

*Notes from the Field***Activating the Community of Dialogue in a 6th Grade Primary School Class in Mexico City:
A Workshop to Strengthen the Thought of Care and Awareness of Peace**

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"When some part of a culture is damaged at its core—a small group with new visions, new convictions, and a willingness to live in new ways—it is a ferment that cannot be stopped."

Carl Rogers (1978f:258) cited in Vandeneynde N (2007.p.91)

Introduction

In the present writing, whose character is more testimonial and practical, I consider from my perspective as a teacher and specialist the experience of a dialogue community carried out before a group of sixth graders in a private school in Mexico City. To contextualize this experience, first, I briefly focus on the current situation in Mexico, which is deeply affected by violence; second, I discuss ways that I encourage actors and the educational sector to assume appropriate responses to this violence from their respective field and creative possibilities; third, I describe and analyze the experience of organizing a dialogue community in a 6th grade class, breaking this down into a series of sessions aimed at empowering the students. Finally, I conclude with suggestions on how to see the scope and implications of this exercise within the pedagogy of Philosophy for Children, especially in terms of its emphasis on the search for, and construction of, an education for peace. In general, tailoring communities of dialogue to focus on complex everyday issues, informing people about them and providing strategies for dealing with them, acknowledges the complexities of human beings and gives ample opportunities for those leading these communities to utilize their educational expertise to support organizational frameworks.

1. Mexico as Context and Scenario of Action

Thinking about educating for peace is an imperative in Mexico as it is a country shaken by a wave of violence, rarely seen in its history. Having been a teacher there for almost two decades, one often hears about forced disappearances, homicides, cartel fights, femicides and other situations, such a panorama makes the population terrified and feeling helpless to combat such harsh realities. However, faced with this situation, those of us who dedicate ourselves to education are encouraged to assume a

more active role: we need to think, face, and “do our bit” to reflect on such difficult experiences, and thus modify the state of violence in which we find ourselves.

According to the database of the National Search Commission, from January to the following December 27, 2022, 11,349 men, 7,273 women, and 19 people of indeterminate status were reported as missing and/or unlocated (Chávez, 2022). This is a scandalous figure that illustrates the endless wave of violence in Mexico. So, it is important to start looking for solutions, and among these alternatives is to focus on an education for peace. At a microsocial level, specifically in the interactive dynamics in the classroom between teacher and students, key strategies can be developed that help students contend with the violence around them, to question the atmosphere of violence and the appeal of violence as a way of resolving issues.

Education for Peace is a UNESCO proposal to generate democratic societies and assumes an individual and collective commitment within the framework of relationships that we can establish in our coexistence between equal and different beings. Working for peace, specifically, means changing our understanding of violence and the proper management of conflicts. This involves delving into other valuable alternatives that require reflection and a commitment to work in communities to generate a significant transformation in society.

Educating for peace is needed to thoughtfully attend to a culture of violence and the set of beliefs and experiences related to violence; this is especially true given the reality of pervasive violence in Mexico. To combat this, we need to show alternate ways of coexisting and valuing one another in order to achieve better, more just, human flourishing. To achieve this requires both reflection at the theoretical level and the practical level of social implications to enable dialogue to emerge that is respectful, critical, and inclusive, and that generates the creative spaces that allow such communities of dialogue to develop. This approach is similar in conception to Lipman's Philosophy for Children program, creating a favorable scenario in which to dialogue with others about those situations, dilemmas, and problems that are relevant to them. This approach allows instructors to shape the classroom as an ideal forum to cultivate skills of communal discussion that students can use to challenge the world that confronts them. In this way students can find alternatives of coexistence and reflection that make their orientation in social space more within reach. We will elaborate more on this issue in the section that follows.

2. The Practice of P4C: Towards an Experience of Dialogue in Community

Many of us already have extensive experience working with Mathew Lipman's educational proposal of Philosophy for Children and its methodology, the Community of Inquiry—a pedagogy that emphasizes the development of critical, creative, and caring thinking skills and has proven itself to be a relevant methodology to generate purposeful change in school settings and beyond. Imbued with these principles and concepts, I have integrated them in me as a teacher. Indeed, I have been in a private primary school in Mexico City for more than 22 years, coordinating and conducting Philosophy for Children sessions and working on teacher training programs.

