” (page 29).
- Dr. Aruri, a renowned Palestinian intellectual and former member of the Palestinian government, agrees with Dr. Pappé:
“I used to be a supporter of the two-state solution but it is now impossible. In fact, Israel-Palestine is now one state controlled entirely by the Israelis. In this state, Israeli Jews have rights and privileges simply because they are Jewish and meanwhile the Palestinians have virtually no rights. It’s time for one person, one vote, in one democratic state” (page 31).

Lesson project

Create groups of four students for the following research project.

Each group will create a document:

1. outlining the facts of root causes of the ongoing conflict.
2. containing an individual narrative on the causes of the ongoing conflict from each group member created from a common set of facts.
3. listing and evaluating the quality of the resources used.

This document could be a report, a poster with the narratives attached, a blog, or another medium to portray the information learned.

Assessment rubric

	1–2 (weak)	3–4 (average)	5–6 (strong)
Evaluation of resources	<p>Contains a list of resources used, but little evaluative commentary. (e.g., <i>This resource was helpful in that it had a lot of information.</i>)</p>	<p>Contains a list of resources, and most of them have been evaluated as to their bias, utility, and affect on the narrative(s) written. (e.g., <i>This resource was useful to help us understand the importance of the al-Nakba to the Palestinian psyche, but it was biased in favour of the Palestinians and didn't really look at the events from a Jewish perspective.</i>)</p>	<p>Contains a list of resources, and may include additional resources. All resources have been accurately evaluated as to their bias, point of view, utility, and the affect on the narrative(s) written. Evaluation of resources may be contested by group members. (e.g., <i>The timeline was clearly written from the Israeli point of view and most found it useful, but members of the group questioned its utility when they noted that key information was left out, which made it difficult to decide whether to include it in my narrative.</i>)</p>
Causes of the ongoing conflict	<p>Lists some causes, but leaves out many events. Causes are not listed chronologically, or in any other order evident to the reader. It is not clear that the group has differentiated clearly between a cause of the conflict and an event that occurred during the conflict. There is little attempt to evaluate the relative importance of different causal events. (e.g., <i>The Holocaust, the Six Day War, the Arab attack in 1948, etc.</i>)</p>	<p>Lists some causes, but may leave out a few events. Not all causes are listed in a discernible order. Some events are included that aren't causes, but are the resulting actions arising from causes. There is some attempt to assign importance to individual causal events. (e.g., <i>The Balfour Declaration which opened Palestine to increased Jewish settlement was a cause of the conflict between Jews and Arabs.</i>)</p>	<p>All causes are listed, it is clear that the group has decided how they should be listed, and the order is evident. The group has not confused causes with events. The causes listed have been evaluated as to their relative importance to the prolonging and depth of the conflict. (e.g., <i>From most important to least important, the following events caused the Palestinians to attack Israel.</i>)</p>

<p>Narratives Individual group members will receive independent marks for their own narrative (250–300 words).</p>	<p>Narrative is not clearly written, leaves out a number of agreed upon facts presented in the causes section of the project, or presents the facts in a confused way. The narrative doesn't have a discernible point of view or the point of view can't be supported by the facts used. (e.g., <i>There is constant warfare in the Middle East because two groups of people can't get along.</i>)</p>	<p>Narrative is clear and has a point of view that is supported by the facts presented in the causes section of the project, but some facts may be missing or the point of view may not be sustained by all the facts presented. (e.g., <i>The conflict in the Middle East has been so long because the Israelis don't want to give the Palestinians their own country. They are afraid they'll use it as a launch pad to attack Israel.</i>)</p>	<p>Narrative is clearly written, based on the facts outlined in the causes section of the project, and the point of view presented is entirely consistent with the facts presented. (e.g., <i>Zionism, the commitment to a Jewish homeland, began before the Holocaust occurred but was seared into the Israeli psyche because of it. Equally, the Palestinians harbour outrage born from the UN decision to partition their country.</i>)</p>
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Resources for group research

- History 12 texts
- The American Israel Public Affairs Committee. (2010). *The Importance of the Jewish State*. Retrieved from www.aipac.org/-/media/publications/policy-and-politics/aipac-analyses/issue-memos/2010/02/importance_of_the_jewish_state.ashx
- The Jewish Outreach Institute. *Is Zionism Racism and/or Colonialism?* Retrieved from www.bigtentjudaism.org/celebrate-jewish-life/qa/do-jews-have-their-own-country/#is-zionism-racism-andor-colonialism
- The Canada-Palestine Support Network. *Colonialism and the Palestine/Israel Conflict*.
- Abuqudairi, A., Chughtai, A., and Hautefeuille, M. (2014). *Palestinian voices: Life since Nakba*. Retrieved from www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/05/palestinian-voices-life-since-nakba-2014515143919991611.html
- Flick, Deborah. (2002). *Toward Understanding the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*.
- Schram, Paul. *Traditional Narratives: a Distillation*. A side-by-side look at Israel-Palestine history from 1882–1849. Retrieved from www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/narratives.html
- BBC Academy. (February 2013). *Israel and the Palestinians*. Retrieved from www.bbc.co.uk/academy/journalism/article/art20130702112133696
- Online Glossary from the Jewish Virtual Library Retrieved from www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/indexrestore.html
- Online Glossary from the Palestine Solidarity Committee, Seattle. See Appendix B. Retrieved from www.palestineinformation.org/Glossary_of_Terms.pdf
- *Palestine-Israel: The Basic Facts*. Covers the timeline from 1897–2009 from the viewpoint of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign. Retrieved from www.palestinecampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/basic-facts-sheet-jan-2012.pdf

- The Centre of Israel and Jewish Affairs. *Timeline of Middle East Conflict* (1947–2014). Retrieved from www.cija.ca/resource/milestones-in-the-quest-for-peace
- www.cija.ca/resource/core-issues-guide/
- www.ijvcanada.org/israel-palestine-101/.

The groups can either jigsaw the materials or all members of the group can read and discuss all the resources. The teacher can create a package of materials for each group to access from the materials cited above or give the students a bibliographic list.

Lesson 4: Searching for a just peace in the Middle East

Background

Since 1949, the world has been searching for a peace plan between the Israelis and the Palestinians. However, the adjective “just” has not been used in most cases. The Social Justice 12 course should reference peace proposals and plans as a just peace, which might make a difference to the students’ critical thinking.

It is unrealistic to assume that students will be able to do what others have failed to do for 65 years, but students can identify the obstacles to peace, or the issues that must be addressed if a just peace is to be entered into, testing them against the UN Declaration of Human Rights and evaluating the possibilities for peace in light of past efforts and current international positions.

Students may want to read History 12 texts’ previous attempts to arrive at a peace settlement, deciding for themselves whether these plans would be just or not. (See, Oslo Accords, Camp David Accords).

Objectives

- Apply the principles of international human rights to the conflict in the Middle East.
- Articulate what a future just peace settlement might look like.

Big ideas

- Understand concepts and terminology of social justice including human rights, oppression, and a just peace.
- Apply critical thinking skills to a range of social justice issues, situations, and topics.
- Demonstrate attributes and behaviours that promote social justice, including recognizing justice, being fair-minded, embracing diversity, empathizing, and taking action.
- Apply systemic analysis to propose solutions to specific cases of social injustice.

Lesson activities

Part One: The obstacles to a just peace

1. Hand out Issues Facing a Just Israel-Palestine Peace (see Appendix 7). Have students describe what is in the left-hand column and make brief, point-form notes about each item that will help them identify what the main or contentious points are in the right hand column. They may help each other with this. Some items may have nothing beside them at this point, and that is all right, as the next steps will help them fill in their knowledge gaps. The aim is to have students understand why each item is an issue by the end of this lesson.
2. Have students do more research on the issues by going to the following sources:
 - Jewish Virtual Library. *Israel’s Liberal Democracy*.
www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/talking/36_liberal.html
 - Jewish Virtual Library. *The Racist Accusation that Israel is an Apartheid State*.
www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/talking/51_apartheid.html
 - The Institute for Middle East Understanding. *Is Israel an Apartheid State?*
www.imeu.org/article/is-israel-an-apartheid-state?

