War has been described as “the sum of all villainies.” Since recorded history, from the shores of ancient Troy to the jungles of Viet Nam, mankind has been engaged in the act of creating suffering and slaughter in an orchestrated manner, often on a grand scale. The rationales for waging war are many, and the underlying causes are various and complex. War as a theme for history, sociology, psychology, philosophy, and literature has few equals. War is the combination of the horrible and the fascinating. It is man in the act of creating the ugliest of all horrors; killing, and it is also man in the act of creating the hugely romantic notion of the human heroic spirit. It is mankind seen at the extremes.

There was a time in history when the questions of whether war was good or bad, justifiable or not were seldom if ever asked. War was regarded by almost every person as inevitable, even correct. Times have changed to some extent, so that now not only individuals but organized communities around the world have generated a focused and genuine appeal to the world at large. This appeal speaks to the questions of war and its compatibility with and necessity in a civilized, rational world.

The students who fill our classrooms today are seriously concerned by the conditions that make up our often chaotic world environment. These young people are very much troubled by problems of disease, prejudice, availability of opportunity, and world war. Yet, at the same time these very students, naive and impressionable as they are, often have a romantic, distorted sense of what power is and the realities of war. There exists for them a profound sense of confusion. This confusion is caused by conflict between that which might be termed a “Rambo” fascination and a budding moral sense that war is wrong. As teachers we have a unique opportunity and responsibility to provide an education that emphasizes development of insight, values clarification, and critical thinking skills.

The purpose of my unit is not to debate in great detail the absolute evils of, or justification for war. The scope will be small. It is a limited study of war. Examining some of its causes, moods, and possible meanings to individuals. The unit will not be systematic nor all-encompassing but will hopefully be of some use to teachers and students in grades eight through twelve who wish to investigate the nature of war, and man in war.

This investigation will be two-part in structure. The first part of the unit will do some investigation into recent research concerning the motivations behind warfare. Critical discussions will be encouraged throughout this examination. The second part of the unit will be a reading of Stephen Crane’s “The Red Badge of Courage”
and a critical examination of its main ideas and characters, specifically as they relate to our discussion of war.

Students need to know that certain factors common to all wars can be isolated, examined, and understood. Students need to be able to look beneath the passion of rhetoric and behind the symbols to correctly discover the essential truths.

Men have gone to war from a variety of motives: excitement, recognition, security, comfort, dignity, wealth, revenge, adventure, prestige, glory, power, plunder, better lands, higher wages, approval, sadism, escape from problems, boredom, loyalty to other nations, to right a wrong, etc. Whatever the motive, wars have a common denominator, the violence.

Are violence and war caused by something inherent in man’s nature? Do we have a natural propensity towards violence? Several researches feel strongly that man is indeed innately aggressive.

The ethnologist Konrad Lorenz has been very influential in lending scientific credence to the view that not only are animals innately aggressive but so is man. Lorenz feels that over the course of evolution man has developed an adaptive aggression or “militant enthusiasm”. Men unlike almost all other animals failed to develop instinctive mechanisms against killing their own kind. Lorenz believes that prior to tool and weapon making, mankind was probably given to flight rather than aggression. As weapons became increasingly available, man became a killer of his own species.

Lorenz describes aggression as being a “true autonomous instinct. It has its own appetite behavior, its own releasing mechanisms, and like any other strong instinct it brings about a feeling of intense satisfaction.” He feels strongly that aggression explains why men go to war.

More recent research than Lorenz’s states that “aggression seems to be related mostly to the individual and cannot be used to explain modern warfare.” The latter involves a multitude of factors, including economic, political, religious, ideological and psychological, and is therefore a very complex phenomenon.

To offer to the student as balanced a discussion as possible, it would be of interest to introduce some readings and discussions revolving around the arguments presented in the book, “Man and Aggression”. This book challenges the conclusion of Lorenz and the other researchers who feel man is innately aggressive and therefore predisposed to war.

