



Religion, Peace and Conflict: Pacifism Teaching Ideas

Learning Objective: To be able to explain why some people are pacifists.

Success Criteria:

- To describe what pacifism is.
- To describe why some people, particularly Christians, believe in pacifism.
- To evaluate the idea of pacifism.

Context: This is the fourth lesson of the topic. Students have previously studied Just War theory.

Starter

Criticism of Pacifism

Define pacifism and then show students the quotes from Roosevelt and Malcolm X. Students should discuss these in pairs and then write their answer on a whiteboard. They then hold these up so the teacher can see their answers. The teacher could ask some students to read out and elaborate on their answers.

Answers will likely revolve around the fact that Roosevelt believes pacifists are traitors because they are, in his opinion, refusing to protect their country during conflict. Malcolm X's thoughts may be linked to the Just War theory; he promotes violence as a necessity to be used only in response to violence. Students may personally argue that there is a need for self-defence during war and that nonviolence ultimately will not work. Students may alternatively emphasise the destructive, murderous nature of war and argue that pacifism, and not violence, can eventually lead to peace across the world.

Main Activities

What Do You Believe about Pacifism?

Students answer this question on the [Pacifism Survey](#) sheet. They then ask other members of the class the same question and record their answers. The teacher can then ask some of the students to share the more interesting answers they have heard.

Quakers

Students read the information on [Quakers Activity Sheet](#). This is a short account of what Quakers are and their beliefs, and can be read as a whole class. This leads onto them completing the activities which pose questions on the new information.

Reasons for and against Pacifism

Students complete the [Pacifism Card Sort](#) to investigate why Christians may or may not support pacifism. They should sort these ideas into two categories: 'for' and 'against' pacifism.

Let's Test Our Knowledge...

Students complete the [Pacifism Exam Question](#) to demonstrate their learning in this lesson.

Plenary

Select a range of pupils to offer their response to the exam question, or even select a few at random and read them aloud yourself. Have students offer feedback on the response: have they explained their reasoning? Have they clearly identified two reasons?

Alternatively, you could distribute the teacher notes section of the [Pacifism Exam Question](#) and have students provide written feedback on a classmate's response.