- Abuqudairi, A., Chughtai, A., and Hautefeuille, M. (2014). *Palestinian voices: Life since Nakba*. Retrieved from www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/05/palestinian-voices-life-since-nakba-2014515143919991611.html
- Jewish Voice for Peace. www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org/
- BBC History of Middle-East peace talks. (July 29, 2013). *Middle East Peace Talks: Where they stand: Obstacles to peace*. Retrieved from www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-11138790
- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=KsJI51_1dhYhttps://](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KsJI51_1dhY)
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=ngFYOLOkmal

Part Two: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

1. Hand out a copy of *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)*. As the students read through the document, they should circle articles that they think might be foundational in a just peace plan for Palestine and Israel.
www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf
2. Have students work in pairs, and using the chart template Key Issues for a Just Peace (see Appendix 8) identify the issue or topic that needs to be addressed in order to find a route to a just peace in the Middle East, the UN Declaration article most closely linked, the Israeli and Palestinian perspectives on the issue/topic, and possible routes that might be used to settle the issue.
Note: if students think there are more than six key issues for a just peace, they may add them to the template. They do not need to have six key issues.
3. Have students choose one article from the UDHR as it applies to the situation in Israel-Palestine and brainstorm ways they might help support that particular article by taking actions in their own community. They might create an online petition, letter-writing campaign, etc.

Part Three: A final narrative—the student’s truth

1. Present the students with the following three quotes. Ask them how such opposing views can be viable.
 - Henry Seigman, head of the Jewish American Congress (1978–1994), wrote in *The August 2007 London Review of Books*: “The Middle East peace process may well be the most spectacular deception in modern diplomatic history. Israel’s interest in a peace process has been a fiction that has served primarily as a cover for the systematic confiscation of Palestinian land.”
 - Dennis Prager, American columnist and talk show host created a YouTube video in 2014 on the Middle East conflict where he said about the conflict, “It is the easiest conflict to explain. One side wants the other side dead...The Arab states went to Khartoum Sudan and announced their three No’s: No recognition, no peace, no negotiation.”
 - “There are already enough Palestinians who are saying that it’s too late already—that these settlements have done enough damage to prevent a viable, contiguous Palestinian

state...I'm getting to the borderline, to the edge of saying it's no longer possible.”
Palestinian Authority (P.A.) spokeswoman Hanan Ashrawi (quoted in New Republic,
March 10, 2013).

Seigman, Ashrawi, and Prager believe their words to be true. They have created their own narrative based on facts, perspective, and points of view.

2. Each student should write a final narrative outlining her or his understanding of the conflict between Israel and Palestine. Before writing their narrative, students should list the facts they are using to create their narrative and the perspectives that come with those facts. Then the students should write a narrative from the facts and perspectives, stating their truth: that is, what they believe to be true about the Israel-Palestine conflict and the obstacles that exist to achieving a just peace.

Independence or Catastrophe?

http://www.rethinkingschools.org/archive/28_04/28_04_shoman.shtml

Teaching Palestine through multiple narratives

By Samia Shoman [Purchase a PDF of this article](#)



Left: The Palmach, part of the Hagana underground Zionist paramilitary organization, arriving in Palestine, July 1947.

Right: Palestinian refugees being trucked out of their village, circa 1948.

Long before I was born in 1975, the course of my life had been drastically altered by history. When David Ben-Gurion declared the creation and independence of the state of Israel on May 14, 1948, my identity as a Palestinian was shaped, along with the history of this region. Throughout my life, I have borne witness to and experienced the ways this day in history changed not only my life, but also the lives of millions of Palestinians and Jews all over the world.

My most recent trip to the region was in July 2013. As always, I felt saddened and overwhelmed as I reflected on what the events of 1948 had caused: an institutionalized system of oppression and apartheid in what some believe is historic Palestine and others see as Israel. This difference in perspective and personal truth is among the many factors that have kept the conflict ongoing into its 66th year.

In my teaching, I use an approach that exposes students to the idea that Palestinians and Israelis have different narratives about the same historical events. The approach encourages critical thinking and allows students the space and opportunity to decide what they think for themselves. At least in my district, it is an approach that has enabled me to build support among a broad range of parents, students, and Middle East scholars—even when I have been challenged by community groups questioning my intentions and curriculum because I am a Palestinian American who teaches the conflict in my contemporary world studies class.

Teaching the conflict takes courage. I write this article in hopes of encouraging teachers who are committed to social justice to take on the challenge. In this context, social justice means exposing students to Palestinian narratives alongside the Zionist narratives that often dominate textbooks. I use the term Zionism and teach it explicitly to my students. Zionism is the support of an exclusively Jewish state in Israel, along with the land that it claims should be part of Greater Israel. An important distinction to make is that not all Jews or Israelis are Zionists, and there are non-Jewish Zionists.

A Framework for Critical Thinking

Before delving into the history of the conflict and the experiences of the people involved, I spend time developing a theoretical framework built on four concepts: fact, perspective, narrative, and your truth:

FACT: Information that can be independently verified; data that is generally accepted as reliable.

PERSPECTIVE: A particular attitude toward or way of thinking about something; point of view.

NARRATIVE: The stories we tell and/or believe to explain how a set of facts or events are connected to each other. Our perspective underlies the narratives we tell.

YOUR TRUTH: In this unit, we will use “your truth” as something every person creates for oneself—an interpretation of facts based on one’s own perspective.

I teach the students that facts and perspectives inform people's narratives, which all lead to individual truths. Facts are pieces of information, data that are independently verifiable or agreed to by all parties. To take an example from world history, it's a fact that the African continent was almost wholly colonized by European powers during the period from the 1800s through World War I. The dominant European perspective was that their contact with African indigenous populations brought the blessings of civilization and exposure to God to the "dark continent." Rudyard Kipling's poem "The White Man's Burden" is a narrative based on that perspective. The dominant perspective among African peoples viewed the Europeans as invaders bent on stealing their resources and destroying their cultures. Oral histories passed down about the spiritual and military leadership of Nehanda Nyakasikana in Zimbabwe, for example, are narratives based on that perspective.

I make the point that people come to their own "truths" based on their interpretations and memories of historical events. This helps build a space for students to feel safe reflecting on what they have been taught or exposed to in the past, and to be open to new ideas and information. It gives students a framework from which to understand the conflict, instead of one in which they need to choose sides.

This teaching framework is my attempt to address the histories of the groups involved. There are many people who do not see this conflict as having two equal sides, but exploring it in this way helps students make meaning of the history and current reality.

Before applying the fact, perspective, narrative, and your truth framework to Palestine/Israel, I have students practice with other historical examples, often based on a recently completed unit.

War of Independence or Catastrophe?

I anchor my Palestine/Israel unit in the events of 1948, although the historical background starts long before this, with the First Zionist Congress of 1897 and the Balfour Declaration of 1917. Later we backtrack to cover this history; it is important that students understand that Zionist organizations had plans to turn Palestine into a Jewish state long before World War II.

I present the 1948 events as both the Israeli War of Independence and the Palestinian *Nakba* (*nakba* is Arabic for catastrophe). It is through the events of 1948 that students get their most intimate understanding of how different narratives determine what people see as the truth. For example, my students learn that a Palestinian student in the West Bank or Gaza and an Israeli student in Israel will learn different stories about what happened in 1948. What those students learn shapes their beliefs about the legitimacy of the state of Israel. It is through this lesson that my students begin to grasp the idea of multiple and competing narratives as they read, watch, critique, and analyze text and video footage of things that happened in 1948 from different perspectives. As students work their way through the history, they begin to develop their own truth about what happened.

I ask the students to analyze a series of documents about 1948, including primary source accounts, secondary texts, maps, and photos (see [Resources](#)). I set it up as a jigsaw activity:

Students work in small groups on one set of documents at a time, then trade them in for another set. The document sets cover the following:

- A. Jewish and Palestinian narratives about what happened in 1948 (War of Independence and Al-Nakba)
- B. The Deir Yassin Massacre
- C. Israeli Declaration of Independence
- D. Palestinian Refugees
- E. Jewish Immigration to Israel

The first document contains two narratives of 1948, one from an Israeli perspective and one from a Palestinian perspective (“Learning Each Other’s Historical Narrative: Palestinian and Israeli” from the Peace Research Institute in the Middle East). The narratives explain that clashes between Palestinians and Jews began quickly after U.N. Resolution 181 to partition Palestine was passed, and continued until an official war broke out on May 15, 1948, after Arab armies entered the newly declared state of Israel.

The Israeli narrative includes the following excerpts:

The war that began on Nov. 29, 1947, is known as the War of Independence because it resulted in the land of Israel, in spite of the fact that at the beginning local Arabs and then armies from Arab countries tried to prevent it. Local Arab troops and volunteers attacked isolated Jewish communities, Jews in cities with mixed populations, and the roads. They also employed terror tactics—all Jewish people, settlements, and property were considered legitimate targets. . . .