The researchers writing in “Man and Aggression” make a case for questioning the accuracy of predicting scientific correlations between animals, prehistoric man and modern man. They think that aggression and territoriality in human culture are real, but far from being innate, these have in fact been “learned from the previous generation and perhaps to a lesser degree from its own physical environment and random events.” The connection of man, violence, and aggression is perhaps best summed up in a statement to be found in the book “Teaching About War and War prevention”, by the anthropologist, Napoleon Chagen. He says, “It does seem clear that man can have the capacity for aggressiveness, including killing members of his own species as individuals or in groups, but cultural systems define and regulate the circumstances under which expressions of aggressions are permitted, what form they take, against what or whom they are directed and the legitimate means of such expressions.”

What of the psychological elements in trying to understand the causes of war? Since these are very complex and varied, for purposes of discussion only two, perception and displacement, will be examined.
Deciding how we will feel about others and consequently how we act towards them depends upon our perception of them. When we perceive others as enemies we maintain certain negative feelings about them. The way these others look, dress, talk, etc. conjures up negative responses, and we relate to them not as they really are but as we believe them to be. Negative images dealing with the Japanese people during World War II and more recently the Vietnamese people have become classic examples of perception supplanting objectivity in the name of justification.

Displacement is a term used to explain the situation through which people vent aggressive feelings on someone or something more acceptable than the source of such feelings. This is also known as scapegoating. The most familiar historical example of displacement was the treatment of Jews in Nazi Germany.

Nations usually have an idealized image of their country. Nations feel they have a monopoly on virtue while other countries possess something significantly less.

Morality and the justness of a war have been the rationale and impetus for many nations throughout history in engaging in so severe an undertaking. The Trojan War and the necessity of winning back Helen, the Holy Wars and the justification of recovering the lands for Christianity, the Civil War and the evils of slavery, and World War II and the need to combat the Nazis, these and countless other wars all speak to the issue of a nation establishing a justification for its actions.

Can war on any level be truly justified? Howard L. Parson, a professor of philosophy, answers that “the only possible justification for war would be that in trying all reasonable alternatives for a given problem, the alternative of war produces the least inhuman consequences.” Yet, Professor Parson in concluding his thoughts on war ends by quoting Bertolt Brecht:

“Even anger against injustice
Makes the voice grow harsh.
Alas, we who wished to lay the foundations of Kindness
Could not ourselves be kind.”

Mankind has historically attempted to eradicate injustice through war and has called its own efforts just. Few would argue with the necessity and justness of warring against slavery and Nazism, and fewer still could deny the immense suffering, pain, and loss of life needed to reach those goals. Again, voicing the words of professor parson, a final time “now all considerations of war pale in the binding light of the atomic bomb. All will be wiped out in a thermonuclear war. principle and consequence, the two great criteria for human moral decision, will not matter.”

Of all the causes of war, probably none have been as important nor as central to human motivation as the ideas of patriotism, romance, and glory. Jonathan Dymond in his “War, An Essay” writes that “the glories of battle, and of those who perish in it, or who return in triumph to their country, are favorite topics of declamation with the historian, the biographer, and the poet. They have told us a thousand times of dying heroes who resign their lives amidst the joys of conquest, and, filled with their country’s glory, smile in death.”
Certainly the heroic exploits of men in battle, the sounds, the colors, the intense activity of war have been documented countless times by story tellers through the ages. More often than not these exploits have been conveyed in a grand, emotionally charged style which tends to inflame the spirit at the expense of rational thought. Few themes are as potentially exciting as men in war. In a writer’s skillful hands the ideas of battle can become idealized, glorified and seductive.

The following poem has elements common to most lyrics and stories which glorify and romanticize war, whether they were written hundreds of years ago or in more contemporary times.