Those of us involved in the implementation of Lipman's P4C program who work with students from first to sixth grade are likely familiar with Lipman's traditional curriculum from *Elfie* to *Harry Stotlemeier Discovery* (*Filio Episteme* in Mexico) as material. In addition to using this material, I have also used materials by Angelica Satiro, such as *Juanita Mariquita's Garden*, *the Nameless Child*, and her books on peace.

I instruct 6th grade, so I receive the children after they have practiced communities of inquiry for more than five years at school (students at my elementary school are exposed to P4C starting in kindergarten). It is enormously satisfying to see what the students have achieved at that point in their education, to see them speak up, put themselves in another's place, begin to be more sensitive to context, show cause-effect relationships, detect ambiguities, and seek to delve into different concepts that arise from the dialogue or related themes. It is in 6th grade that one begins to see all the skills that contribute to the construction of a welcoming and cohesive environment converge, where more critical, creative, and careful thoughts are generated.

Knowing that NAACI (North American Association for the Community of Inquiry) was going to organize a conference in 2023 in the state of Querétaro, in Mexico, on the theme of educating for peace, I thought about modifying my 6th grade sessions to focus on this theme. I started to work with the children on creating a workshop that would take advantage of weekly P4C sessions to promote the inclusion of peace as a core theme (with different materials and stimuli related to that theme). The workshop ran for approximately 8 sessions of 50 minutes each session and consisted of eighteen students, seven girls and eleven boys, ranging in age between eleven and twelve.

First Session

Since August 2022, we had been working with *Harry Stotlemeier Discovery* (*Filio Episteme*, in Mexico) until we reached chapter IX written by Lipman about the salute to the flag and Daniel, the student who opposes doing these honors because of his religion and who causes a complex situation due to his difference of beliefs. I used this chapter to transition my class to the specific theme of peace. The chapter provides a scenario that models a very interesting dialogue involving the teacher, the students and Daniel, and that is handled in a very critical and collaborative way by the person in charge of the school. In addition, this chapter highlights the importance of symbols and signs. Discussing this theme gave us a rich opportunity to explore the meaning and use of signs, which I used to highlight the symbols we use to represent peace. Thus, I was able to introduce the theme of peace in this first session in an organic way, incorporating the theme of the NAACI Conference for that year.

After discussing these symbols, I asked the students to reflect on what the dialogue was about, delving into the meaning of the various symbols, we then shared definitions of peace given by the students in the class. Words like care, protection, equality, rights, beliefs, necessities, and inclusion were some of the key terms that arose from discussion, concepts that I highlighted and built on in the following sessions.

Some examples of the statement's students expressed in their reflection on the dialogue, in this first sessions, are as follows:

“A boy who has a different religion and cannot express his thoughts feels threatened.”

“Peace is the resolution of conflicts in a calm and safe manner.”

“Without taking care to create an environment conducive to expressing oneself rationally and freely, there is no peace.”

“Be calm, be in balance mentally and socially, rather in everything, so that there are no wars or disagreements.”

By looking at the expressions of the students, we can see how important it is to have spaces where students can express their concerns, even if these concerns may deal with disturbing ideas. Considering that these ideas are expressed in response to different beliefs and values of other student participants are different, which can easily lead them to take sides and lose sight of the importance of respecting the person and their beliefs. Daniel is led by the teacher to reflect on the event of not having wanted to salute the flag and invites him to also approach his parents and talk openly about the subject. The fact that Daniel does not think the same as his parents does not mean that he dishonors them, and based on this topic, the students delved deeper and listened to the perspectives of Daniel's director and the alternatives presented.

One point that we strengthen in these workshops, and in accordance with what we have studied in Lipman's pedagogy, is that we know that "There can be no peace without exercising care." And this care is something essential in the pedagogy of P4C and in the formation of the Community of Inquiry.

