



**PROMISES**  
**Lesson Plan**

**Understanding History, Religion, and Politics in Jerusalem and Beyond**

**Grade Level:** 7-12

**Subjects:** History, Language Arts, Behavioral/Social Studies, Sociology

**Estimated Time of Completion:** 3-5 class periods, plus homework preparation

**Overview:**

The city of Jerusalem has been the center of controversy for centuries. Current differences involve the struggle between Israel and Palestine for control of the city and the areas known as the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Rather than explore the conflict politically, PROMISES introduces viewers to seven Israeli and Palestinian children ranging in age between 9 and 13 who live with this conflict daily, and who have formed definite opinions about the roles of its participants. Living within 20 minutes of each other, “each growing up in very separate worlds,” these children had never met until filmmaker B.Z. Goldberg brought some of them together for a day. Through the course of the film, we learn that these disparate neighbors share common ideas, opinions, and biases shaped by cultural, religious, and historical influences. Typically, one side blames the other, but unlike adults, these children suggest that a resolution could be possible. After hearing about each other from B.Z., and motivated by curiosity, some of the children prevail upon him to arrange a meeting between the two sides. Voicing their ideas with a candid innocence underscored by the harsh realities of their young lives, these children offer hope that one day this conflict can be peacefully resolved. Through research, class discussion, and writing, students will be able to learn how the controversy came about. They will be able to identify with these children on a personal level, and to speculate on current conditions and resolutions that might effect a peace.

1. Objectives
2. Standards
3. Materials Needed
4. Procedure
5. Assessment Suggestions
6. Extension

**Objectives:**

Students will:

- i. Understand the reasons for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- ii. Explore concepts of peoples’ rights and justice.
- iii. Interpret a conflict from multiple perspectives.
- iv. Explore tolerance and sensitivity by understanding others’ beliefs.
- v. Apply conflict resolution principles.

**Standards:** This lesson unit addresses the following national content standards established by McREL at <http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>

*1. Historical Understanding: Standard 2. Understands the Historical Perspective*

Level 3 (Gr 7-8)

1. [Understands that specific individuals and the values those individuals held had an impact on history.](#)
2. [Analyzes the influence specific ideas and beliefs had on a period of history.](#)
4. [Analyzes the effects specific decisions had on history.](#)
6. [Knows different types of primary and secondary sources and the motives, interests, and bias expressed in them \(e.g., eyewitness accounts, letters, diaries, artifacts, photos; magazine articles, newspaper accounts, hearsay\).](#)

Level 4 (Gr 9-12)

2. [Analyzes the influences specific ideas and beliefs had on a period of history and specifies how events might have been different in the absence of those ideas and beliefs.](#)
4. [Analyzes the effects specific decisions had on history and studies how things might have been different in the absence of those decisions.](#)
5. [Understands that the consequences of human intentions are influenced by the means of carrying them out.](#)
10. [Understands how the past affects our private lives and society in general.](#)
11. [Knows how to perceive past events with historical empathy.](#)

*2. Behavioral/Social Studies Standards*

Standard 1. [Understands that group and cultural influences contribute to human development, identity, and behavior](#)

Level 3 (Grade 6 – 8)

1. [Understands that each culture has distinctive patterns of behavior that are usually practiced by most of the people who grow up in it.](#)
2. [Understands that usually within any society there is broad general agreement on what behavior is "unacceptable," but that the standards used to judge behavior vary for](#)

different settings and different subgroups and may change with time and in response to different political and economic conditions.

5. Understands that various factors (e.g., wants and needs, talents, interests, influence of family and peers and media) affect decisions that individuals make.

Level 4 (Grade 9 – 12)

1. Understands that cultural beliefs strongly influence the values and behavior of the people who grow up in the culture, often without their being fully aware of it, and that people have different responses to these influences.

3. Understands that social distinctions are a part of every culture, but they take many different forms (e.g., rigid classes based solely on parentage, gradations based on the acquisition of skill, wealth, and/or education).

