

## Freedom From the Madness

### *Mahatma Gandhi, India*

Mahatma Gandhi had a very ambitious mission: to teach total nonviolence to the people of India. He had used civil disobedience and his fasts to free India from British imperialism in 1946. Now he wanted to teach his people how to create peace and racial harmony. "We are one human race," he would say. "Religion must unify us, not divide us." In this inspiring story, Gandhi's grandson tells the story of how the great teacher helped Souren Bannetji, whose life had been ruined by religious hatred, to set aside anger and vengeance and learn how to forgive. Out of tragedy, Souren was able to create a new life for himself and his new family. He came to understand Gandhi's words: "Change can come only one life at a time."

#### Reflection Questions

1. What does "Mahatma" mean? Why do you think Gandhi was called this special name?
2. Imagine if Gandhi was alive today? What might he be doing to bring peace to the world?
3. What tools did Gandhi use to teach his people how to create peace and racial harmony?
4. What kinds of nonviolent civil disobedience did he use to free India from British rule?

#### Qualities and Values

- Leadership
- Compassion
- Social justice
- Equality
- Nonviolence

#### Lessons You Can Learn

- Sometimes, change can come only one life at a time.
- Religion must unify us, not divide us.
- Anger, when used intelligently can enlighten human lives.
- Gandhi's own experience with injustice inspired him to work for social justice for all.

#### Actions

##### Language Arts

- Watch Richard Attenborough's *film, Gandhi* on his life and work. Discuss student's reactions.
- List five memorable actions that Gandhi took during his lifetime and discuss their impact.
- Research Gandhi's philosophy, *Satyagraha* and compare it to his teachers: Henry David Thoreau, Jesus Christ and Leo Tolstoy. Find out what all four men have in common leaders who were influenced by Gandhi. What actions did they take?
- Identify famous
- Develop a reading list on Gandhi's writings. Who else has practiced nonviolence to bring peace and social justice to their countries? Contact the Fellowship for Reconciliation to request their catalogue at 914-358-4601.

##### Social Studies

- Research times in which people have fasted to create positive social change in the world.
- Study the history of India, Ireland and the Middle East to learn how people's religious beliefs and actions have resulted in modern-day wars. Research their efforts to bring peace to their countries. Write a report on their process - the challenges and successes.
- Identify a few world leaders and write a report on your ideas about how they could use Gandhi's ideas to bring peace and racial harmony to the world today.

##### Community Service

- Celebrate the 50th anniversary of Gandhi's assassination by making peace with an enemy
- Contact M. K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence to learn about the power of nonviolence as a proactive tool to build human relationships and avoid conflict at 901-452-2824.

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