The March of the Regiment

“Here they Come!—Tis the twelfth, you know—
The Colonel is just at hand—
The ranks close up, to the measured flow of music
cheery and grand.
Glitter on glitter, row by row.
The steady bayonets, on the go
For God and the Right to stand—
Another thousand to front the Foe!
And to die—if it must be even so—
For the dear old Fatherland!
O trusty and true! O gay, warm heart!
O, manly and earnest brow!
Here in the hurrying sheet, we part—
To meet—ah where and how?
O ready and staunch? Who, at wars alarm
on lonely hill-side and mountain farm
Have left the axe and plow!
That every tear were a holy charm,
To guard, with honor, some head from harm,
and quit some generous vow.
For valiant heart and sturdy arm
Was never more needed than now.
The maddened crime at bay with her Doom,
And fighting it clod by clod.
O calm and Glory—beyond the gloom.
Above the bayonets bend and bloom
The lillies and palms of God.” 12

February 1862
The images of marching, of glittering uniforms, connections to God and death are all portrayed in romanticized, idealized terms. War is visualized as an endeavor to be entered into cheerfully, and dying for one's country and an ideal is a guaranteed passage into heaven.

National loyalty is often understood and described as quasi-religious in nature. The following description by the historian John Good articulates this situation:

“As a citizen of a nation-state the individual associates himself with other individuals in common loyalty and action, as he does in an organized religion. Like religion, nationalism is developed through symbols. The national flag replaces the Christian cross, and the national anthem becomes the foremost hymn of the new religion. The heroes of a nation's history become the saints of this new religion. Nationalism has proved as intolerant of nonconformists as religion, and like religion, the nation asks men to sacrifice their property and lives.”

Most people, our students included, might be quick to stress their individuality and independence from blind loyalty to a flag or country. Yet as discussed previously, national groups, consciously or not, tend to have strong feelings about their country that imply superior morality and virtue. It is human nature to construct a logic that satisfies preconceptions.

Several writers have written about war and men in battle through less romantic, less glorified portraits. These writings, while no less intense in their depictions of war, than other more traditionally romantic works, offer something else. They attempt to treat the emotions, the glory, the passions of war suspiciously and ironically. Stephen Crane's “The Red Badge of Courage” is one of the earliest and best examples of this type of writing.

As a writer, Stephen Crane is considered an impressionist and a naturalist. This naturalist style is defined as detailing a story in its actuality, as it appears to occur in real life. This “real life” writing will convey its own emotional weight without sentimental heightening, moralizing or little if any interpretive comment. Yet Crane, though not a romantic writer in the traditional sense, does write about themes closely connected with the romantic tradition, themes concerned with creation of a better society, adventure, goal attainment and overcoming an element of evil. “The Red Badge of Courage” is indeed such a book. It deals with these romantic themes. Yet, it is written with a purpose and in a style that makes it clear that Crane's real interest does not lie in the adventurous or idealized spirit but in the irony behind it. This book was written in 1895, almost thirty years after the Civil War. Crane’s realistic style stood in stark contrast to the majority of fiction that followed the Civil War. These writings tended to romanticize the events of the war. For Crane, war was truly beyond romance.

“The Red Badge of Courage” is essentially the story of a young farmboy who discovers his courage and becomes something of a “hero” in the midst of a Civil War battle. This young boy clearly thinks about his actions, rationalizes his motivations, but even at the end of the story gains only a limited understanding of himself as a person.

Henry Fleming, the main character, is initially alive with visions of military glory. He enlists in the Union Army over his mother’s objections. She severely disappoints Henry because she doesn’t share his burning romantic dreams of greatness in battle. Henry feels he will be a hero in battle, but the more he thinks about it the more he begins to lose confidence in himself. Would he run from the enemy? His dreams are now full of self doubt. Henry’s progress through this story is seen in a series of stark contrasts between the glorified and romantic images in his imagination, and the grim realities of battle and death. Men in battle “drop like sacks of laundry.”
Henry discovers his “courage” in battle following a return from a cowardly retreat. But Henry’s courage is to be regarded ironically. Crane makes the point of continually showing Henry’s courage as stemming from blind instinct, temporary insanity or fear of being seen as a coward. The wound (“Red Badge of Courage”) he receives from a retreating Union soldier is an accident. Yet this accident allows Henry to hide behind a “badge” and inspires him to fight like a “hero” in the next battle. Henry’s courage in battle is blind rage against the enemy. Crane does not portray it as a virtue but rather as an unreflective response to an intense situation, much like the cowardice that preceded it. The connection Crane makes between men and animal behavior is obvious. Throughout the book Crane leaves out clear references to dates or places of battle, flag emblems or uniform descriptions, because his central subject is not the Civil War itself, but all wars in general. He portrays the battles as chaotic and out of control. Orders from superiors are arbitrary, and death is frequent, random and ugly. Crane means for his readers to see war as meaningless and absurd. Combat, far from being an instrument of the heroic spirit, is really an instrument of human waste. Crane makes no mention of idealism, nor the reasons for the war depicted. He seems to be trying to reduce war to its most essential characteristics, that is, war regardless of reasons produces destruction and death.