6. Understands that heredity, culture, and personal experience interact in shaping human behavior, and that the relative importance of these influences is not clear in most circumstances.

7. Understands that family, gender, ethnicity, nationality, institutional affiliations, socioeconomic status, and other group and cultural influences contribute to the shaping of a person's identity.

Standard 3. Understands that interactions among learning, inheritance, and physical development affect human behavior.

Level 3 (Grade 6 – 8)

1. Understands that all behavior is affected by both inheritance and experience.

5. Understands that paying attention to any one input of information usually reduces the ability to attend to others at the same time.

6. Understands that learning often results from two perceptions or actions occurring at about the same time, and the more often the same combination occurs, the stronger the mental connection between them is likely to be.

Level 4 (Grade 9 – 12)

1. Understands that differences in the behavior of individuals arise from the interaction of heredity and experience.

3. Understands that expectations, moods, and prior experiences of human beings can affect how they interpret new perceptions or ideas.

4. Understands that people might ignore evidence that challenges their beliefs and more readily accept evidence that supports them.
5. Understands that the context in which something is learned may limit the contexts in which the learning can be used.
6. Knows that human thinking involves the interaction of ideas, and ideas about ideas.
7. Knows that people can produce many associations internally without receiving information from their senses.

Standard 4. Understands conflict, cooperation, and interdependence among individuals, groups, and institutions.

Level 3 (Grade 6 – 8)

1. Understands that being a member of a group can increase an individual's social power and also can increase hostile actions toward or from other groups or individuals.
3. Understands how various institutions (e.g., banks, schools, hospitals, the military) influence people, events, and elements of culture and how people interact with different institutions.
4. Understands how tensions might arise between expressions of individuality and group or institutional efforts to promote social conformity.

Level 4 (Grade 9 – 12)

1. Understands that conflict between people or groups may arise from competition over ideas, resources, power, and/or status.
2. Understands that social change, or the prospect of it, promotes conflict because social, economic, and political changes usually benefit some groups more than others (which is also true of the status quo).
3. Understands that conflicts are especially difficult to resolve in situations in which there are few choices and little room for compromise.
6. Understands that intergroup conflict does not necessarily end when one segment of society gets a decision in its favor because the "losers" then may work even harder to reverse, modify, or circumvent the change.
9. Understands how changes in social and political institutions (e.g., church, school, political party) both reflect and affect individuals' career choices, values, and significant actions.

10. Understands that the decisions of one generation both provide and limit the range of possibilities open to the next generation.

### 3. Language Arts

#### Listening and Speaking

Standard 8. Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes.

Level 3 (Grade 6 – 8)

2. Asks questions to seek elaboration and clarification of ideas.
4. Listens in order to understand topic, purpose, and perspective in spoken texts (e.g., of a guest speaker, of an informational video, of a televised interview, of radio news programs).
5. Conveys a clear main point when speaking to others and stays on the topic being discussed.
6. Uses level-appropriate vocabulary in speech (e.g., metaphorical language, specialized language, sensory details).
11. Understands implicit statements of attitude and opinion (e.g., implicit point of view conveyed by tone of voice and expression in a television interview).

Level 4 (Grade 9 – 12)

2. Asks questions as a way to broaden and enrich classroom discussions.
9. Understands influences on language use (e.g., political beliefs, positions of social power, culture).
11. Understands reasons for own reactions to spoken texts (e.g., emotional appeals).

#### Viewing

Standard 9. Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media.

Level 3 (Grade 6 – 8)

1. Understands a variety of messages conveyed by visual media (e.g., main concept, details, themes or lessons, viewpoints).
2. Uses a variety of criteria to evaluate and form viewpoints of visual media (e.g., evaluates the effectiveness of informational media, such as web sites, documentaries,

news programs; recognizes a range of viewpoints and arguments; establishes criteria for selecting or avoiding specific programs).

