

Peace Poles

Grade Level: 3-6th Grade

Duration: 3–4 class periods (45–60 minutes each)

Objective:

Students will explore the history and significance of peace poles, research global peacemakers, and create a collaborative peace pole representing diverse cultures and languages.

Essential Questions:

- What role do peace poles play in global communities?
- How can symbols and words inspire peace and unity?
- Who are some individuals who have worked toward peace, and how can we learn from them?

Materials Needed:

- Wooden stakes, cardboard tubes, or other materials for peace poles
 - Paint, markers, or collage materials
 - Research materials (books, online sources)
 - Chart paper and markers
 - A world map or globe
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Lesson Breakdown

Day 1: Introduction to Peace Poles & Cultural Connections

- 1. Discussion & Inquiry (15 min):**
 - Show examples of peace poles from around the world.
 - Ask students: *What messages do they convey? Why might people place them in public spaces?*
 - Introduce the phrase “May Peace Prevail on Earth” and discuss why it's written in multiple languages.
- 2. Historical Context (15 min):**
 - Explain that the first peace pole was created in Japan after WWII by Masahisa Goi.
 - Discuss its connection to the desire for global peace after conflict.
- 3. Choosing Four Languages (30 min):**
 - In small groups, students research and propose four languages to include.
 - They must justify their choices based on cultural significance, geographic diversity, or personal connections.
 - As a class, mark chosen countries on a world map and discuss the global reach of peace poles.

Day 2: Researching Peacemakers

- 1. Introduction to Peacemakers (15 min):**
 - Define a "peacemaker" and discuss characteristics of influential peace leaders.
 - Provide examples: *Nelson Mandela*, *Malala Yousafzai*, *Dalai Lama*, *Rigoberta Menchú*, *Wangari Maathai*.
- 2. Independent or Small Group Research (30–40 min):**
 - Each group selects a peacemaker from one of their chosen language regions.
 - They research their life, contributions to peace, and legacy.
 - Groups prepare short presentations or written reflections.

Day 3: Designing and Creating the Peace Poles

- 1. Symbolism & Design Planning (20 min):**
 - Discuss how art conveys messages (e.g., color psychology, symbols of peace like doves, olive branches).
 - Groups sketch their peace pole, incorporating their chosen languages and artistic elements.
- 2. Building & Decorating (40 min):**
 - Students write "May Peace Prevail on Earth" in their four languages.
 - They decorate with symbols, images, and colors representing peace.

Day 4: Reflection & Community Engagement

- 1. Presentation & Reflection (30 min):**
 - Each group presents their peace pole, explaining their language choices, design elements, and peacemaker research.
 - Class discussion: How do symbols and words contribute to peace?
- 2. Extending the Impact (15–20 min):**
 - Students brainstorm ways to share their message (e.g., displaying the peace poles in school, writing a letter to local leaders about placing them in the community).
 - Consider creating a school-wide peace ceremony.

Assessment & Extension

- **Assessment:** Evaluate based on participation, research depth, and creativity.
- **Extension:** Invite guest speakers (activists, educators) to discuss peace efforts in different cultures.

Extensions & Scaffolding for Middle and High School Students

Scaffolding for Middle School (Grades 6–8):

To scaffold for middle school students, deepen the research component and encourage more critical discussions about peace and activism.

- 1. Expanded Peacemaker Research:**
 - Instead of brief summaries, students write biographical sketches analyzing a peacemaker's methods, challenges, and impact.
 - Students compare two peacemakers and evaluate different approaches to peace (e.g., diplomacy vs. activism).
- 2. Historical & Contemporary Connections:**
 - Students examine how historical peacemakers influenced modern social movements.
 - They explore how international conflicts today might be resolved using nonviolent strategies.
- 3. Debate & Discussion:**
 - Organize a debate: *Is peace always possible?* Students use historical examples to argue different perspectives.
 - Discuss case studies where peace efforts succeeded or failed (e.g., South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission).
- 4. Design & Writing Challenge:**
 - Instead of simply creating a peace pole, students write persuasive essays or speeches explaining why their chosen languages and symbols represent peace.
 - Option: Create a digital version of the peace pole using graphic design software.

Extensions & Scaffolding for High School (Grades 9–12):

For high school students, the lesson shifts from a basic introduction to a **critical examination of peace, power, and justice**, incorporating **primary sources, ethics, and policy discussions**.

- 1. Deep Inquiry & Research:**
 - Assign students to research peace treaties, human rights declarations, or peace-building organizations.
 - Encourage analysis of failures in peace efforts (e.g., Treaty of Versailles, Rwandan Genocide response) and what could have been done differently.
- 2. Philosophical & Ethical Discussions:**
 - Examine philosophies of peace (e.g., just war theory vs. pacifism).
 - Explore the **role of power**—Who gets to define peace? Whose voices are excluded from peace negotiations?
- 3. Personal & Local Engagement:**

- Connect global issues to local communities by researching peace-building efforts in students' own cities or countries.
 - Service-learning extension: Students create a "**Peace in Our Community**" campaign, engaging local leaders, artists, or activists.
4. **Multimedia & Creative Expression:**
- Instead of physical peace poles, students create **virtual peace poles** using interactive maps, videos, or podcasts.
 - Students write poetry, short stories, or op-eds inspired by the peace movements they studied.
5. **Policy & Activism:**
- Students propose policies or actions that schools, governments, or international organizations could take to promote peace.
 - Model United Nations-style activity: Students represent different countries/organizations in peace negotiations.
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General Extension Ideas for All Levels:

- **School-Wide Peace Pole Project** – Students advocate for placing a permanent peace pole at their school or in the community.
- **Art & Cultural Studies Integration** – Explore peace symbols in various cultures and how they evolved over time.
- **STEM Connection** – Analyze the environmental impact of war and how sustainability can be part of peace efforts.