

Community in Crisis: An Exercise in Conflict Resolution

TEACHER NOTES

Grade: 6 to 12

Subject: Social Studies

Group Size: Whole class, small groups

Duration: Two hours to one week, depending on the depth to which the topic is explored.

Skills: Separating fact from opinion, reading for information, informational and persuasive writing, listening, establishing and defending a point of view, resolving conflicts, achieving compromise and consensus

Vocabulary: Conflict, compromise, wants, needs, negotiations, consensus, stakeholder, perspective, point of view

Defenders of Wildlife and the developers of this curriculum are grateful to Hank Halliday of Wolf Awareness, Inc. in Ontario, Canada, for collaborating on this lesson plan which was originally designed for schools in the ranching communities in southern Alberta and for the eighth grade at the James W. Robinson Middle School in Fairfax, Virginia.

OBJECTIVES:

- Upon completion of this lesson students should be able to: Understand the role of stakeholders in a participatory democracy
- Productively participate in the process of conflict resolution by working with those with opposing viewpoints to reach compromises
- Draft a proposal describing a solution to the issue of wolf restoration
- Revise a proposal based on the needs and wants of stakeholders
- Assess the skills learned through this activity.

READING ASSIGNMENT:

- 7. Wolf Conservation

MATERIALS:

- **Public meeting announcement from *Blue Ridge Flyer***
- **Activity sheets:**
 1. Working It Out
 2. Resolving Conflict, Finding Balance
 3. Compromises and Creative Solutions
 4. The Stakeholders
 5. Roundtable
 6. Revised Group Solution to the Reintroduction Proposal
 7. Roundtable Proposal
 8. Conflict Resolution: What Makes It Happen?
 - 12 Perspective Cards
 - Paper and Pencils

BACKGROUND:

The issue of wolf restoration is controversial. Most of the feasibility studies of areas for potential wolf reintroduction have found the major limiting factor to be opposition by local people rather than ecological considerations such as prey base and habitat. This issue forces us to look at ways to achieve compromise and to examine what is really important, both for ourselves as stakeholders and for the generations to come.

PROCEDURE:

- Follow the activity sheets to proceed through the unit. The first sheet “Working it Out” introduces students to conflict resolution by getting them to recall and discuss instances of conflict and compromise in their own lives.
- The article from a fictional newspaper, the “Blue Ridge Flyer,” introduces students to the wolf reintroduction issue and announces an upcoming roundtable discussion on the topic. Assign (or have students choose) various stakeholder positions and participate together in the roundtable to arrive at a solution.
- Instructions are given on each of the worksheets. The perspective cards are included to introduce students to the wide variety of perspectives on this issue.

While working through the worksheets, you can also have students do the following:

- Make a map of the fictitious Spruce Creek State Park. They can include towns and villages, recreational areas, streams and rivers, adjacent private lands, anything they wish.
- Ask students who have visited state or national parks to share their experiences in a class discussion. Have students list the attractions of a state or national park and discuss why people go there and what purposes besides recreation these parks serve.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

- Invite a speaker - a wildlife biologist, forest ranger, someone who works for a wildlife advocacy organization, your state legislature or the department of natural resources - to talk to your class. This is a chance for students to learn about issues first-hand.
- Have students write a news article about the outcome of the roundtable discussion.
- Have students read the Defenders of Wildlife Fact Sheets that are included in the Background Reading. These Fact Sheets discuss some of the plans to restore wolves in selected areas of the United States.

1. Working It Out

1. With a small group, a partner or on your own, write a definition of each of the following words. Then look them up in the dictionary. After you have done that, everyone in the class should agree on the definitions.

a. conflict

My Definition _____
Dictionary _____
Pack Definition _____

b. compromise

My Definition _____
Dictionary _____
Pack Definition _____

c. stakeholder

My Definition _____
Dictionary _____
Pack Definition _____

d. “wants” and “needs” - What is the difference?