9. Understands techniques used in visual media to influence or appeal to a particular audience (e.g., production techniques, such as designing a news program as entertainment; persuasive techniques, such as exaggerated claims, portrayal of appealing lifestyles, bandwagon, glittering generalities; subliminal messages; narrative style).

Level 4 (Grade 9 – 12)

1. Uses a range of strategies to interpret visual media (e.g., draws conclusions, makes generalizations, synthesizes materials viewed, refers to images or information in visual media to support point of view, deconstructs media to determine the main idea).

2. Uses a variety of criteria (e.g., clarity, accuracy, effectiveness, bias, relevance of facts) to evaluate informational media (e.g., web sites, documentaries, news programs).

12. Understands the effects of visual media on audiences with different backgrounds (e.g., age, nationality, gender, class, belief system).

#### *4. Thinking and Reasoning Standards*

Standard 1. Understands and applies the basic principles of presenting an argument

Level 3 (Grade 6 - 8)

3. Questions conclusions based on very small samples of data, biased samples, or samples for which there is no central sample.

4. Makes basic distinctions between information that is based on fact and information that is based on opinion.

6. Identifies and questions arguments in which all members of a group are implied to possess nearly identical characteristics that are considered to be different from those of another group.

7. Compares and contrasts the credibility of differing accounts of the same event.

Level 4 (Grade 9 - 12)

1. Understands that when people try to prove a point, they may at times select only the information that supports it and ignore the information that contradicts it

2. Identifies techniques used to slant information in subtle ways.

4. Identifies or seeks out the critical assumptions behind a line of reasoning and uses that to judge the validity of an argument.

5. Understands that to be convincing, an argument must have both true statements and valid connections among them.

Standard 2. Understands and applies basic principles of logic and reasoning

Level 3 (Grade 6 – 8)

4. Understands that reasoning by similarities can suggest ideas but cannot be used to prove things.

5. Understands that people are using incorrect logic when they make a statement such as "if x is true, then y is true; but x isn't true, therefore y isn't true".

7. Understands that some people invent a general rule to explain how something works by summarizing observations.

8. Understands that people overgeneralize by making up rules on the basis of only a few observations.

9. Understands that personal values influence the types of conclusions people make.

10. Recognizes situations in which a variety of conclusions can be drawn from the same information.

Level 4 (Grade 9 – 12)

2. Analyzes the deductive validity of arguments based on implicit or explicit assumptions.

6. Understands that people sometimes reach false conclusions either by applying faulty logic to true statements or by applying valid logic to false statements.

7. Understands that a reason may be sufficient to get a result but may not be the only way to get the result (i.e., may not be necessary), or a reason may be necessary to obtain a result but not sufficient (i.e., other things are also required; some reasons may be both necessary and sufficient).

9. Understands that proving a general rule to be false can be done by finding just one exception; this is much easier than proving a general rule to be true for all possible cases.

10. Understands that logic may be of limited help in finding solutions to problems if the general rules upon which conclusions are based do not always hold true; most often, we have to deal with probabilities rather than certainties.

11. Understands that once a person believes a general rule, he or she may be more likely to notice things that agree with that rule and not notice things that do not; to avoid this "confirmatory bias," scientific studies sometimes use observers who do not know what the results are supposed to be.

12. Understands that very complex logical arguments can be formulated from a number of simpler logical arguments.

13. Identifies counter examples to conclusions that have been developed.

Standard 5. Applies basic trouble-shooting and problem-solving techniques .

Level 3 (Grade 6 – 8)

1. Identifies alternative courses of action and predicts likely consequences of each.

2. Selects the most appropriate strategy or alternative for solving a problem.

Level 4 (Grade 9 – 12)

1. Applies trouble-shooting strategies to complex real-world situations.

2. Understands that trouble-shooting almost anything may require many-step branching logic.

5. Engages in problem finding and framing for personal situations and situations in the community.

9. Examines different options for solving problems of historical importance and determines why specific courses of action were taken.