Care is a necessary element so that peaceful dialogue can occur. As such, it is a precondition for thoughtful communal inquiries and should be explicitly cultivated and used to guide discussions. In that sense, caring allows one to be attentive to one's own needs and those of others, to be sensitive to the context, and to be empathetic with others. Care starts from the act of recognizing oneself as a person, with needs and rights; so that, without care, there can be no respect or recognition of the other as a subject fully endowed with their needs and right.

This is precisely why Lipman emphasizes that the development of critical and creative thinking also includes caring thinking - or care-based thinking - which is essential to generate optimal environments and conditions for the development of reasonableness and higher order thinking. Under this background, he offers us many interesting and profound ideas about care and that are important to consider when we work in the Community of Dialogue.

The idea of care that Matthew Lipman (2003) explores includes a fusion between cognitive and emotional thought, which expresses itself through activities such as appreciation, esteem, respect, care, empathy, compassion, and valuation (Lipman, 2003 [2017]). The importance of care was also emphasized in the 2nd edition of the book *Thinking in Education* (Gómez Pérez, 2017, p. 11).

In addition, for Lipman, the thought of care also has a double meaning. On the one hand, it means thinking carefully about what we think, and on the other, it means taking an interest in one's own way of thinking. Thus, caring thinking is that type of thinking that cultivates a relational awareness, along with the ability to pay attention to the relationships between people and things, and between people.

It should be noted that, when understood in this way, caring is based on the interdependence between people, and on the need that each of the others must grow in understanding and harmony. Therefore, it makes us capable of entering the other's world, understanding, and empathizing, and in turn getting to know ourselves better.

We also discussed chapter IX of Harry Stotlemeier as a model of dialogue aimed at peaceful discussion of complex and contentious ideas. This activity consisted of generating a discussion oriented to practicing specific aspects of successful communal inquiry, such as: taking turns to speak, listening to the other carefully, exchanging different points of view, reflecting together on the meaning of the terms and concepts expressed. In this way we were able to see how a community of inquiry develops essential skills that build toward a community of care, thus enabling the creation of an environment conducive to reflecting on what peace is and what it means.

This first session, therefore, introduces students in a more explicit way to the topics of peace, the difference between symbols and signs, different beliefs, and the topic of the importance of caring for differences. In this way, what is proposed here is an introduction to delve more directly and closely into these aspects, along with the subsequent topics to be addressed.

Second Session

In the second session, we had the opportunity to read a text by Bernardo Pérez (2017) called: *The chain of peace (La cadena de la paz)*. Through this exercise, the characteristics of a group of villagers who lived in a valley were highlighted, opposing what the inhabitants of the top of the mountain were doing, until the moment when they all had a fire and realized that the two groups could work together in community to solve their problems.

The following quote describes that fulfilled search and expectation: “In the end when the fire was put out, we found out what we had done together prevented the government building from burning down. Thanks to this, the war between the two groups ended and from then on peace reigned in my town.”

This text favored reflection among students and served as a model to find alternatives and work in solidarity in groups. In the text the fact that the two different perspectives of the villagers were realized and the way their differences were resolved are key elements of the story. It is the experience of a shared event that shook them and allowed them to value the presence of others to achieve the joint resolution of a common, and it is this realization that facilitated a broader perspective for the villagers and revealed what is involved in working for peace.

A comment from a student, having finished the reading, was: “Peace will happen when everyone is not fighting because we have to help others.”

Third Session

In the third session, the students received some famous quotes about what peace is, and then discussed the meaning of these statements. Among the quotes, I mention the following:

"Men build too many walls and not enough bridges" (Isaac Newton).

"When they asked me about a weapon capable of counteracting the power of the atomic bomb, I suggested the best of all: peace" (Albert Einstein).

"Respect for the rights of others is peace" (Benito Juárez).

These are quotes that can inspire students while helping to connect ideas and focus understanding. That is, they can be used to help show the different beliefs needed to understand the notion of peace as a concept that involved building bridges, generating respect, and accepting the rights of others. By having students consider key ideas of the past on peace, they can see many different assumptions on the subject.

Fourth Session

In the fourth session we decided to return with another text by Lipman and we worked on chapter 1 of *Lisa*, from which arose concerns related to human rights, animal rights, the right to hunt animals, empathy, and generosity. We used these different concerns to explore how these elements relate to the notion of peace.