My Definition of “wants” _____
Dictionary (look for noun form) _____
Pack Definition _____

My Definition of “needs” _____
Dictionary (look for noun form) _____
Pack Definition _____

e. negotiate

My Definition _____
Dictionary _____
Pack Definition _____

f. consensus

My Definition _____
Dictionary _____
Pack Definition _____

g. solution

My Definition _____
Dictionary _____
Pack Definition _____

2. Spend one to three minutes recalling a time when you had a conflict with another person or with a group of people. This could be a conflict with a brother or sister, a parent or friends. **Focus on an event when you and another person or persons wanted different things or different outcomes to situations.**

In just a few words, briefly summarize this event:

I remember the time when

On a separate sheet of paper, write a first-person narrative account of this event. Identify the conflict and tell how it began and ended. Focus on the following questions: Was it resolved? Unresolved? Was there a “winner” and a “loser?” Why? Were you happy about the outcome? Did you have to give anything up?

3. Share your personal experiences with a small group (four students maximum). When you have finished reading your narratives to your group, choose one to read aloud to the whole pack.
 4. Meet again in your groups. Answer the following questions:
 - a. Were any of the conflicts shared by your pack mates NOT resolved?
 - b. If some were not, why not?
 - c. Were any of the conflicts resolved?
 - d. If some of the conflicts were resolved, why?
 5. With your group members, make a list of the ingredients of **conflict resolution**. You may make your list on this page. Or hang six or seven pieces of tagboard on the walls and blackboards and, using markers, **make your list of conflict resolution strategies!**
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THE BLUE RIDGE FLYER CONFLICT IN THE COMMUNITY

Citizens' Advisory Committee to Meet

A feasibility study by a team of wildlife management officials and biologists from Mountain State College has been completed. The study reveals that wolves could live successfully in the proposed reintroduction site in Spruce Peak State Park. This decision was based on a number of factors including prey populations, road density, human population and the percentage of state mandated wilderness area.

Preliminary public opinion surveys indicated strong public support for the proposed reintroduction. Recently, however, a significant number of local residents have voiced concerns about wolves living in close proximity to human communities.

A Citizens' Advisory Committee has been formed with representatives from various stakeholders' groups. Results of the committee's deliberations will be sent to the State Department of Natural Resources along with a list of recommendations. The committee will hold a series of roundtable discussions on April 3, 10, and 17 at 7:30 p.m. at the Spruce Peak Visitors' Center. Local residents are encouraged to attend.

2. Resolving Conflict

Finding Balance

Can the issue of reintroduction of the wolf be resolved? Your challenge is to work out ways that stakeholders can meet their needs and wants and live together in harmony. In order for a plan to be successful, two things must happen:

- 1. Each stakeholder must assess needs and wants carefully and be sure they are reasonable.**
- 2. Each stakeholder must assess needs and wants carefully and be sure that they are not harmful to the well-being of others.**

Your Challenge

1. Divide the pack into groups of three or four depending on the size of the pack.
2. Place the perspective cards face down on a table. **Do not include the wolf perspective card. The teacher will be the alpha wolf and he or she will present the wolf's perspective.**
3. Draw a perspective card.
4. From the perspective you drew, work through the exercises on the following pages. Be prepared to share your work with the pack. You will come together to negotiate a solution to the proposed reintroduction of the wolf to this area.

3. The Stakeholders

A stakeholder is a person or a group who has a strong concern about a particular issue. Stakeholders often have a “vested interest” in an issue; that is, they expect some private benefit from the resolution of the issue in their favor. This benefit can be economic, aesthetic, philosophical or spiritual.

In the past, many stakeholders have been successful at getting their personal wants and needs met, but often at the expense of wildlife and habitat. The current goal in protecting and preserving wildlife in the last great wilderness areas in the United States is to have all stakeholders work cooperatively to achieve a plan that works for everyone.

Wolf recovery is a highly volatile issue. It arouses strong feelings and opinions from a variety of individuals and groups. Before you read the stakeholders’ perspectives on the following page, try this! As a group, list all the stakeholders you can think of - people and groups who are in some way affected by having the wolf, a top predator, reintroduced to a portion of its former range.

Stakeholder

Perspective (point of view)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

4. Compromises and Creative Solutions

Name of stakeholder _____

Your task is to list the needs and wants of your stakeholder. The perspective card will help you, but you should also include your own ideas.

