

An Intro to Reconciliation Lesson Plan and Discussion Guide

Age range: high school and up

Materials needed:

Computer/internet access for students

Goals:

- Determine some general and commonly used definitions for the word reconciliation
- Consider how reconciliation relates to other justice-oriented definitions
- Discuss whether reconciliation is an end goal or a process
- Discuss several different types of reconciliation
- Analyze how large groups of people can work toward reconciliation
- Consider what a personal response to reconciliation could look like
- Create an educational reconciliation tool for young children

Virtual Activity: Ask students to look up “reconciliation” and share the definitions they come up with.

Teacher prompt: here are some common definitions that you can expect to see students find...

- The restoration of friendly relations (assumes that they existed at one point – but you might point out that this is not always the case, esp. with something like race relations)
- The action of making one view or belief compatible with another (you might ask students - who decides which view has to bend to make the beliefs compatible?)
- Making amends
- Coming to a truce
- Restoring a relationship to a harmonious state after a dispute (You might point out that this definition may not be the best to describe reconciliation that needs to happen due to trauma/violence that exists, especially when that trauma is inflicted due to a power imbalance)
- The act of confessing one's sins and performing penance. This is reconciliation in a religious context and is especially prominent in the Catholic Church where confession is seen as a sacrament, which is a grace conferring act
- Restoration to favor – you might point out that this definition may imply a power imbalance. Can we have true reconciliation when there is a power imbalance?

Discussion Questions - pose these questions to students and allow them time to discuss either as a class or in small groups

- What does reconciliation assume?

Teacher prompt: Students may have a variety of answers here, but if they need some guidance, you might hint that it assumes some kind of a broken relationship. It also assumes truth-seeking.

- What does reconciliation require?

Teacher prompt: Students may have a variety of answers here, but if they need guidance, you might hint that it requires two parties ready to re-engage the terms and nature of the relationship, correcting problems where they exist. It requires the two parties to be willing to embrace truth and face facts, even if they aren't easy to process.

- Is reconciliation an end goal or a process?

Teacher prompt - Students may have a variety of answers here. Even some scholars disagree, largely because the concept of reconciliation is so broad. But you might lead students to the thought that when dealing with large groups of people, a process oriented approach may be the better approach since not everyone is ready to reconcile at the same time. As such, you can ask questions like “what kind of progress are we making” not “are we there yet.”

- If the broken relationship is caused by a key fault, does that entity have more responsibility in the reconciliation process?

Teacher prompt -

- How is reconciliation different from forgiveness?

Teacher prompt - Let students respond here, but hopefully they come to a similar conclusion as this: Forgiveness is one-sided and does not mean that the parties have reconciled. Forgiveness may be a part of reconciliation though, especially if the broken relationship is caused by an abuse of power or resulted from a key fault from one party. You might also talk to students about how, while we think of forgiveness as a one time thing, forgiveness may also be process-based and multi-faceted.

- How is reconciliation different from justice? Can two parties be reconciled without justice?

Teacher prompt: This is definitely a deep dive question! Students will likely have a wide variety of answers and may disagree. This is ok! If students struggle to answer this question, you might help them think about reconciliation being a larger pursuit that involves a search for justice.

- What types of relationships in our society need mending?

Teacher prompt - students will have a variety of answers, but some common ones will likely be religious, political, social, racial

Think, Pair, Share

What can be done to get large groups of people to enter back into harmonious relationships with each other?

Teacher prompt: Students will have a wide variety of responses here. But if they struggle to come up with ideas, you might ask students to think about this question on a State level, federal level, personal level, non-profit level, education level.

Virtual Activity:

In small groups, google centers of reconciliation and write down one center that you found.—
Next, locate their mission and share that with the class.

Teacher prompt: Here are two to get you started

- [John Hope Franklin mission](#) - to transform the bitterness and mistrust caused by years of racial division, even violence, into a hopeful future of reconciliation and cooperation for Tulsa and the nation.
- Duke School of Divinity – Center for Reconciliation – pastors and lay people can help churches reconcile with each other and with their communities

Explain to students that these Centers are better places to go for information about reconciliation than a basic google search. (Consider printing out [this worksheet](#) for students on what makes something a reliable source.)

Next, have students google Sites of Conscience -
<https://www.sitesofconscience.org/about-us/about-us/faqs/>

Have students navigate to their FAQs section and read their definition for Transitional justice

“Transitional justice processes are typically set in place following wide-scale human rights violations and conflicts. The memorialization process is fundamental to recovering from trauma and atrocity and thus plays an important role for societies that are undertaking or involved in transitional justice processes. Memorialization is important in various aspects of the transitional justice process, such as establishing the truth about historical events, providing symbolic reparation to victims, and assisting in the long-term building of democracy. . . [M]emory initiatives can unite people across vastly different experiences and perspectives to forge ways to work together in rebuilding the social fabric and commit to lasting peace.”

Ask students to summarize what this paragraph says and answer the question “Can memorial sites help with the larger work of reconciliation? How so?”

Are there other types of symbolic reparations we can talk about?

Teacher prompt: Students may have a variety of answers, but some common ones may include Monuments, sites of memory, memorials

*At the end of the lesson, be sure to let students know that this is a LARGE complex field of study that scholars spend a lot of time thinking about and creating guides for. This lesson just barely scratched the surface, but if students are genuinely interested in these topics, they can study them further at the college level.

Further Activities/Discussions if you have time:

How would you explain reconciliation to a child?

Do a google search for reconciliation books for children. What do you notice?

They're almost all religious books

Why do you think almost all the books for children on the topic of reconciliation are religious?

In a group, talk about how you would go about talking with children about reconciliation. Create an outline as well as several illustrations for a children's book about reconciliation.