Henry never achieves a complete knowledge of himself nor does he really attain a heroic spirit in the truest sense of the word. His knowledge about himself is full of the most obvious rationalizations and self-deceptions. At the end of the book he can only look proudly on his heroics because he is able to dismiss his previous cowardice, and justify his errors in judgement.

War forces young men to grow up quickly. Henry does some growing up. After having been tested by combat he is better able to see the hard realities of war. His romantic, glorified dreams of battle have been shattered. Yes, Henry has grown but I think not really changed to any great extent. In almost the final sentence of the book, Henry, having just survived a violent battle, dreams of “images of tranquil skies, fresh meadows, cool brooks—an existence of soft and eternal peace.” 16 But in romanticizing and idealizing the concept of peace, he is as naive and dangerous as in romanticizing and glorifying the images of war. Creating and maintaining peace requires hard work. It certainly requires those who have dreams, but also those who have two feet planted firmly on the ground. The realities of peace are at least as demanding as those of war. True heroes are those who at least excel at war while fighting to prevent war. Henry would not appear to qualify as a true hero on either level. He hasn’t changed morally, emotionally or intellectually. The same romantic dream that distorted the realities of war for him will also distort his perception of peace.

This unit would be most beneficial and productive if taught as part of the social studies or history course. The target population would be students grades 8-12. The unit itself could be taught over the course of one marking period, about eight to ten weeks.

Essential to the success of this unit is the necessity of some understanding of and practice with group organization and group/class discussion. This is important for several reasons. On a purely affective level organized class discussions and the formation of “group” goes a long way toward creating in the classroom an atmosphere of positive cooperation, and it reduces conflict between students. It works as an unifying mechanism. Secondly, it needs to be emphasized to students that group discussion, critical thinking skills, problem solving, and the democratic process are by necessity dependent upon one another. If War or any other major issue is to be understood and correctly evaluated then all our students must be encouraged to participate and grow. The well-organized class discussion, working on a variety of problems, is an excellent tool with which to accomplish those goals.

An introductory lesson plan on group discussion has been included. Obviously this is only an initial step. There
are many fine books available on organizing group discussions and one of these has been included in the teacher’s bibliography of this unit.

Sample Lesson Plan For Developing an Understanding of Group Discussion and Group Process.

Objectives

1. To further student’s understanding of the concept of group discussion.
2. To help student’s understanding and ability in detecting the presence or absence of a clear group purpose, and to help a group find goals when they are missing.
3. To increase student’s understanding of terms related to group discussion and group process.

Introducing the concept of group discussion:

Introduce students to the general nature and purpose of group discussion. A number of writers have defined discussion in various ways. For the sake of clarity discussion may be defined as two or more people talking with one another to achieve a mutually satisfactory understanding of each other’s images or beliefs, or solution to a problem. This definition implies several characteristics of a group discussion and should be detailed and explained to the students.

1. **Cooperation is paramount to discussion**:
   It should be reinforced to students that there may be disagreements and arguments during a discussion but that all members of a discussion group must cooperate in the search for a group solution that will be satisfactory to all.

2. **Interaction occurs continuously**:
   Point out to students that each member of a group is influencing each other and in turn being influenced by each of the other members.

3. **Speech is the primary medium of communication**:
   Students need to become aware that words and vocal characteristics are the major means by which group members interact, although we can also interact through movement, posture, position, gesture, facial expression, touch, and writing.