10. Evaluates the feasibility of various solutions to problems; recommends and defends a solution.

### **Materials Needed**

1. VCR, monitor, and videotape of the P.O.V./PBS program, PROMISES.
2. Computers with Internet access.
3. Library access.
4. Note taking materials.

## Procedure

### I. Introducing the film's central thesis: Respect for others, diversity, understanding and tolerance.

Prior to viewing the film, ask students to brainstorm ideas pertaining to issues of prejudice and intolerance, and outline a collective list on the board as ideas take shape:

- How many different forms of prejudice can you name?
- What fosters prejudice?
- How do biased attitudes create barriers, walls, borders?
- Why is it wrong to judge by appearances only?
- How does putting labels on people and situations contribute to prejudice?
- Why is it wrong, even dangerous, to judge people by making assumptions?
- How do fear, jealousy, insecurity, ignorance, and others' opinions contribute to prejudice?
- What is a scapegoat? Why is scapegoating both wrong and dangerous?
- How are people conditioned to become prejudiced? How does conditioning promote prejudice?
- How do apathy, fear, and denial promote prejudice?

### II. Introducing the background to the conflict.

Teachers could either present, or have students research in brief, the history of Jerusalem to discover the conflicts involving the control of the city since the time of King David. Consideration should be given also to examining the biblical genealogy of Abraham to illustrate that Jews and Arabs share a common source: from Abraham's son, Isaac, and Isaac's son, Jacob, comes the creation of the 12 tribes of Israel; and from Abraham through his other son, Ishmael, and grandson, Esau, comes the 12 tribes of desert nomads that ultimately are known as Arabs. You may wish to refer students to print or electronic encyclopedias. The following Web sites also provide information:

[http://www.geocities.com/jim\\_lancaster.geo/archaeology.html](http://www.geocities.com/jim_lancaster.geo/archaeology.html)

<http://www.al-bushra.org/jerus/hst-pal.htm>

[http://www.inisrael.com/tour/jer/more\\_his.htm](http://www.inisrael.com/tour/jer/more_his.htm)

<http://jeru.huji.ac.il/>

[http://jeru.huji.ac.il/open\\_screen2.htm](http://jeru.huji.ac.il/open_screen2.htm)

<http://www.owl.net.rice.edu/~arch343/lecture2.html>

[http://www.bibletap.es.com/tape1\\_1.htm](http://www.bibletap.es.com/tape1_1.htm)

### III. Understanding terminology.

Have students define the following terms prior to seeing the film:

colonialism	Intifada
dogmatic	Palestine (Palestinian)
Hamas	refugee
Hezbollah	Zion (Zionist)
hummus (variation: humus; houmous; hommos)	

### IV. Using *PROMISES* to explore the issue.

Teachers are encouraged to screen the entire film if possible. The points of similarity and difference between American youths and these children in the Mid-East will fascinate students. Seeing the complete film will also enable students to develop a greater affinity for each of these seven children. Should teachers not have enough time to show the entire 87-minute film, four segments are recommended below with breakdowns provided as guidelines for making frequent pauses in the program.

Show the first segment of the film, stopping the tape at end of each section to permit students to complete information on [Worksheet 1](#). Students should make brief notations identifying each child's name, nationality, and location of residence. (Yarko and Daniel could be noted together.) In addition, students should record their initial impressions or opinions about each child and each child's environment. This material will help students with the panel discussion in a later class.

