

**Language, Communication, and Successful Conflict Resolution**  
**Middle School Contemporary World History; American Civics/Government**

**Elaborated Lesson Focus:**

The purpose of this lesson is for students to consider the role of communication in resolving conflicts. Specifically, the lesson encourages students to think about language and how it can create – or dissipate – conflict.

**Performance Tasks:**

- Students will learn about homographs
- Students will use debate to reach consensus on the meanings of various words
- Students will explore the importance of a “shared vocabulary” in conversation and debate
- Students will

*Note:* Because the students believe that this is a quiz, they may be very invested in getting the answers right. They may wish to argue the veracity of their answers. Allow this to occur. Allow students to debate among themselves which use of each word is accurate. Do not offer a final “verdict” on which students are correct. Mediate where necessary by asking questions, such as: Who else feels the way {Emmanuel} feels? Did anyone else use the word that way? Why do you think {Li} is wrong?

5. Once students have arrived at a place of complete disagreement, encourage the class to reflect on this experience. Ask the class to describe what just happened. Who is right? Who is wrong? Why is there such a difference in opinion? What happened to their ability to communicate?
6. Assure students that this was not an actual quiz, but was an experiment to show how important communication is in dealing with conflict. Tell the class that the words on the “quiz” were HOMOGRAPHS: words that are spelled one way but have more than one pronunciation and meaning.

*Note:* To dispel any anxiety or concern, reiterate to students that this was not a quiz, but was only an experiment to illustrate the importance of clear communication, and that there will be no recorded grades.

7. Explain to the class that this experiment illustrates how,



write another letter that is a response to their first letter. Students should consider how language and communication might help to lessen this conflict and bring about a resolution.

- There are a number of nonprofit organizations that focus on building and strengthening communication to resolve conflict. Examples might be: Americans for Peace Now, Amnesty International, Seeds of Peace, Pen Pals for Soldiers, or The Carter Center. Students should create an informational poster about one organization: what it does, where it works, how others can get involved, how others



*Student Handout: Word Game*

**Directions for facilitator:** In preparation for use, cut along the double lines to create 36 individual cards. Distribute one card to each student pair.

<p><b>ELEPHANT</b> <i>You cannot say: elephant, trunk, grey, peanut, Dumbo.</i></p>	<p><b>SCHOOL BUS</b> <i>You cannot say: school, bus, yellow.</i></p>	<p><b>BEST FRIEND</b></p>
<p><b>FOOTBALL</b> <i>You cannot say: foot, ball, the name of any specific football teams (including mascots), or name specific TV shows or movies about football.</i></p>	<p><b>TIGER</b> <i>You cannot say: tiger, cat, stripe, Tigger, Frosted Flakes.</i></p>	
<p><b>DECK OF CARDS</b> <i>You cannot say: deck, card, spade, diamond, heart, club, or name any specific card game.</i></p>	<p><b>BIRTHDAY CAKE</b> <i>You cannot say: birthday, cake, eat, or frosting.</i></p>	
<p><b>TENNIS RACQUET</b> <i>You cannot say: tennis, racquet, or name any professional tennis player.</i></p>	<p><b>DRUM SET</b> <i>You cannot say: drum, set, kit, drummer, sticks, cymbal, percussion, name any specific drummer, kind, or brand of drum (bass, snare, etc).</i></p>	
<p><b>SWIMSUIT</b> <i>You cannot say: pool, bathing, suit, swim, ocean, beach.</i></p>	<p><b>SOCCER</b> <i>You cannot say: soccer, ball, black, white, goal, Olympic(s), or name any specific soccer team, player, or team mascot.</i></p>	
<p><b>SUNFLOWER</b> <i>You cannot say: sun, flower.</i></p>	<p><b>ENVELOPE</b> <i>You cannot say: envelope, letter, address, stamp, postage, mail.</i></p>	

**DANCE**

*You cannot say: dance,  
music, step, partner, prom,*