During the first stages of the war, Arab residents began leaving their communities in the land of Israel. The first were those who were well-off economically. The result was a significant weakening of the entire Arab community. . . . Most of the Jewish military and civilian leaders in the land welcomed the flight of the Arabs for political reasons (so that the future Jewish state would include as small an Arab minority as possible) and for military reasons (to distance a hostile population from the field of battle). Hagana [Zionist defense] forces began to deport Arabs. However, not all Arabs were deported and there were no high-level political orders to do so, although military commanders were given freedom to act as they saw fit. Thus the flight was due to deporting and frightening Arabs and because of their own fears without regard to Israeli actions. During the course of the war about 370 Arab villages were destroyed.

The Palestinian narrative includes the following excerpts:

On Nov. 29, 1947, the U.N. General Assembly passed Resolution 181, which called for the partition of Palestine into two states, Arab and Jewish. This was the start of the countdown for the establishment of the state of Israel on May 15, 1948, and the 1948 Catastrophe, which uprooted and dispersed the Palestinian people. The Catastrophe was: 1. the defeat of the Arab armies in the 1948 Palestine war; 2. their acceptance of the truce; 3. the displacement of most of the Palestinian people from their cities and villages; and 4. the emergence of the refugee problem and the Palestinian diaspora...

The destruction of 418 Palestinian villages inside the green line [pre-1967 Israeli border], concealing the landmarks of Palestinian life, and the massacres against the Palestinian people are the best evidence for the brutality to which the Palestinians were exposed. They were dispersed throughout the world.

Concerning the exodus, the Palestinians did not have the least doubt that it would be for a few days, after which they would return to their houses: “We thought that we would return after one or two weeks. We locked the house and we kept the key, waiting to return.”

Some 1,400,000 people inhabited Palestine in 1948. After the Catastrophe, about 750,000 Palestinians wandered with nowhere to go. Families were separated, the elderly died, children carried younger children, nursing children died of thirst. Suddenly Palestinians found themselves exiled from their homes, in an alien world that regarded them as a different kind of frightening human being—refugees! The international community did not focus on learning the reasons for the refugee problem and finding a remedy. Rather than investigating the reasons for the forced migration and displacement, all they did was to provide them with humanitarian assistance.

I have students answer a series of questions, including:

- What are the main differences between the historical narratives recounted by each side? Give two examples.
- List five established facts referred to in both narratives.
- How can the same historical event be known as a War of Independence and a Catastrophe?

“What are some differences between the two narratives?” I asked one group.

“The Israeli narrative says that lots of Palestinians left on their own, but the Palestinian story says they were forced out.”

“How would you describe the perspective behind the Israeli narrative?” I asked.

“They believe the land is rightfully theirs for taking.”

“They are coming to create Israel because the land was given to them by God.”

“They deserve the land because of what survivors of the Holocaust went through.”

“What about the perspective behind the Palestinian narrative?” I asked.

“The Jews came in and took their land.”

“They were already living there. The Holocaust wasn’t the Palestinians’ fault, so they shouldn’t have their land taken from them.”

I moved on to a group that was struggling to understand the two narratives. “Let’s start with established facts,” I suggested. “What are some facts that both sides agree on?”

“Four hundred and eighteen Palestinian villages got destroyed,” read Jorge.

“Do both narratives agree on that?” I asked.

“The Israeli side says 370,” Alex pointed out.

“So how could you express that as a fact more likely to be accepted by both sides?” I asked.

“How about: At least 370 Palestinian villages were destroyed,” suggested Elizabeth.

The group agreed that would work and moved on to find other facts.

The documents on Palestinian refugees include photographs and this excerpt:

A man from the Nahr Al-Bared refugee camp in Lebanon recalls what happened to his small daughter: I had a daughter—she was 3½ years old, and was separated from her mother during the fighting. Some people told me they had seen her going toward the Druze village of Yarka, so I went to look for her. I searched until morning but could not find her. In the morning I went up to Yarka. Some children played in the courtyard. I saw my daughter standing in front of a boy who was eating a piece of bread. She was hungry and asked the boy: ‘Give me a piece.’ The boy did not pay any attention to her. I came up behind her, hugged and cradled her in my arms. I couldn’t utter a word because of my tears. In just 12 hours our condition changed from honor to humiliation (Sayigh, p. 105).

Students worked in groups to respond to the questions attached to each document set. As I walked around the room, I heard a range of student comments:

“This whole situation is messed up.”

“How come people can’t just live peacefully together?”

“It’s so sad. What happened to the Palestinians who left their homes?”

“I don’t know if this can ever be overcome.”

The students had a hard time reconciling the experiences of Jewish people during the Holocaust—and the horror and sadness they had shared as we studied it during our World War II unit—with what they were learning about the Nakba. One of the most common questions students asked throughout the entire unit, often out loud to the entire class, was “How could Jews treat Palestinians without dignity or humanity after what they had experienced?”

When students raised this, I let them engage in discussion with one another and facilitated rather than answered, because I have no answer and do not think there is a single answer. It was an opportunity for students to dig deep on an emotional, academic, and critical thinking level to synthesize historical knowledge with their own perspectives on human behavior.

Students were actively engaged in text analysis and looking at pictures and maps, calling me over for clarification and discussion. They asked me if my family had to flee in 1948 or if I know anyone who did. I explained that my parents were from a village near Jerusalem, were young children in 1948, and were relatively safe; but that my husband's parents were forced to flee to Jordan, where my husband was born.

Students stayed after class, came in at lunch, and hung out after school because they wanted to discuss the situation. My students always have a heightened interest in this unit because it is current, because I have witnessed it firsthand and can share stories, and most of all because it is wrought with human emotion, differing realities, and seems never-ending. This past year the level of engagement was exceptionally high. Perhaps that was because I had Palestinian, Arab, and Jewish students in class together.

To wrap up the document analysis, I asked the students to predict some of the results of 1948 for Palestinians and for Jews in Israel. What might happen next? How might different people have felt? The result was a T-chart. Students wrote:

- Palestinians would be unhappy their homeland was taken away.
- Palestinians would demand changes and want more land, continue to retaliate, and be scared because of the massacres and violence.
- Jews would be happy that their historical homeland became theirs officially.
- Jews would be happy about no more discrimination.
- Jews would justify their actions with their spiritual connections to the land.

After the document analysis, I asked students to apply the framework and their historical understanding to designing a fact, perspective, narrative, and your truth poster for 1948. I had students number off by twos and assigned them to either the War of Independence or the Nakba. As with all student work, there were differing depths of understanding reflected in what students turned in. A high-performing student's work on Israel's Independence included the following excerpts:

FACT: The Jewish and Arab people fought a war against each other after tension arose between the two. In 1948, Israel was formed and gained its independence. After the creation of Israel, the Jewish immigration rate increased.

PERSPECTIVE: The Jewish people believed they had a "natural and historic" right to Palestinian land due to their religious history. Once they gained control of Israel, any Palestinian resistance was seen as a threat that must be dealt with because Arabs were trying to interrupt the land that rightfully belonged to the Jews.

NARRATIVE: Jews were tortured and unaccepted in Europe during the time of the Holocaust. After the Holocaust, Jews were displaced and not united with one another. They saw hope in a land that was full of their history. Families of all ages packed up their belongings and began the journey to Palestine in hopes of settling into new homes.

YOUR TRUTH: Even though the Jews needed a stable home after the devastation they had been put through in Europe, I believe that they didn't have the right to completely take over land that belonged to another group of people. The Jews should have made a civil compromise with the Arabs before heading to war and pushing them out of their own homes.

In contrast, a hardworking and engaged student with low literacy skills wrote the following about the Nakba:

FACT: Palestinian villages were erased, although the exact number is disputed. After Israel was created, Arab armies invaded. Palestinians ran away from their homes and had to go to refugee camps.

PERSPECTIVE: The Israeli "independence" is nothing but a catastrophe for us.

NARRATIVE: The Jews made us go to refugee camps and we attacked their villages. Also, more than 300 of our villages were taken over. They came and took our land, killed, and violated rights. We are stuck living in poorly set up camps while they are sleeping in our homes.

YOUR TRUTH: I know that Jews needed a place to stay and the only place they wanted to go was Palestine because it was their birthplace but it was kind of mean of them to go to Palestine and just kick out the Palestinian people because what the Jews went through before was now happening to Palestinians—they had nowhere to go and were living in tents and it was a bad situation for them.