NEEDS	WANTS
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____

Solution

With your group members, draft a solution to the issue of wolf reintroduction. Your solution should be in line with the reasonable needs and wants you have listed above.

5. Roundtable

Arrange the classroom so that the entire pack can sit in a big circle, listen carefully to each stakeholder and ask questions if necessary for clarification. Members of the roundtable should take notes as each stakeholder speaks.

1. Select one person to speak for the stakeholder the group represents. When you speak:

A. Identify the group of stakeholders you represent. Pause to let the members of the roundtable write it down.

B. Read slowly and carefully your list of needs and wants. Pause to let the roundtable take notes.

C. Read your stakeholder's solution. Read slowly and carefully, pausing to look at the other roundtable members.

D. When you have finished, ask if there are any questions or if you need to repeat anything you have said.

2. In your stakeholder group, meet again and work on the compromise section below. After listening to the other stakeholders' positions, you should now be prepared to compromise so that a solution can be reached and other stakeholder's needs and desires can be met as well as your own.

Compromises

8. Conflict Resolution

What Makes it Happen?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

Perspective Card
THE LOCAL SMALL-TOWN RESIDENT



Our families have lived in this area for generations. We have never had wolves, at least not for over a century, and many of us see no reason to reintroduce them. A lot of the people who want to put wolves in the park don't live here, and they won't have to deal with the problems. We are concerned about several things. For one, endangered species mean property restrictions, or so we have heard. What if a wolf pack takes up residence on a hundred acres my family owns up in the mountains? Could that restrict what we do with that property? Could we build a cabin there, for example, if a wolf pack has a den there? Also, it is against the law to kill an endangered animal. But what if we need to protect our children and our pets? We are not clear on how that works. I don't have anything against wolves. Most folks around here don't. We're responsible people, we mind our own business, and we obey the law. I don't know anybody who out and out hates wolves or who really believes that fairy tale stuff. But I don't think wolves belong here. They belong in an area where there are fewer people. I have heard the argument that wolves avoid humans and that they aren't a danger to people. But what if they lose their fear of humans because they are protected? Would little kids be in danger for instance? And how would their numbers be controlled? Would the state be responsible? Would private citizens? We have to live here, and we want some say in whether or not we have wolves.

**Can compromises be made?
Is there a creative solution?**

Perspective Card
THE WOLF



I am the alpha female of the pack. My mate and I are the leaders of our family. We are responsible for our pups and for making sure they are protected and taught how to hunt in order to survive. We are carnivores. We depend on elk and deer and other large ungulates to survive. We have evolved over thousands of years with our prey. We keep the herds healthy and strong because we choose the most vulnerable animals to kill. We also kill young animals if the mothers cannot protect them. We have to. We have no other food source, and successful hunting is very difficult and dangerous. We have never caused the extinction of any species. We have been blamed for declines in prey populations, but from our perspective, that is an unfair accusation. We would never cause our own extinction by eliminating our food source. Nature goes in cycles; no one is quite sure how that works, but there are many factors involved in the rise and fall of animal populations. The ungulates need us to stay strong and swift and wary. In addition to keeping their numbers under control, we provide food for scavengers. We reduce coyote populations so that small predators can thrive. Every healthy ecosystem needs summit predators. Our role is vital. If humans are educated to treat all wildlife with respect and caution, we can coexist peacefully.

**Can compromises be made?
Is there a creative solution?**

Perspective Card

GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL

STATE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL

RESOURCES

(DNR)



The State Department of Natural Resources is accountable to the taxpayers of this state. It is our responsibility to ensure that farmers and ranchers can make a living, that hunters can be successful because we rely on license fees to protect wildlife and habitat, and we want the park to be visited by people from both inside and outside of the state. We must be careful to listen to all points of view on the issue of restoring wolves. Most people feel that the Yellowstone National Park reintroduction has been a major conservation achievement. The proposed reintroduction here, however, is not on federal land; it is not a national park. It is a state park, and as such, the state has full responsibility for its management. There is a high percentage of private property within the perimeter of the park. As managers of a state park, we have a responsibility to every citizen to be sure that we have adequate resources and the means to manage wolves. We want to be certain that any plan that goes to the state legislature for approval has been well thought out, and that every citizen has had an opportunity for input.

