

The Peace Portal:

Listening with the Goal of Understanding



BIG IDEAS

- › Different people experience the same situation in different ways.
- › Understanding multiple perspectives results in a fuller understanding of the situation.
- › Your perspective is influenced by who you are and your past experiences.



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- › Compare their own perspective on an artwork with the perspectives of other students.
- › Practice listening with the goal of understanding the other person's perspective.



VOCABULARY

- Empathy** › understanding and caring about the feelings and perspectives of others
- Perspective** › your point of view; the way you see things
- Perspective-taking** › trying to see things the way another person sees them
- Respect** › understanding the inherent value of each perspective; showing consideration to others



CHARACTER CONNECTION

Students practice **empathy**, by working to see one another's perspectives, and **respect**, by recognizing the value of each perspective.

THEME

Appreciating Diversity

GRADE LEVEL

4-8

TIME

30 minutes

MATERIALS

The Peace Portal PowerPoint file, with computer and projector, or color copies of *The Peace Portal* handout



Directions

1. Display the PowerPoint slide, *The Peace Portal*, or give each student a **color copy** of *The Peace Portal* hand-out (both are included with this lesson at <https://libertymuseum.org/liberty-institute/tours/overview/>). Tell students this is an abstract painting, in which people can see many different pictures, using their imagination.
2. Tell students the first part of the activity will be done in silence, to give everyone a chance to think. Have them look at the image for one minute and select an image they can see in the *Peace Portal* that another person might not see. (For instance, "I think that green swirl over there looks like...")
3. Once everyone has had time to view the painting silently and choose an image, tell students you are going to go around the room and have every student describe what they see. (Don't forget to include yourself and other staff!) Before you begin, tell students:
 - › when one person is speaking, everyone else's job will be to listen closely and try to see what the other person is seeing.
 - › your goal is to see as many new images as possible.



ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Common Core Language Arts

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4-8.1 >

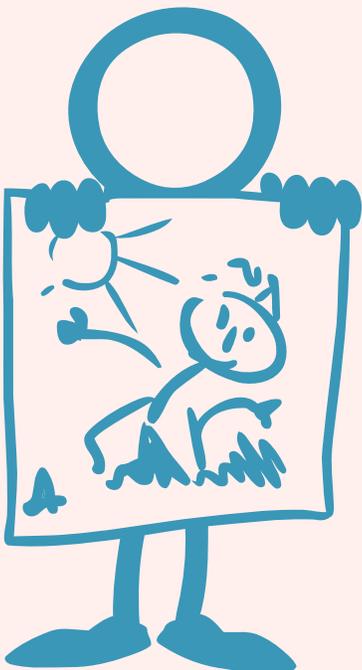
Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade level topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

PA Student Interpersonal Skills

16.2.5.A > Establish relationships that are positive and supportive of others.

NJ 21st Century Life & Careers

9.1.8.D.3 > Use effective communication skills in face-to-face and online interactions with peers and adults from home and from diverse cultures.



4. Once everyone has shared, ask students how many new images they were able to see as a result of listening to their classmates' descriptions. Did everyone see at least one new image? Did anyone see five? Ten?
5. Ask students, **"Why did we all see different things, even when we were looking at the same part of the painting?"** As students share their responses to this question, listen for the following ideas:
 - > People on one side of the room were looking at the PowerPoint image from a different angle than people on the other side
 - > Some people may have been reminded of specific things they have seen that others in the room don't know about (such as a place that is special to them, a favorite toy, etc.)
 - > People may have seen images related to topics they are already interested in (i.e. a student who loves outer space might see planets where a student who loves sports saw basketballs)
6. Highlight the idea that the way you see things, or your **perspective**, is influenced by who you are and by the experiences you have had.
7. Tell students: As we did this activity, we practiced two different skills. We practiced **perspective-taking**, which means trying to see a situation the way someone else sees it. And we practiced **listening**.
8. Ask students, **"When you were listening to another person describe what they saw, what was your goal?"** (At the beginning of the lesson, you told students their goal was to see as many new images as possible. So as they listened to each person, their goal was to see what that person was describing.)
9. Tell students they can improve their communication skills by using that same goal anytime they are listening to someone speak. When you are listening to someone describe their thoughts, feelings, or experiences, your goal should be to understand what they mean. This might sound obvious, but often it is not obvious.
10. Share the following quote with students, and ask them to share their responses to it:
 - > **"Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply."**
—Stephen R. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change* (Free Press, 1989)

WRAP-UP

11. As an exit ticket, have students respond to the following prompt:
Name one person in your life who you would like to understand better. What can you do to understand that person better?

SHARE YOUR
work!

The Peace Portal

by Ulla Darni

NAME _____