I am fortunate to have six weeks for this unit in a two-year world history cycle, so we continued on to study key historical events and issues. I included the First Zionist Congress, the Balfour Declaration, the 1967 and 1973 wars; the first and second *Intifadas* and other Palestinian resistance efforts; the Oslo Accords and Camp David negotiations; Israel's security apparatus; the building of the separation wall/security barrier; the effects of the occupation on Palestinians and the effects of the conflict on Israelis; 2008–09 events in the Gaza Strip; and recent political, economic, and social developments (e.g., the current Palestinian prisoners' hunger strikes).

The final assessment for the students was participating in a highly structured U.N. conference on solving the conflict based on current facts and the situation on the ground. Never have I seen my students work so hard, become so frustrated by humanity, but be so proud that they were trying to resolve something so difficult and necessary.

To give students a chance to share their personal reactions to our study, after the U.N. conference I asked them to use any medium of their choice (art, poetry, video, collage) to represent what they felt or believed about what they learned during the unit. It could be focused on one particular piece of content, such as the wall/security barrier, or on the entire conflict. The work students turned in was diverse and creative.

Teaching Palestine Is Possible

The impact of May 14, 1948, stretches far beyond those directly affected or tied to the region by ancestry and/or religion. The events of that year set off one of the longest conflicts between two peoples in modern world history, making it an educational obligation to those of us teaching contemporary world studies and modern world history. Yet this responsibility has largely been unfulfilled. It's true that the typhoon of controversy that swirls around this issue can draw the attention of parents and community members to your curriculum and teaching practices, although what you teach the rest of the year is ignored. The possibility of scrutiny and criticism has dissuaded educators from teaching the Palestinian-Israeli conflict for years, or led them to teach a watered-down version that does not reflect all experiences and voices.

But teaching Palestine is both possible and ultimately rewarding. I have seen my students flourish as they think, question, and engage. I feel validated that I have helped instill a sense of urgency and humanity in them. That student engagement, strengthening their ability to draw their own conclusions about arguably the most urgent situation in the world, inspires and motivates me to keep teaching about Palestine. I hope that I never lose my courage.

Resources

- [1948 Document Sets and Questions.](#)
- Adwan, Sami, Dan Bar-On, and Eyal Naveh. 2012. Peace Research Institute in the Middle East. *Side by Side: Parallel Histories of Israel/Palestine*. The New Press.
- Sayigh, Rosemary. 2007. *Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries*. Zed Books.

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A Social Justice Lens



A Teaching Resource Guide

For more information about the Social Justice program at the BCTF, go to www.bctf.ca/SocialJustice.aspx



Using the BCTF social justice lens to focus our work

revised by CASJ, May 2010

The BCTF's Committee for Action on Social Justice (CASJ) has developed a lens that applies social justice and critical theory to all aspects of our professional lives. This tool provides a framework in our union and in our schools to help guide policy, plan actions, and evaluate resources for social change. Social justice theory focuses on equity for all and critical theory requires action and systemic change. These two concepts form the basis of the BCTF social justice lens.

Central to all is a commitment to equity requiring systemic change. Often bandage-type solutions are inadequately used to solve urgent and emerging problems. Our social justice lens was developed to assist us to both zoom in to sharpen our focus, to broaden our perspective, and to develop and expand the scope of our work within the bigger picture. It provides a common language to communicate about our work and ensures that we are moving beyond short-term, immediate reactions. It is applicable to the classroom and to our work within and beyond our own union.

The lens has four distinct interconnecting filters—access, agency, advocacy, and solidarity action. Each represents an aspect of social justice work, and, while we may focus on one filter at a time, the true potential of these filters lies in engaging with all four simultaneously. Participatory democracy, civil

society, transformative practice, and systemic change found on the rotating outer ring of the lens are necessary to achieve the ultimate goal of equity found at the centre of the lens.

Access is the gateway to inclusion and participation. It hinders or enables an individual or group to take part. As teachers, we recognize the inherent socially just nature of the public education system and strongly voice our concerns to ensure that all students have real access to all programs and educational opportunities. Institutions only open to a privileged or select few have a high social injustice quotient. Restricted societies close off opportunities.

Agency means that individuals know their rights. They have the capacity and the ability to voice their concerns and to take actions that create change for the better. Learning how to think critically about the world is a key strategy to develop their agency. In conjunction, a social justice education is imperative for developing socially responsible, democratic participation in a civil society.

Advocacy is a deliberate process of influencing outcomes so that change can occur. It requires a set of skills that allows a person to understand a problem and effect change using varied strategies and tactics. Developing the skills to successfully advocate for oneself or on behalf of

others involves awareness (knowing what's happening), analysis (seeing the different parts, their impact, and the importance to the whole), and action plans (knowing what to do and how to do it). Action plans include a purpose, a message, a way to express the message, and an audience. Advocacy can be done individually or in groups.

Solidarity action refers to working with others to act for the collective betterment. It requires us to recognize injustice, to work across differences to find a common ground, and to achieve equity. Solidarity action requires coalition building within a group and networking with other groups. Examples of skills that help to achieve solidarity action can include empathy, co-operation, coalition building, and effective mediation and conflict-resolution skills.

Participatory democracy, transformative practice, systemic change, and civil society, like the ultimate goal of equity, are to be kept in mind when developing plans to advance access, agency, advocacy, and solidarity action. Invoking these concepts, we challenge the control of elites, whether they are ruling classes in society or the power structures in our work places. We also must look inside to examine how our own privilege affects our values and actions. These are some ways we choose to do socially just work and the means by which we will achieve greater equity.

A social justice lens checklist

by Marianne Neill, CASJ—Peace and Global Education Action Group member

Here is a checklist that you can use to assess whether programs, resources, events, and so forth meet the criteria of the social justice lens. If not, you may want to identify alternatives that do satisfy these criteria. Note that some criteria may not apply to the specific item you are evaluating. A scenario using the social justice lens follows the checklist.

Access

- values a welcoming and inclusive approach to all people equally
- values openness to the ideas and opinions of others as equal participants
- teaches the value of multiple perspectives
- demonstrates respect for democratic processes and civil society
- values community and co-operation
- responsive to all others equally

Agency

- develops understanding of one's right to create change
- encourages belief in one's ability to affect one's own reality
- nurtures action and empowerment of everyone equally
- develops ability to think critically about social problems
- develops leadership skills
- values recognition and respect for the agency of others

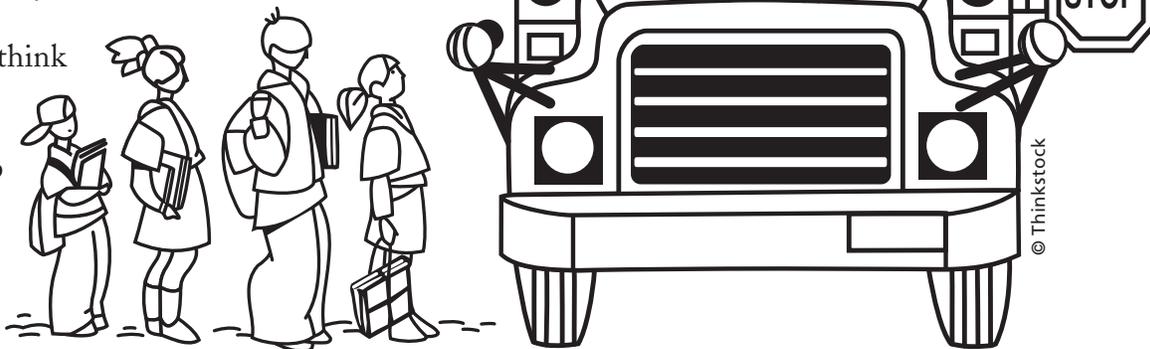
- actively encourages leadership in working towards positive change that benefits everyone
- encourages people to find their own voice
- empowers people
- values participatory democracy
- contributes to the development of ability to participate in the world
- contributes to the development of ability to change the world

Advocacy

- builds skills needed to effect systemic change using various strategies
- develops an understanding of one's position and privilege in society
- develops awareness of social realities
- develops analytical ability
- develops awareness of how to respond to make change
- develops voice and agency to enhance the ability to influence outcomes
- empowers the voice of disenfranchised and minorities

Solidarity action

- promotes transformative work for the betterment of others
- nurtures an understanding that an injury to one is an injury to all
- values co-operation and coalition-building
- works across differences to find common ground
- advocates broad interconnections and common goal-setting and actions
- shows recognition of the strength in unity
- shows effectiveness in mediating and resolving conflict to build alliances
- encourages collaboration with disenfranchised or minorities
- nurtures ability to take action with empathy



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Scenario: Judy's Dilemma

Judy is a busy Grade 10 teacher. Her school is planning to go out to watch the celebration of a major international sporting event. She has concerns because she knows the event includes commercialization and advertising by multinational corporations, and she has concerns about the slogan “win at all costs.” She decides to apply the social justice lens to assist her in making her decision about whether to participate or not.