4. **Interpersonal perception**:
   Students need to be made aware that all groups must to some degree be aware of the presence, actions, and reactions of each other.
**Strategies for obtaining objectives:**

1. It is important for students to establish and work toward a common goal. Progress is impossible until there is a common goal. A purpose must be found acceptable to all members of the group and should be identified. A discussion led by the teacher concerning a group goal is initially necessary. This discussion emphasized that whatever the group goals are, they must be exactly defined and mutually accepted by all members, and must take priority over personal goals not in harmony with it.

2. It is initially very important for the teacher to clearly define and detail the functions in the group. Essentially these are the behaviors that the members within the group perform or are expected to perform. These are broken down into three categories: (1) group task functions; (2) group building; (3) self-centered functions. The introduction and explanation of these categories can be handled by the teacher as simple vocabulary and concept definition exercise. After an introduction and some modeling behavior by the teacher, the students may be asked to explain the meaning of the following technical terms, either verbally or in writing. It isn’t essential that the students know the concepts exactly. However, it is important that they have some working knowledge of the concepts so they can begin to think more critically about their own behavior in groups and about others in their group.

**A. Group Task Functions:**
These behaviors supply information.

1. **idea initiating** —proposing new ideas, new goals, possible solutions.
2. **information seeking** —asking for facts, clarification.
3. **information giving** —offering facts, information or personal experience.
4. **opinion seeking** —asking for opinions.
5. **opinion giving** —stating own opinion, belief, judgement.
6. **elaborating** —developing an idea previously expressed.
7. **coordinating** —describing relationships among facts.
8. **energizing** —prodding the group to greater activity.
9. **recording** —keeping a written record on paper or chalkboard.
B. Group Building Functions:
These functions establish and maintain cooperative interpersonal relationships.

1. **supporting** — agreeing, praising, showing warmth.
2. **harmonizing** — mediating differences between others.
3. **tension relieving** — joking and pointing out humor in a situation.
4. **gate keeping** — encouraging others to speak.
5. **norming** — suggesting standards of behavior, challenging unproductive ways of behavior in group.

C. Self Centered Functions:
These functions list behaviors which satisfy individual needs at the expense of the group or other individuals.

1. **blocking** — preventing progress toward group goals by constantly raising objections.
2. **attacking** — name calling, attempting to put down others.
3. **horseplaying** — behavior that takes away from the serious work of the group.
4. **dominating** — giving orders, interrupting and cutting off.

Through time students and teachers will begin to feel less mechanical and more comfortable in the use of organized group discussion and group problem solving. Students and teachers will become more sensitive to their own skills and ideas, as well as their fellow classmates.

**Exercises:**

1. Have individual students observe introductory class discussions. Using the list of class functions as a guide, list the functions each member performs. Have the students describe the overall role taken by each group member. Share these observations with the class.
2. Write out a hypothetical situation having to do with conflict/aggression or write out an actual situation that has happened within your class or school. Give a copy of this situation to each student. Next divide the class into groups of four-five members each. Each group must then reach a consensus (best choice agreed upon) about how the situation could be dealt with most effectively and/or how this situation could be avoided in the future. If students have trouble agreeing, be sure to discuss the value or criteria on which the choices are based. Then have the entire class meet and share their choices, arriving at an overall consensus if possible. The teacher
may act as a guide, pointing out possible direction of discussion, clarifying situations, and generally providing stability.

Sample Lesson plan for Developing an Understanding of the Causes and Nature of War.

Objectives

1. To improve the student's understanding of the roles of stereotyping, misperception, and escalation in conflict and aggression.
2. To improve the student's understanding of the roles of leadership and group pressure as they contribute to conflict and aggression.
3. To increase student’s understanding of terms related to the study of conflict, aggression and war.

Introducing the Lesson:
The films, “The Ox-Bow Incident”, “The Bedford Incident”, and “The Lord of the Flies” are each excellent for raising questions about the causes of human conflict and aggression. Though group discussions of these films the students will increase their awareness of the issues of stereotyping, perception, displacement, leadership and group issues. They will be better able to develop alternate avenues of behavior in dealing with conflict.