The questions that the students asked themselves when we read that chapter were:

1. "Is it okay to be generous if you hurt people?"
2. "Why haven't anybody controlled the drug problem knowing that it exists?"
3. "Why didn't Lisa eat the roasted chicken to make up for what she had told Memo?"

Seen in an extended way or as a network, the words communication, trust, empathy, appreciation, authenticity, generosity... it turns out that they have been constants that express and are presented in the community of dialogue.

In this session the students were able to recognize the importance of peace, not as an isolated and easy-to-achieve concept, but one in which people are participants in building relation to others through shared concepts like needs, beliefs, empathy, rights, respect, and freedom, all of which were presented in chapter 1 of *Lisa* in a more explicit way.

Fifth Session

I decided to add another element, focusing on artistic perspectives, to the workshop in our fifth session. Building on Micha Brumlik's insight from his book *Pedagogy of Peace*, that art is a way to build

peace, I anticipated that adding another disciplinary perspective could help us further unpack the concept of peace.

Building on the ideas we had already explored, I used as a stimulus the song by José Luis Perales called: *A song for peace* (2006), whose refrain says:

Let the image of the past be erased.
If the past is death and discouragement
and that a future of hope is born
for those who lost it one bad day
May the earth be filled with the smiles of children
And stop the war forever.
May the light turn on again today
Let a love song play!
May all the men who fill the earth
Be united for peace.
And all voices rise to heaven to the cry of freedom.
Let the people walk.
May the light turn on again today, let a love song sound
That all men who fill the earth bet united for peace
May the light turn on again today
To the cry of freedom.

When the students listened to it, I asked them to reflect on the lyrics and they made a number of important observations based on word associations, such as: hostility, resentment, prejudices against people other than us. And, as these ideas were reflected on, it was seen how they can be present in our mentality, and that just thinking about them can cause us a reaction that reflects fear and distance.

Regarding this point, Robin Casarjian (as cited in Valdez Castellano, 2015, p. 9) expresses: "how it happens to us with our personal enemies when we feel hostility or prejudice against a particular group, fear and projection dominate our perception and they prevent us from seeing who and what these 'enemies' really are. Prejudice determines our expectations and experiences, because we assume that each person in a given group is going to behave in a certain way. We relate to an abstraction and not to an individual human being."

Seeing how prejudices can desensitize us to the reality of other people makes evident how crucial it is to be able to place ourselves in a community of dialogue when discussing a concept like peace. Lipman, with his P4C program, provides us with invaluable resources for generating transformational, critical, creative, careful, and collaborative thinking aimed at strengthening our bonds to one another and our collective lives. Using different resources, like songs, as stimuli to start a community of dialogue seems to complement well with Lipman's pedagogy for it can enrich the experience of community and encourage reflecting on subjects from different perspectives while preserving the interest of students. Moreover, the variety of different stimuli is linked in a fluid and authentic way, motivating us to continue asking ourselves about the role that Philosophy for Children plays in transforming the educational process within violent societies.

Sixth Session

In the sixth session, we bring chapter XIV of *Harry Stotlemeier's Discovery* (Filio Episteme) to the classroom as a way to highlight the importance of seeing the other as a human person. In this chapter Ana and Suky visit a museum. Ana has been educated to be able to appreciate art and is excited by the works she sees. Suky has grown up in an environment where love for living beings and plants has been cultivated since childhood. The two friends have different perspectives and Ana accidentally offends Suky, who is extremely sensitive, for losing sight of the fact that Suky is a person, not an object to be appreciated or admired. This exchange can be used to generate for the students an understanding of what it can mean to unintentionally treat the other as an object rather than as a person. This point can be directly linked to the search for peace since a first condition for peace to be achieved is being able to respect those involved as distinct persons with dignity, rights, and their own ways of being.

In a community of dialogue, there are many opportunities to move beyond preconceived ideas and learn to see each person in a new way. With these opportunities an impulse is awakened to question past ideas that we have learned rather than project these on to the community of inquirers, subjecting these ideas to scrutiny and reconsideration.