Access

The general philosophy of the event is an inclusive celebration of human achievement. Anyone could apply to participate, and everyone can go to watch it. Once in attendance, the students will be subject to advertising by the corporate sponsors. One of the sponsoring companies has been the subject of international investigations for murdering labour leaders. Judy has concerns that students will get the message that she and the school condone “winning at all costs” and support multinationals that put their financial profits before human rights.

The principal has been putting a lot of pressure on teachers and students to participate. As the event has been framed in the school, there does not seem to be openness to divergent opinions. Teachers have expressed fears that if they choose not to participate, there will be adverse consequences for them.

Using the checklist, Judy sees that the event is widely accessible, open to all, but isn't supportive of multiple perspectives and doesn't really demonstrate respect for democracy, human rights, and civil society.

Agency

The event sets out to inspire youth to be involved in sports, and to aspire to achieve their dreams. In this way, it does encourage agency and confidence in one's ability to change the world. However, Judy feels that the commercialized aspects of the event send a message to students that excellence can be achieved only by getting corporate sponsorship. She is concerned about the students' ability to critically assess the role of corporate sponsorship in public events. Unless she provides a critical background for her class, the event could have the effect of undermining critical thinking and questioning. The pressure coming from the principal and the lack of consultation with teachers is reducing the likelihood that many teachers will provide students with the critical perspective.

Judy has concerns about the minimal agency students will develop from participating.

Advocacy

The event purports to model co-operation among diverse cultures and groups. However, only the elite are present from the different countries represented. There is no opportunity to see the realities of those not competing and little understanding offered of the sacrifices made to get the elite athletes to this point. The students will be spectators, relegated to the role of cheerleading. They won't have an opportunity to interact with the athletes or analyze the role of sport in various communities. Prior to attending the games, any dissent with the event itself is being stifled through social pressure.

Judy assesses participation in the event as having no opportunity to develop students' advocacy. In fact, just the opposite is occurring. Dissent with participation is being actively discouraged and speaking out is frowned upon.

Solidarity action

The image of athletes coming from all over the world to participate peacefully helps create a sense of hope about making connections across cultures. Athletes are generally competitive with one another, not supportive, although the rare acts of selfless support that occur really stand out because of that. Also, knowing what she does about the human rights abuses and lack of regard for communities of the companies advertising at the event, Judy once again feels that the value of working to change the world for the betterment of others is not primary. No matter what the human rights record of the companies might be, the acceptance of corporate values of high-stakes competition and self-interest are entirely counter to ideas of coalition building, unity, and support for the disenfranchised. Also, the “win at all costs” slogan is antithetical to values of co-operation, collaboration, and attainment of one's personal best.

Judy gives the event a low grade on the potential for solidarity action.

In the end, Judy feels this event does not pass the social justice litmus test. She tells the principal she will not participate in the event. She provides opportunities for her students to gain a critical perspective before they attend, and gives them as much freedom as possible with regard to attendance and expressing dissent.

How socially just is my classroom?

by Sasha Wiley-Shaw, CASJ—Status of Women Action Group member

When I look at my classroom through my teacher’s eyes, I see a wide variety of individual circumstances, learning needs, and skills. On the surface, it may appear to be just an average

classroom; however, when I look at it applying the social justice lens, a range of challenges and opportunities emerge, and by addressing the question of how socially just my classroom is, I can provide a richer learning

environment that fuels positive social change.

Here, divided into the areas of the lens, are issues I would look at in my classroom.

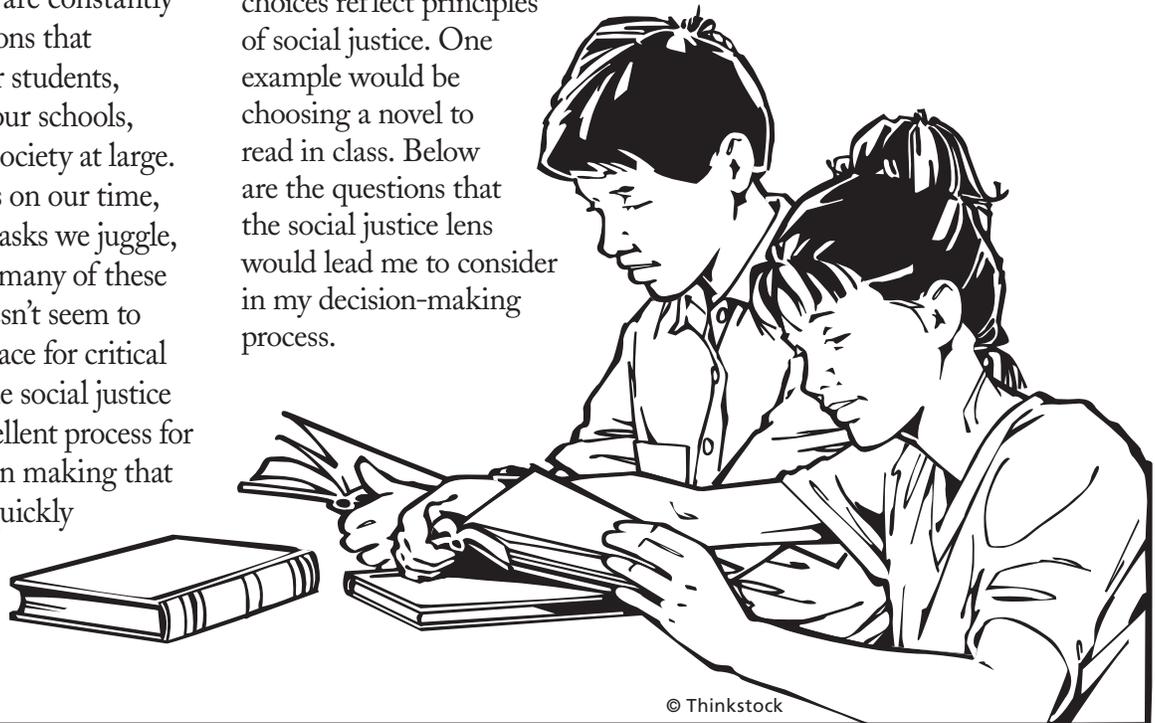
ACCESS	AGENCY
<p>Do all students have access to learning and success in my classroom?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Do I use multiple presentation methods to try to address the needs of different learning styles or challenges? •Do all students have access to the supplies they are expected to use in my classroom? •Are there students who have life situations that may get in the way of their ability to live up to my homework policies or standards? •Do all students feel safe and supported in asking questions when they need clarification or don’t understand? 	<p>Is my classroom a place where students see themselves and are treated as individuals with the right and ability to cause change?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Do students have a genuine voice that is heard when it comes to setting classroom policies? •Do I make sure to include stories of individuals in my teaching materials so that my students are exposed to models of personal agency? •Do I support my students in finding effective ways to take action, whether they encounter injustice in society or chafe against a non-progressive school policy? •Do I explicitly value and emphasize the importance of students developing their own opinions on issues?
SOLIDARITY ACTION	ADVOCACY
<p>Do we study issues of social injustice with an eye to transforming hierarchies and eliminating inequity?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •When generalizations are made that presume levels of affluence or membership in dominant groups, do I problematize them and encourage students to consider how things might be different for other groups or in other places? •When students experience problems or injustice, do I guide them to make connections to global issues or systems? •Do I actively undertake to help students understand the power of collective action? •Do we examine hierarchies and power structures with regard to how they privilege certain groups or world views over others? •Do we deconstruct inequality and view it as systemic rather than accidental or individually constructed? 	<p>Do students gain the skills needed to improve the lived experiences of others?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Do I have classroom policies that promote cooperation and students supporting one another? •Do I explicitly emphasize empathy skills and encourage students to imagine themselves in someone else’s position? •Do students have the framework necessary to understand individual hardship as resulting from systemic inequity? •Are students aware of legal frameworks and decision-making processes that shape our society and are they aware of how to have a voice in them? •Are students informed about political organizations, advocacy groups, and NGOs through which they can help work for social change?