Segment One (approximately 14 minutes)

1. (0:05:16 – 0:08:07) West Jerusalem: **Yarko and Daniel** – bus – discussion of terrorists, safety, and suspicious people.
2. (0:08:07 – 0:10:54) Palestinian neighborhood, East Jerusalem: **Mahmoud** – coffee.
3. (0:10:54 – 0:13:25) Old City, Jewish Quarter: **Shlomo** – Wailing Wall – rabbi in training.
4. (0:13:25 – 0:16:54) Israeli checkpoint to Palestinian Territories: Background to 1948 and 1967 and to the creation of the refugee camps; Deheishe Refugee Camp: **Sanabel** – father imprisoned.
5. (0:16:54 – 0:19:00) Deheishe Camp: **Faraj** describes the death of Bassam, his friend – One Year Later, **Faraj** is proud that he, too, threw stones on behalf of Palestine.
6. (0:19:00 – 0:22:17) Checkpoint to Beit-El: **Moishe** says Arabs took land promised to Jews by God. “If the soldiers aim poorly, it’s OK ‘cause they might shoot an Arab!”

Segment Two (approximately 20.5 minutes)

Using the breakdown of this segment as a guide, stop the tape at each appropriate point to permit students to summarize on [Worksheet 2](#) each child's opinions about the opposing side and about rightful ownership of the land. (Students should consider comments made in the previous segment by Faraj and Moishe as well.)

7. (0:42:10 – 0:45:45): **Moishe** believes Arabs view him (personally) as one of those who took their land, but he says the land belongs to Israel. **Mahmoud** says the land belongs to Arabs and the Jews have no right to take it. **Shlomo** is philosophical, somewhat empathetic, but detached: “I understand them [the Arabs]. They were thrown out of here 50 years ago, and they feel very small, very hurt.” **Yarko**: “...this is our country, and it's also theirs.” He believes the extremists who say Arabs should not live here are wrong. **Sanabel** recognizes the Israeli's hold enough power to take even the refugee camps over. She relates to the problem in terms of her imprisoned father: “They occupy people and put them in prison. This is wrong.” **Faraj** also relates to the problem on a personal level: “I have proof that I own this land and I have the right to build on it!” [He alludes to his grandparents' home.] He wants their land returned, and then believes there will be peace. **Moishe** looks to scriptures to defend his claim that Abraham was given the land by God. **Faraj** looks to land deeds that pre-date the war.
8. (0:45:45 – 0:50:31) The journey to the site of **Faraj**'s grandparent's former home; **Faraj**'s hope – demonstration – **Faraj**'s dream expressed in interview.
9. (0:50:31 – 0:51:44) “Faith,” an Islamic Boys' School in East Jerusalem: **Mahmoud**'s teachers teach about freedom using deer analogy – draw a picture to show how you feel – “Who does Jerusalem belong to?”
10. (0:51:44 – 0:52:51) **Yarko** says they want Jerusalem as their capital and they can keep waiting. **Sanabel** says Jerusalem is 10 minutes from Deheishe camp yet she has never been permitted to enter Jerusalem. **Daniel** says the whole world should discuss how to resolve the problem. **Moishe** says he'd never return Jerusalem to the Palestinians. He'd instead clear all the Arabs out.
11. (0:52:51– 0:55:37) “Jerusalem Day”: parade through the Moslem quarter. **Mahmoud** talks of killing Jews: “When we blow up buses, we anger them.”
12. (0:55:37 – 0:57:56) **Moishe** talks of his friend's murder by terrorists.
13. (0:57:56 – 0:59:30) Memorial Day for Israel's fallen soldiers and victims of terrorism – **Daniel** questions what is a winner?
14. (0:59:30 – 1:01:29) Old City, border between Moslem and Jewish Quarters: belching contest.
15. (1:01:29 – 1:02:36) **Moishe** – doesn't know and doesn't want to know any Arabs. **Mahmoud** doesn't like talking to Jews. **Faraj** feels like hurting, even killing, Jews when he sees them. **Moishe** cautions Arab kids could grow to become terrorists. **Faraj** believes that he is perceived as a terrorist by Jewish children.

