

LESSON PLAN Ages 6 - 10

Resource: Book – *The Parrot and the Merchant*, by Marjan Vafian

Preliminary note on the resource: This text can be used from 6+ although the text itself possibly suits readers at higher age.

Aim / learning intention: To learn about freedom; to question our decisions and thinking about 'others'; to learn about the ideas of 'false' borders.

Beginning: Ask the class if they know about Persia / Iran or India / Pakistan / Bangladesh or Afghanistan or Turkey. Ask if they know any stories about or from there. Explain that this is based on a story from a poet from 800 years ago who was born in what is now Afghanistan, who died in what is now Turkey, who lived in many countries.

Main activity:

Read the text out loud.

Ask why they think the parrot was sad.

Ask why they think the Merchant didn't realise.

Ask why the parrot was sad in the cage.

Ask how they think the Merchant could love the parrot but not realise he was unhappy.

Ask how they think we can 'cage' other people without meaning to by the way we think about them.

How do they think we can change this way of thinking?

For younger children: Ask them to think about how calling friends by different names rather than their own might affect them (especially when those children are from different heritages).

Explain that when the original poet wrote this story he lived in what are today different countries but some of which were then all one country. Introduce the idea of changing borders, and the idea that they do not define people within or without those borders.



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For older children: Ask them to consider how expecting friends from different heritages to or people they don't know from different heritages to be more like them is a way of 'caging'. You can try to introduce the concepts of Article 14 and Article 30 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (appended below with other resources)

For all ages: Emphasise that this can happen without any of us meaning to do it, and our challenge is to be aware of it and try not to do it.

Homework: Write up a short story from (one of) your own heritages to share with the class.

Learning Outcomes: To understand about country borders and how they do not define you. To be able to discuss what freedom means for different people living together when some are in a minority. To be able to individual behaviour can inadvertently affect others even when well intentioned.

Additional resources:

1. *Stories from other cultures*

[Word of Mouth](#)

Michael Rosen listens to traditional stories from around the world, told by the people from those cultures who are now passing the stories on to their own children.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0194mw1>

This may be useful for teachers, and parts may be useful for older children to listen to.

2. *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*

Article 14

1. States Parties shall respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.
2. States Parties shall respect the rights and duties of the parents and, when applicable, legal guardians, to provide direction to the child in the exercise of his or her right in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child.

Article 30

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.