Selecting resources using the social justice lens

by *Sasha Wiley-Shaw, CASJ—Status of Women Action Group member*

As teachers, we are constantly making decisions that affect ourselves, our students, and more broadly, our schools, communities, and society at large. Given the demands on our time, the multiplicity of tasks we juggle, and the urgency of many of these decisions, there doesn't seem to be much time or space for critical analysis. For me, the social justice lens sets out an excellent process for analysis and decision making that can be done quite quickly and helps me ensure that my

choices reflect principles of social justice. One example would be choosing a novel to read in class. Below are the questions that the social justice lens would lead me to consider in my decision-making process.



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ACCESS

- Does the story include characters from diverse backgrounds so that students who don't belong to the dominant group will be able to connect and/or feel represented?
- Are there assumptions about cultural background knowledge that may impede understanding for students with different backgrounds?
- Are there representations of individuals or groups that rely on generalizations or stereotypes that could make students feel alienated or marginalized?

AGENCY

- Does the story and its representations of individuals and groups reinforce existing hierarchies or social inequities, such as showing minority groups in disempowered roles?
- Does the story show proactive problem solving or activism, as opposed to resignation to the status quo?
- Are characters able to affect change in their individual lives, community, and/or society?
- Is diversity or difference depicted as a liability to be overcome or as a strength/ opportunity?

SOLIDARITY ACTION

- Does the novel interrogate or highlight existing prejudices, stereotypes, or social injustices?
- Do characters prompt/promote student empathy for those who are different from themselves?
- Are there empowering models of being an ally, such as groups or individuals receiving support from others while still retaining their own voices or dominant groups making space for the voices of minority groups?

ADVOCACY

- Is the novel likely to lead to greater understanding of different groups and their conditions of life?
- Will the events or characters engage students in challenging existing prejudices or preconceptions?
- Does the way problems are solved suggest or imply real life actions that could be taken to oppose or reduce social injustice?
- Will it inspire students to want to take action or become advocates themselves?

How socially just is the practice of democracy in our governance structures?

by Roz Johns, former CASJ—Poverty Action Group member

The concepts of leading from behind, leading from above, top-down organization, top-forward organization, grass-roots organization and election with a prescribed mandate often enter into the debate about how a particular committee or group organizes itself. As new members become involved in an organization, a system for ensuring easy access, the right of participation, support, and networking needs should be clear. How is the type of committee governance chosen? Do decisions

include various perspectives and majority and minority points of view? Is there a sense of inclusion and fairness? How are individual responsibilities assigned? What is the process for follow through? Does the governance structure reflect and meet the needs of the total membership? Socially



just governance structures better ensure inclusion, full representation, and meaningful and responsible participation of all members.

ACCESS	AGENCY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •What mechanisms exist so that everyone understands the mandate of the committee? •How does the committee ensure that available information about a topic is accessible to all? •What structures exist for the inclusion of minority points of view? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •What mechanisms are used so that everyone understands how they can participate in the process and have a voice? For example, round table discussion, Robert's Rules of Order, talking stick. •How does the organization overcome systemic or hierarchical barriers to ensure that all points of view are considered?
SOLIDARITY ACTION	ADVOCACY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •What processes are in place to identify the impact of the systemic change? •What processes are in place to include all members in the outcome? •How does the committee and the work of the committee connect with other committees in the larger organization? •How does the committee connect with the membership? •How does the larger group network with outside agencies? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •What mechanisms are in place to ensure systemic change? •What is the process for considering multiple solutions to a final response/solution? •What mechanisms are in place to ensure that decisions are implemented? •How do committee members participate in promoting the interests of the committee? •How are individual needs met and initiatives given support?

Rethinking fee-run programs in our public schools

by Karen Whyte, CASJ—Peace and Global Education Action Group member

As a music teacher in Victoria, I view with concern the policy of charging students for instruments, music books and supplies, and participation in field trips. I worry that, even with parent-requested fee exemptions, some children may be excluded from the enjoyment of being involved in music programs and trips.

The same applies to participation in sports academies. There is no doubt that boards of education need these academies to help fund other programs. However, implementation of fee-run programs is simply one way of proliferating our present

government's goal of creating a two-tiered system of education based on who can or cannot pay for services. Consider the United Way commercial showing a young boy applying for a job so that he can play hockey. Why not have open access to all programs for all students as is the practice in many other countries? The next Mozart or Henri Richard may be washing dishes late at night to pursue their dream activity during the day, albeit with less energy than a more privileged student.

I decided to consider a proposed secondary school level music trip to Europe through the social justice lens so that I can decide

whether to recommend this to my students or not. The cost for this trip would be \$4,000, of which an unspecified amount could be raised through fundraising. Using the social justice lens, I would ask myself the following questions.



ACCESS	AGENCY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Is this field trip available to all students regardless of their ability to pay or not? •Do students have adequate and accessible opportunities for fundraising for this field trip? •Can fundraising be done with family support or will it be extremely time-consuming for the student, thereby interfering with precious afterschool and weekend family time or activities? •Does the field trip promote acceptance of music from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds or promote ethnocentric based learning? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Will my students see that this is a trip that will benefit them in their learning and view of the world? •Will my students look forward to this trip as a shared experience with many friends? •Will they all have adequate funds available to enjoy the many historic and cultural sites on the trip? •Will they have adequate funding to purchase extra nourishment and personal items as required?
SOLIDARITY ACTION	ADVOCACY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Will my students be able to share their experiences with family and friends upon their return? •Will the trip lead to greater understanding of different cultures and ways of life? Will the trip dispel myths and stereotypes students may have held about other cultures? •Will my students feel inspired to continue in music and other fine arts? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Will my students be able to comfortably communicate with other students and teachers during the trip? •Will my students feel free to express themselves about their own culture while making this trip, or will they feel segregated and unrepresented because of historic and cultural differences?

Water as a social justice issue

by Louise Gonsalvez—CASJ, Status of Women Action Group member

The moral imperative to do what is right and just requires education, advocacy, policy, legislation, and law. Building a social consciousness about water issues is important. Through

education we can build awareness of water issues and establish a better water ethic and morality. We can also educate people so they know they have the right and ability to speak out about water policy.



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ACCESS	AGENCY
<p>How can we ensure that access to free safe drinking water is fundamental to community, government, and institutional practices?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do all people have access to free safe drinking water in your community or are there unfair barriers? • How are water scarcity and distribution issues dealt with in your community? • Does your building provide free safe public drinking water? • Are you willing to confront power structures that promote the privatization and misuse of water? 	<p>How can we educate people that they have the right and the ability to speak out about water use policies and laws?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we address wasteful water consumption practices? • How do we educate people to use public water systems? • Do we know that we are able to voice our views on school, municipal, provincial, national, and/or global water initiatives that can detrimentally or positively influence how water will be used and distributed?
SOLIDARITY ACTION	ADVOCACY
<p>What organizations can we work with to address the issue of water privatization?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are we educating students and colleagues about corporate control of water? • Do we network with agencies that support water conservation, free public drinking water, and who ban the sale of bottled water at their work sites? • Do we work with other organizations, unions, and institutions to exert public pressure against the increasing commodification of water? • Do we participate in protests, public forums, and letter-writing campaigns? • Do we support political parties that support free safe drinking water policies, regulations, and legislation? 	<p>Do students gain the skills needed to improve the lived experiences of others?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we advocate for institutional water policies that support public water and prohibit the sale of bottled water? • Do we write letters to our mayor, municipal councilors, MLA, and MP regarding our concerns about the increasing commodification of our waters? • Do we advocate for those who do not have access to free clean drinking water? • Do we advocate for those who can't afford to pay their water bills? • Do we advocate for water as a public resource in our daily conversations? • Do we advocate for the right to free drinking water and safe air to breathe?

Social justice lens or rose-coloured glasses? What are we using to view our pensions?

by Susan Ruzic, CASJ—Antiracism Action Group member

Teachers who are concerned about social justice issues in their classrooms are often just as concerned about these issues as they pertain to their own lives. Some teachers want to examine how our teachers pension fund is invested and what types of investments our funds are invested in.