One transformational element that can occur when reading this chapter stems from its focus on the meaning of respect and the different ways this subject can be approached. Respect entails treating an individual in a considerate manner, based on the ethical value that is anchored in being a person. Based on this, respect means accepting and valuing and is associated with the fundamental term dignity or the appreciation that we all deserve as human beings. It is thus a central feeling in the construction of one's personality as a moral being and, therefore, is central to the social and political life in which we are inserted (Grivé, R. and De Puig, 2019, p. 79).

The value of respect is expressed thematically in the reading, and this theme emerged in the discussion with students on chapter XIV of *Harry Stotlemeier's Discovery*.

One of the questions that arises in the dialogue when we discussed this chapter was: Is it important to respect the point of view of others, when we give a point of view?

Given the previous discussion on respect in the group there were several expressions about the way in which Suky usually respects living beings and is sensitive to nature and how these inform the concepts of life and death. These are ideas to which Suky is very sensitive and cautious about discussing, since she has experienced the death of her mother. Suki's perspective emerges in contrast to the practical way of seeing life embodied by Ana and her taste for art, and who knows about painting and feels a fascination for it.

In reflecting on Suki's experience, the students' discussion reaffirmed what it means to have different tastes and interests, to respect others despite not thinking like us, to be able to make friends with people whose visions are different from our own yet still enrich us with their thinking.

I should also mention how these chapters in Lipman's novels very explicitly reinforce extremely important philosophical concepts in the lives of adolescents, such as the meaning of being a person, peace, friendship, respect, and care. Thus, in addition to being materials that can be used interchangeably depending on the topic, they also help strengthen the formation of more solid thinking that favors not only the development of higher-order thinking, but also the development of caring and socio-emotional skills so necessary in the life of current students.

Seventh Session

In the 7th session, we managed to get the students to draft and share their ideas in writing regarding peace, care and how peace is achieved, together with what such a notion means to them. The comments from the children in response to this activity are indicated below.

Here are their thoughts:

Children's Comments on Peace: February 16, 2023

Response 1.- What is peace?

- Peace is healthy coexistence between communities, without aggression or disrespect.

How do we take care of it?

Response 2.- Peace is good coexistence between people

How can I develop care?

- Understanding what it is to care for and take care of things

Response 3.- What is peace?

- Peace is when you are with a person, a country, even because of a war, for me it is when you are with something in harmony.
- How can I develop care?

Response 4.- What is peace?

- Peace is when you are calm without anyone bothering you.

What is care?

- It is caring for someone, diversity

Response 5.- What is peace?

- Peace for me is the absence of conflict. It is respect for other people or animals, the peace of mind of knowing that you are safe.

What is care?

- Caring can be developed by taking responsibility for something or someone and looking out for someone's well-being or the good state of something.
- "Among individuals as between nations, respect for the rights of others is peace" (Benito Juárez) mentioned again by April.

Response 6.- What is peace?

- Peace is the feeling of tranquility which you feel at a time when you do not have any worries.

How can I develop care?

- Caring is what you do when you want something, therefore caring develops when you have something precious. (Jessica)

Response 7.- What is peace?

- It is a concept of a sensation never achieved which is tranquility and without discomfort.

How can I develop care?

- With habits that force you to try to be the perfect subject.

Response 8.- What is peace?

- Peace is having tranquility about the objects that you have around you.

What is care?

- It's having respect or taking things easy. Reassurance can help with respect.

Response 9.- What is peace?

- For peace to exist, the term war should not exist. With war there is no peace without war there is peace.

What do I understand what is peace?

- I understand that peace is an alliance between places, people, countries to be well with the people, places, or countries.
- The elements of peace: coexistence, trust, faith, friendship, honesty, and empathy.

Response 10.- What is peace?

- Let there be no discrimination, insults, classism, slavery. Peace is tranquility and world
- happiness
- Peace for me is a way of uniting people.
- The elements of peace are friendship, love, empathy, humility.

How can I develop care?

- Practicing peace, you care for others.

Response 11.- What is peace?

- Peace is having tranquility about the objects that you have around you.

What is care?