Segment Three (approximately 8 minutes)

This segment, beginning at 1:02:36, provides the rationale for the panel discussion that will follow. Stop the tape after Faraj says, “Saturday.” (1:09:36)

#### V. Panel Discussion

Divide the class as evenly as possible with each student adopting the role of one of the following:

- An Israeli living in West Jerusalem
- A Palestinian living in East Jerusalem
- A Palestinian living in a refugee camp (such as Deheishe Camp)
- An Israeli living in a Territories settlement (such as Beit-El Settlement)

At issue are the following questions: Both Jews and Arabs claim the land as their heritage. Do the Palestinians have a right to land they once called home? Has Israel a historic justification for claiming the West Bank?

Through discussion, students should explore the issues faced by the children in the film. Topics of discussion should include the history of Jerusalem, the importance of culture and religion in shaping one’s values and beliefs, historical and religious precedents as reasons and justifications to claim the land, perceived injustice involving land claims, prejudicial feelings based on cultural and religious influences, and suggestions for resolving the issue.

The teacher should moderate the discussion, noting key points made by students, both for summation purposes and as an aid to student assessment.

#### VI. The Film’s Ending

If time permits, students would be curious to see the meeting between the twins and the Palestinian children. They may also appreciate learning the opinions of these children two years after this meeting. Approximately 15.5 minutes of the film remain beginning at 1:09:36

#### **Assessment Suggestions for Panel Discussion**

Teachers may wish to score each student individually. Students can also benefit by critically evaluating each others’ groups. Teachers may then weight and blend the scores to determine an overall grade for each student.

Both the teacher’s individual student evaluations, and the students’ group evaluations may use the following criteria for scoring. The following divisions are worth 25 points each.

Knowledge: Did the student (group) use research to advance arguments and defend positions? To what extent? How effectively was research applied to argument? /25

Understanding: To what extent does the student (group) demonstrate understanding of the issue? Did the student (group) present any key points? Did the student (group) present original ideas? Was the student (group) able to use examples or analogies to defend an argument? To what extent does the student (group) demonstrate empathy for the cause he or she is representing? Did the student (group) show respect for others' opinions? /25

Communication: How logical was the student (group) in presenting an argument? Was the student (group) able to communicate effectively and clearly? Did the student (group) incorporate key terminology? /25

Participation: How often did the student contribute to the discussion? Did the student tend to dominate a discussion, thereby hindering others' participation? (For group evaluation: Did all students participate in the discussion? Did any students within the group tend to dominate discussion within the group, thereby hindering other group members' participation?) /25

### **Extension Activities:**

1) Examine the complexity of peace building and negotiation in Israel-Palestine by organizing students in a role-playing "peace talks negotiation" exercise which incorporates key issues to be resolved in the actual peace process. Students are divided into three groups, one representing the Israelis, one representing the Palestinians, and one acting as mediators. The same scoring criteria above can be applied.

2) Media Studies teachers may be interested in exploring issues related to documentary filmmaking. For example: 1. What is the filmmakers' purpose in presenting this film? How effective do you believe the filmmakers were in addressing their purpose? Provide examples to support your argument. 2. The filmmakers chose to present a controversial situation through the opinions of children. Discuss why this is an effective approach in presenting a sensitive topic.

3) Suggested Essay Topics:

a. Various factors and influences shape our values and our philosophies of life. Discuss this statement with reference to the film, PROMISES.

b. Show that parallels might be drawn between issues presented in PROMISES and events in America's history.

c. Is the current situation in the West Bank founded on justice, or is the perception of justice by some at the same time a perception of injustice by others?

d. The young people in the film have identified two different ways to resolve the conflict in Israel/Palestine: armed violence and peace negotiations. Ask students to compare and contrast these two methods of settling disputes in either a graphic organizer or an essay.

What are the costs and benefits of each method? Students may also be asked to do additional research in order to conduct the cost/benefit analysis of each method or to present other solutions to resolving the conflict.

This lesson plan was written by Gerry Lawson. Mr. Lawson had been a teacher for 25 years before retiring to become a film classification consultant. He continues to write teacher resource guides for film study, and presents in-service workshops on teaching film and media.