Reminding ourselves that social justice is one of the three pillars of the BCTF, it is important to advocate for pension plans that support our beliefs. It is all too easy to adopt a “head in the sand” attitude and continue to accept the status quo. But too often the status quo involves suffering on the part of other people when products are

produced in sweatshops or involve the sale of unhealthy products such as tobacco. In order to have a pension fund that is inclusive of all teachers preferences, we can apply the social justice lens as an evaluative tool of our pension decision-making processes. Below are the questions that the social justice lens would lead me to consider.

ACCESS	AGENCY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Do all teachers have a say in determining how they would like to see their pension funds invested? •Are the documents easy to access so that all teachers may see how their funds are invested? •Are all teachers able to take part in decision making around their pension funds? •Are there pension funds that rely on investments that could make teachers feel alienated, marginalized, and uncomfortable? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Do all teachers feel that their opinions on pensions will be appreciated? •Do we allow diverse opinions as to what people would like to invest, as opposed to resignation to the status quo? •Are teachers aware that their investments could be used to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -manufacture weapons or military machinery -produce tobacco -contribute to systemic human rights’ violations -contribute to severe environmental damage? •Do teachers show concern that their investments are in funds that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -have fair labour practices -have sound corporate governance and meet the targeted actuarial assumption?
SOLIDARITY ACTION	ADVOCACY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Are existing funds interrogated to expose social injustices carried out by certain funds? •Do all parties involved with the pension fund work together to make sure that all voices are heard and that a consensus is reached that will satisfy all groups? •Does the dominant group make space for the voices of minority groups? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Are there ways to inform teachers about the consequences of their pension choices and why they should care? •Is there an opportunity to challenge the current funds to create ones that are acceptable to all? •Does the pensions committee take all teachers’ viewpoints into consideration when discussion about funds allocation takes place? •Are opportunities given to all to meet with the pensions committee to have their input heard?

How socially just is your social justice grant or project?

Use these questions to help you plan your project. Please provide details on how your grant application fits with the social justice lens.

NAME OF PROJECT

ACCESS	AGENCY
<p>How does your local social justice project or grant provide equal access for students and teachers from different schools or grade levels to work together?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • 	<p>How will students and teachers have the opportunity to have input into the scope of the project and determine the product(s) at the local level?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • •
SOLIDARITY ACTION	ADVOCACY
<p>How does the grant/project allow for networking with community groups; coalition building to effect systemic change on this social justice issue at the local level?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • 	<p>How does this grant/project help students and teachers to develop concrete skills to effect change locally and globally? (i.e., personal awareness, analysis of the issue and action)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • •

Our social justice lens as a tool

THEME/IDEA/QUESTION/CONCERN

ACCESS

AGENCY

SOLIDARITY ACTION

ADVOCACY

Name: _____

Fact, perspective, narrative, and your truth

“Everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but not their own facts.” – Daniel Patrick Moynihan

Fact: Something that has really occurred or is actually the case; a truth known by actual observation or authentic testimony, as opposed to what is inferred, guessed, or hypothesized; a product of experience, as distinguished from the conclusions that may be based upon it.

Perspective: A particular attitude toward or way of thinking about something; an individual point of view.

Narrative: The story we tell or believe, in order to explain how a set of facts or events are connected to each other.

Truth: The quality of being true; conformity with fact or reality; an obvious or accepted fact; the character of being, or disposition to be, true to a person, principle, cause. In this unit, we will use “your truth” as something each person creates for themselves—an interpretation of *facts* based on their own *perspective*.

Question: Should the Japanese living on BC’s coast have been interned after the bombing of Pearl Harbour?

Fact(s): (Something that has really occurred or is actually the case.)

- Shortly after Japan bombed Pearl Harbour on December 7, 1941, Japanese-Canadians were removed from the west coast.
- Over 21,000 Japanese-Canadians were forced to leave the “restricted area” and move 100 miles (160 km) inland from the west coast.
- Many men were sent to work in road camps in Ontario and on the BC-Alberta border.
- Small towns in the BC interior became internment quarters mainly for women, children, and the aged.
- Some families agreed to work on sugar beet farms in Alberta and Manitoba where there were labour shortages.
- Those who resisted were incarcerated in a barbed-wire prisoner-of-war camp in Angler, Ontario.
- Their property was confiscated and sold with the proceeds used to pay auctioneers and realtors, and to cover storage and handling fees.
- Unlike prisoners-of-war of enemy nations, Japanese-Canadians were forced to pay for their own internment.

- As World War II was drawing to a close, Japanese-Canadians were strongly encouraged to prove their “loyalty” by “moving east of the Rockies” immediately or by signing papers agreeing to be “repatriated” to Japan when the war was over.
- About 4,000 people, half of them Canadian-born, were exiled in 1946 to Japan.
- No person of Japanese race born in Canada was charged with any act of sabotage or disloyalty during the years of war.
- On April 1, 1949, four years after the war was over, Japanese-Canadians were given full citizenship rights, including the right to vote and the right to return to the west coast.

Perspectives: (A particular attitude toward or way of thinking about something. These perspectives were taken from an article describing the situation at the time.)

- Japanese-Canadians are proud that Japan showed such strength and ingenuity at Pearl Harbour. Japan may win the war.
- Japanese-Canadians are appalled at the attack on Pearl Harbour.
- Japanese aliens and Canadian-born Japanese are loyal to Canada.
- There is a Japanese conspiracy to overthrow British Columbia.
- Many Japanese-Canadians asked to pledge their loyalty and join Canada’s armed forces.
- Canada’s quarrel is with Japan, not the Japanese nationals here or people of Japanese blood.
- Japanese-Americans collaborated in sabotage at Pearl Harbour according to the American secretary of navy.
- Western Command Headquarters in California keep reporting warnings that BC was about to be attacked by Japan.
- Obviously, if the fishing fleet is being impounded, then that proves that the Japanese-Canadians are traitors.
- Japanese-Canadian fishermen willingly co-operated with the roundup and impoundment of their fishing boats because they are loyal to Canada.
- Japanese-Canadians should be fired from their jobs especially on the railroad, in major hotels, and in sawmills.
- We should suspend all Japanese fishing licences, sell the fishing vessels to non-Japanese, prohibit short-wave radios to Japanese aliens, and form a service corps to employ citizens of Japanese ancestry.
- This is all so that the Japanese-Canadian’s property, fishing boats and licences, houses, etc. can be confiscated by Caucasians.
- The United Federal Fisherman’s Union wants all Japanese to be expelled from the fishing industry to keep us safe.
- The Pacific Ocean is safer now because the Americans have entered the war and are patrolling the Pacific coast with naval and air patrols.
- If we intern all the Japanese of military age that will calm down the population and prevent interracial riots and bloodshed.

- The government should block the holding of anti-Japanese demonstrations and parades.
- Public in general was calm, but some self-seeking individuals were deliberately causing trouble.
- If there is any evidence of sabotage or lack of collaboration, then all BC's Japanese should be interned.
- Latin-American countries interned all their Japanese, so they must be dangerous.
- There is a labour shortage in BC's interior; they can be sent there to work.
- It's important for everyone to stay calm and not conduct anti-Japanese demonstrations.
- Japanese-Canadians were thankful for the steps the RCMP had taken to protect them against angry Caucasians.

These perspectives were sourced from Ann Sunahara's book *The Politics of Racism: The Uprooting of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War* (2nd edition, 2000, Ottawa, self published).

Narratives (These narratives came from looking at all the different perspectives above and trying to create at least two stories that explain how different perspectives all fit together.)

There is a Japanese conspiracy to overthrow British Columbia. The 5th column is the population of 20,000 Japanese-Canadians that live near the coast in BC, and they are plotting with Japan's government. This was proven when Japan, without warning, bombed Pearl Harbour with the help of the Japanese living there. The BC coast is defenceless from a sneak attack like Pearl Harbour. In order to protect the citizens of BC, we must move all persons of Japanese origin away from the coast because they are a menace.

Japanese-Canadians are appalled with the attack on Pearl Harbour and to prove their loyalty they assisted in the impoundment and storage of their fishing fleet. The rumours and innuendo that inflate the danger of Japanese-Canadians to British Columbia are fueled by American rumours and a few local individuals who hoped to gain by confiscating the property and fishing licenses of the Japanese community. Most people in BC encourage calm and do not feel the Japanese are a threat.

Your Truth: What do you think at this time?