Can compromises be made?
Is there a creative solution?

Perspective Card

ANIMAL RIGHTS ACTIVIST



Animals have just as much right to live as humans do. It is wrong for humans to kill them for their own purposes. Their lives should be respected. Wolves were nearly exterminated in the lower forty-eight states. It is time to right this terrible wrong. We owe it to the wolf. Wolves should not be hunted, and humans should work to tolerate their presence and to find ways to coexist with all wildlife. Animals have as much right to live on this earth as humans do. No animal has ever caused the artificial extinction of hundreds of species by exploiting plants and animals and their habitats. It is time to halt this destructive process and to get back to our own place in the natural scheme of things. We must stop competing with nature and start cooperating instead.

**Can compromises be made?
Is there a creative solution?**

Perspective Card
**VISITOR-HIKER-CAMPER
OWNER OF SUMMER HOME**



I live in the city, but my family and I come here every year to enjoy the outdoors. We want our children to experience wildlife, and that includes hearing wolves and finding their tracks and maybe even seeing them. We want to know if wolves are dangerous to people and what precautions, if any, we should take if we are in wolf county. We are also concerned about pets, especially our dogs, as we have heard that wolves sometimes kill domestic dogs. We hear so many conflicting stories, and we need accurate information. I think that some steps should be taken to educate people about wolves. We don't want a situation like we have with bears where people are irresponsible with food at campsites, for instance. Bears are attracted; then they do damage and sometimes have to be destroyed. I would hate to see something like that happen with wolves.

**Can compromises be made?
Is there a creative solution?**

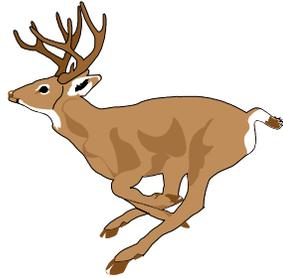
Perspective Card
ENVIRONMENTALIST



Top predators are essential to a healthy ecosystem. Wolves play an important role in a well-balanced wilderness. Too many ungulates, like deer and elk, cause extensive damage to vegetation. Even with the hunting season, the hard winters, and natural mortality, their numbers are increasing. We need wolves for the natural control of the elk and deer herds and to ensure that the strongest and healthiest animals survive to breed. The coyote population is also on the rise. Wolves would help reduce the number of coyotes, which would benefit farmers and ranchers who are experiencing livestock depredation. Wolves do not generally kill livestock as long as their natural prey is plentiful. In addition, smaller predators and scavengers would thrive from the presence of wolves. Wolf populations should be managed, controlled, and protected in a responsible manner so that everyone and everything, including the wilderness itself, will benefit.

**Can compromises be made?
Is there a creative solution?**

Perspective Card
HUNTER



This has always been a hunting community. The local people enjoy hunting deer and elk here, and we use the meat to feed ourselves and our families. We are not trophy hunters. Outfitters here depend on income from hunters who come from the cities and who need guides. That's a major source of income in this region. I am worried that wolves will deplete the supply of game. The herds have a bad time of it as it is with some of the severe winter weather we get around here. I am also concerned that if wolves are reintroduced, there will be pressure to stop hunting altogether. Money from hunting licenses is a big source of income for this state, and some of that money is used to protect wildlife and habitat. Hunting is a way of life around here. We want to ensure that the herds of deer and elk are not stressed by a top predator like the wolf.

**Can compromises be made?
Is there a creative solution?**

Perspective Card
RANCHER - FARMER

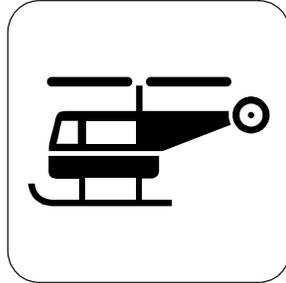


My income depends on the sale of livestock. When wolves or other predators kill sheep and cattle, I lose money. If wolves kill my livestock, I could be forced out of business. We have enough trouble around here with coyotes as it is. But at least it's not against the law to shoot a coyote. I could go to jail or have to pay a huge fine if I kill a wolf. Maybe both.