Vocabulary Development:
This will include defining exercises and sentence building for the following words.

aggression conflict hostile
stereotype perception leadership
escalation pressure alternative
innate displacement violence
behavior awareness misperception

Group Discussion Questions and Interest Building Questions:

1. What are the themes of each of these movies?
How are they different? How are they the same?
2. How are the issues of stereotyping, perception and escalation portrayed in each film?
3. What are some of the problems faced by the characters in each film?
4. What are some of the romantic elements used in each? What are some of the realistic elements used in each? How do these elements contribute to the overall dilemma faced by the characters in each film?
5. How are conflict and aggression developed in each film?
6. Considering the nature of the characters and the nature of conflict and aggression in each film, what are some possible alternatives available to the characters?
7. How are leadership and group pressure depicted in each film?
8. How is fear portrayed? How does fear contribute to aggression in: neighborhoods, cities, nations?

**Writing Activities:**

1. Compare and contrast “The Ox-Bow Incident”, “The Bedford Incident”, and “The Lord of the Flies”. Show what the important differences and similarities are. Describe what factors lead to conflict and aggression. Describe how conflict and aggression may have been avoided.
2. In the film “The Lord of the Flies”, the premise of being stranded on a desert island is a very romantic one. What went wrong? Write a one or two page essay.

**Lesson Plan for “The Red Badge of Courage”**

**Objectives**

1. To improve student’s understanding of both the romantic and realistic nature of war.
2. To improve student’s understanding of the issues of aggression, stereotyping, courage, heroism, perception, and conflict.
3. To improve student’s understanding of an author’s use of irony.
4. To improve student’s vocabulary skills and writing ability.

**Introduction to Story:**

“The Red Badge of Courage” is a story of a young man who joins the army to fight in the Civil War. His reasons for joining are based on his dreams of adventure, glory, heroism and romantic images of himself in battle. Through the course of the story, the young boy comes to experience war as it really is, brutal and very unromantic. Crane’s story is often referred to as the first anti-war novel ever written.

**Vocabulary Development:**

The following words will be used in definition exercises, sentence writing and in writing essays.

- courage
- doom
- ideal
- hero
- command
- romantic
- panic
- awe
- Homeric
- glory
- virtue
- bravery
- irony
- realism
- impression
- wisdom
- illusion
- realistic
- coward
- instinct
- symbol

**Discussion questions:**

1. What are some of the central themes of this story?
2. How are the issues of aggression, conflict, perception and displacement depicted in this story?
3. How does Crane portray the issues of cowardice, courage, heroism and bravery in his characters?
4. How does Crane depict Henry’s romantic ideas of war? Contrast his ideas in the beginning and at the end of the story.
5. How does Crane’s use of romantic language and image enter into the pattern of irony throughout the story?
6. What is the role of stereotyping in this story? Discuss this issue particularly in relation to the story’s initial lack of detail and description concerning the enemy confederate soldiers, then the detailed description of the four captured confederate soldiers.

**Writing activities:**


1. Write an essay comparing and contrasting the issues of perception, scapegoating, rationalization and morality in “The Red Badge of Courage” to those issues in “The Ox-Bow Incident” or “The Lord of the Flies”.

2. Write an essay comparing and contrasting the issues of courage, heroism and aggression in “The Red Badge of Courage” to those issues in “The Bedford Incident”.

3. Write a three-to-four paragraph essay examining and critiquing Henry Fleming’s behavior.

**Activity**

1. Conduct a group discussion. Discuss the nature of heroism generally and in relation to the characters in “The Red Badge of Courage” and the three films. Draft a position paper outlining and defining what constitutes a hero.

**Notes**

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p. 25.
6. Ibid., p. 27.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
16. Ibid., p. 131.
Teacher Bibliography


Teacher and Student Bibliography


Resources

*Lord of the Flies* 1964 videocassette

*The Bedford Incident* 1965 videocassette

*The Ox-Bow Incident* 1945 videocassette