Short chronology of Israel-Palestine

1882–83	Palestine is part of the Ottoman Empire. First large-scale European Jewish immigration to Palestine, mainly from Russia. Palestinian population is mostly Muslim (85%) but also Christian (10%) and Jewish (5%).
1897	First Zionist Congress convened by Theodore Hertzl in Switzerland. Zionism, a European-Jewish political movement is advocating for a homeland for the Jewish people in Palestine in order to escape oppression and anti-Semitism in Europe.
1917–18	British Foreign Minister Balfour pledges support for establishment of a “Jewish national home in Palestine.” Four hundred years of Ottoman rule in Palestine ended by British conquest.
1922–24	European-Jewish immigration continues mostly from Russia and Poland. Jews now 11% of the population. Britain granted mandate to administer Palestine from the League of Nations. United States Congress passes legislation severely limiting Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe into the United States.
1933	The rise of Nazism and anti-Semitism in Germany generates new wave of Jewish immigration to Palestine, mostly from Germany.
1939–45	World War II and the Holocaust.
1947	The population of Palestine is now Palestinian-Arab 66%, Jewish 33%
	The United Nations partitions Palestine into two states: a Jewish state (56%) and an Arab state (43%). Jerusalem will become an international city (1%). Canada supports the partition.
1948	The British withdraw and hands over Palestine to the United Nations. Israel declares statehood on May 14 and defeats local Palestinian population and Arab armies. Western powers support the new Israeli army. For Jewish-Israelis, this is called the War of Independence. Israel is now 78% of Palestine. Palestinians call this the al-Nakba (catastrophe) because 700,000 Palestinians were driven or fled from their homes and became refugees and many villages were destroyed. Historic Palestine is now divided into Israel, Gaza (under Egyptian control), and the West Bank (under Jordanian control). The Arab state is never formed.
1967	The Six-Day War. Israel defeats Egypt, Syria, and Jordan and occupies Gaza and the West Bank. Israel controls 100% of historic Palestine.
1979	Egypt and Israel sign a comprehensive peace agreement at Camp David in the United States.
1967–1993	Israeli settlements grow in Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem (called the Occupied Palestinian Territories by the United Nations).
1993	Oslo accords are signed between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization. Oslo accords are intended as first step toward Palestinian self-rule and eventual peace agreement. The accords don’t lead to peace. The Israelis

	blame the Palestinians particularly for the rocket fire from Gaza. Palestinian say that Israeli settlements have doubled in the Occupied Territories since the Oslo agreement, making a Palestinian state impossible.
2000	Peace talks sponsored by United States President Bill Clinton at Camp David between Israel and the Palestinian Authority fail. Palestinians launch the second intifada (uprising) to protest the Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank.
2004	Israel builds a fence/wall in West Bank that they call the security fence and the Palestinians call the apartheid wall. Israel says the wall/fence protects against Palestinian terrorism. The Palestinians say that the wall/fence imprisons them and takes more of their land.
2004	The International Court of Justice rules that the fence/wall is illegal.
2005–07	Israel pulls out its 8,000 settlers from Gaza. The Palestinian group Hamas takes power in Gaza. Israel sets up blockade of Gaza.
2008–09	Israel attacks Gaza because it says Hamas rockets coming from Gaza are threatening Israeli citizens and are unacceptable and illegal. Hamas says that it was Israel that broke the truce between them. 1,300 Palestinians and 13 Israelis are killed.
2013–14	New peace discussions between Israel and Palestine Authority sponsored by the United States fail.

Adapted from:

- Canada-Palestine Support Network. (2014, May 10). *Colonialism and the Palestine/Israel conflict*. Retrieved from www.canpalnet.ca/mambo/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=592&Itemid=1
- BBC News. (2013, July 29). *History of Mid-East peace talks*. Retrieved from www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-11103745.

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Distinguishing Facts from Perspective

The following excerpts are taken from [*The Wall Must Fall \(2007\)*](#), a CUPE BC publication. Read the text and underline statements you think are facts and **highlight** statements you think are perspective or point of view.

- Israel's first Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion summed up the Palestinian position in *The Jewish Paradox*:
 "Why should the Arabs make peace?" he asked. "If I was an Arab leader, I would never make terms with Israel. That is natural: we have taken their country. Sure, God promised it to us, but what does that matter to them? Our God is not theirs. We come from Israel, it's true, but two thousand years ago, and what is that to them? There has been anti-Semitism, the Nazis, Hitler, Auschwitz, but was that their fault? They only see one thing: we came here and stole their country. Why should they accept that?" (page 8).
- In 1949, the Fourth Geneva Convention was passed. Article 49 states:
 "The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer part of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies." This Convention was adopted to prevent a repeat of the Nazi Germany settlements in Eastern Europe in the Second World War and was signed by virtually every country in the world, including Israel.

Israel continued to control 78 per cent of Palestine until the six-day war in 1967 when Israel now occupied 100 per cent of historic Palestine including the West Bank and Gaza. In response, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted resolutions 242 and 338, calling on Israel to withdraw to its previous borders in exchange for peace.

But Israel never withdrew. Instead, it started building settlements in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem on Palestinian land with unprecedented support and financing from the US government. The occupation began in contravention of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Hundreds of thousands of Jews from Israel and around the world poured into the illegal settlements in the Palestinian Territories where they were protected by the Israeli army, governed by Israeli law and voted in Israeli elections (page 9).

- After 9/11, Israel depicted its project of occupying Palestinian land as part of the war against terror, portraying the Palestinians as terrorists. Playing on this destructive racial profiling, in 2003, the Israelis rushed to build a new six-metre-high Separation Wall inside the West Bank. The wall is about 700 kilometres long as it snakes its way through the West Bank. The Berlin Wall by comparison, was three metres high and 155 kilometers long.

The Israelis claimed that they needed the wall for security, that is, to prevent suicide bombers from entering Israel. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled the Wall illegal in 2004. As Amnesty International in its June 7, 2007 report entitled "Enduring Occupation" said: "The Wall is not constructed on Israel's border with the West Bank (the green line) but right inside the West Bank itself annexing yet more land to Israel" (page 10).

- Dov Weinglass, top advisor to Ariel Sharon explained:
“The Gaza disengagement is actually formaldehyde, so that there will not be a political process with the Palestinians. The political process is the establishment of a Palestinian state, the evacuation of settlements, the return of refugees, the partition of Jerusalem. And all that has now been frozen” (page 10).
- For the Palestinians, the occupation is a daily grind that dominates all aspects of life in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Israeli activist Jeff Halper calls it “The Matrix of Control,” a massive apparatus of checkpoints, roadblocks, military bases, Jewish-only settlements and bypass roads that prevent movement by Palestinians in order to protect the illegal settlements.

The checkpoints, according to Halper, increasingly resemble and function like International border crossings, yet they are not crossings between Israel and the Palestinian territories but are erected deep in Palestinian territory dividing communities, not nation states.

John Dugard, the UN special envoy to Palestine relates:

“The number of checkpoints, including roadblocks, earth mounds and trenches, was 540 in December 2006. These checkpoints divide the West Bank into four distinct areas: the north (Nablus, Jenin, and Tulkarem), the centre (Ramallah), the south (Hebron), and East Jerusalem. Within these areas further enclaves have been created by a system of checkpoints and roadblocks. Moreover, highways for the use of Israelis only further fragment the Occupied Palestinian Territory into 10 small cantons or Bantustans. Cities are cut off from each other as a permit is required to travel from one area to another and permits are difficult to obtain” (page 14).

- Desmond Tutu, the renowned Anglican bishop of South Africa, said:
“I’ve been very deeply distressed in my visit to the holy land; it reminded me so much of what happened to us Black people in South Africa. I have seen the humiliation of the Palestinians at checkpoints and roadblocks, suffering like us when young white police officers prevented us from moving about” (page 29).
- Dr. Aruri, a renowned Palestinian intellectual and former member of the Palestinian government, agrees with Dr. Pappé:
“I used to be a supporter of the two-state solution but it is now impossible. In fact, Israel-Palestine is now one state controlled entirely by the Israelis. In this state, Israeli Jews have rights and privileges simply because they are Jewish and meanwhile the Palestinians have virtually no rights. It’s time for one person, one vote, in one democratic state” (page 31).

Issues Facing a Just Israel-Palestine Peace

Issue/topic	Main/contentious points
two states/one state	
refugees/right of return	
historic memory (the Holocaust/al-Nakba)	
security of all citizens	
water	
settlements/occupation	
security barrier/wall	
Jerusalem	
other	

Key Issues for a Just Peace

Key issue	UN article	Israeli perspective	Palestinian perspective	Possibilities for a just peace
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				