I don't have anything against wolves or any other animal. But something has to be done to make sure my interests are protected if wolves are restored to this area. I just barely get by some years as it is, and the loss of even one cow or steer means a big financial loss to me.

**Can compromises be made?
Is there a creative solution?**

Perspective Card
WOLF BIOLOGIST

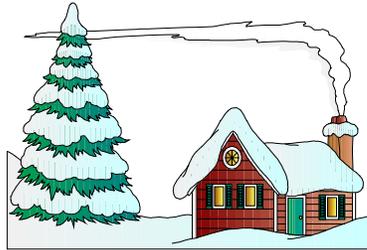


Wolves are intelligent and flexible animals. They are opportunistic hunters. They are also travelers; they disperse widely, and if their numbers can increase dramatically until, sooner or later, conflicts of one kind or another may occur. This park can support a wolf population. There is plenty of habitat and a sufficient prey base to sustain wolves. Public acceptance and tolerance are the keys to having restoration work. We strongly advise careful consideration of a state management plan and the money to fund it. Who will be responsible? The State Department of Natural Resources? Private citizens? How will the public be educated about coexisting with wolves and other wildlife? Can the public schools help in cooperation with responsible wildlife advocacy organizations? We feel there are some serious questions that should be addressed and discussed before a final decision is made.

Can compromises be made?

Is there a creative solution?

Perspective Card
RESORT OWNER



We depend on visitors to this park - skiers in the winter, hikers in the summer, and hunters in the fall. We have a few concerns about public safety. Sure, we know that wolves have a good track record, especially compared to bears and mountain lions. We know that wolves tend to avoid humans. But what if visitors start leaving food around so they can perhaps see a wolf? We worry that eventually wolves might lose their fear of humans, and then there could be problems. We would love to have wolves here if some plan could be worked out so the public would accept them but so that they wouldn't expect them to hang around like dogs. Wolves are sort of trendy now, and that's good because we could sell wolf mugs and t-shirts in our gift shops. That would boost business. But we have had complaints in the past about people and wildlife clashing. Mostly it's the fault of the people, but not always. What steps are being taken to educate the public to be cautious and responsible around all wildlife? Should the public schools take on some responsibility for that in this area?

**Can compromises be made?
Is there a creative solution?**

Perspective Card
STATE FOREST OFFICIAL



Everyone wants the woods and the wilderness and wildlife for some personal or economic reason. We're trying to achieve a balance here in the park between the demands for recreation, solitude, wildlife habitat, and jobs for people who are in the timber industry, who are farmers and ranchers, who are outfitters and guides, and who are owners of recreational facilities, ski lodges and such. The truth is, there is something for everyone, including the wolf. Careful and responsible logging practices can actually create habitat for deer and elk. These animals are browsers - that is, they depend on the abundance of leafy plants and small trees that are present in new-growth forests. Unlogged areas and old-growth forests do not always provide the forage that elk and deer need. But old-growth forests are beautiful and provide an essential habitat for other wildlife species. What needs to happen is for everyone to win some, lose some. People can't just be out for themselves anymore. We have to look at the big picture together, and maybe we will all have to make some sacrifices. Maybe farmers will actually see the health of the elk and deer herds improve with the wolves to cull the weaker animals. Maybe tourism will increase if people can hear the howl of the wolf. And maybe we will all benefit from the return of the wolf.

Can compromises be made?
Is there a creative solution?

Perspective Card
LOGGER



Logging used to be big business around here. Not any more. Many of the big timber companies are into tree farming now. The companies that do have leases to cut timber in this area have a lot of restrictions on them now, and if wolves are reintroduced, I doubt any roads will be approved into areas where there are good stands of timber. Many of us are out of jobs, or we are worried that we will lose the ones we have. The wolf is just one more threat to our making a living and to our security. Some people tell us to just go find other work. That's easier said than done in this area. I have lived here all my life. I don't have any skills other than operating a chain saw and heavy equipment. I don't want to leave, and even if I did, where would I go?

**Can a compromise be made?
Is there a creative solution?**