- It's having respect and taking things with tranquility.
- Tranquility can help with respect.

Response 12.- What is peace?

- It is something that allows you to live in peace and you need to be calm

Response 13.- What is peace?

- It's the feeling of everything in order.

What elements do we need for there to be peace?

- With so many humans there will never be peace because humans cannot live together with so many differences. (Ricardo)

Response 14.- What is peace?

- Love

What elements are needed to have peace?

- To have dialogue

What elements are needed to have peace?

- Harmony is needed.
- Let there be a good community and be in harmony with everyone and not have problems.
- For peace to exist, the term war should not exist. With war there is no peace, without war there is peace.

How can I develop care?

- Practicing peace, you care for others.

Eighth Session

In the final session of this workshop, an unexpected event occurred that sparked a lively and meaningful discussion within the group, in which I played a direct role. I believe this situation not only prompted a theoretical reflection but also led to an emotional experience that, in some ways, deeply affected both the group and its subsequent reflections.

In the last session, I prepared a topic on compassion to work on fostering peace within the group. As the facilitator, I brought a text to share and guide our discussion. That day, the classroom was extremely hot – the temperature in Mexico City had been consistently above 30 degrees Celsius. The oppressive heat made it challenging for students to focus and remain attentive during class. Upon arriving, I noticed one of the boys had completely covered himself, including his face, with a sweater. I gently asked him to remove the sweater so I could see him and begin the session. However, he refused, pulling the sweater tighter around himself and responding with swear words instead of complying. I repeated my request, hoping he would cooperate. Meanwhile, the group started pressuring him, and eventually, one of the students remarked, "He doesn't want to be seen because his hair was cut, and he doesn't want anyone to notice." This comment triggered whispers and gossip among the group, increasing the tension in the room.

Realizing that the boy's behavior wasn't typical, I approached him to check if he was okay. I gently pointed out that the heat could make him feel even more uncomfortable with the sweater on, but I

reassured him that if he preferred to keep it on, he was welcome to, and we would proceed with the class.

The head teacher, who had been standing near the door and overheard the murmurs in the classroom, stepped in. She asked the boy to leave the room so he could calm down, as his eyes were filled with tears. I followed him out, offering words of encouragement to help him feel better about himself and not let his classmates' comments affect him. I reminded him that his worth was not tied to his haircut or appearance.

Although he listened to me, the boy eventually ran off crying, accompanied by the head teacher. I returned to the classroom and led a serious reflection with the group. Over the course of our seven sessions, we had discussed peace, focusing on creating an environment of cordiality, empathy, and inclusivity. We talked about respect, rights, empathy, and caring for others. Yet, in that moment, the intolerance, cruelty, and lack of consideration among the group became apparent. It also brought to light the boy's vulnerability and low self-esteem, which had been triggered by something as simple as his haircut.

Over the course of seven sessions, we discussed peace, focusing on building an environment that encouraged cordiality, empathy, and inclusivity. We explored themes such as respect, rights, empathy, and caring for one another. However, moments of intolerance, human cruelty, and a lack of consideration for others occasionally surfaced, as did the boy's vulnerability and fragile self-esteem, particularly after his haircut.

The group engaged in a discussion, which eventually led them to realize the importance of an additional element: gratitude. They began to recognize the value of thanking others as a pathway to fostering peace.

At that time, the group had only three weeks left before graduating from 6th grade and leaving elementary school. For many students, this marked a significant transition, as they would not continue together in the same high school. It was a sensitive time, with emotions running high and feelings coming to the forefront. As the boys and girls reflected on the moment they had just experienced, they also began to think about the shared moments they had spent together—living, learning, and discussing various topics and circumstances throughout their lives.

The issue of peace prompted students to pause and reflect more deeply, especially when they witnessed real-life examples, like the one that had just unfolded. During the discussion, one of the girls shared: *"I want to thank E..., the boy involved in the event, for listening to me during times when I was struggling."* The group fell into a profound silence as they absorbed her words. Seizing the moment, I gently encouraged her by saying, *"When your classmate returns to the room, dare to tell him this directly. Your words could mean a lot to him."* The dynamic evolved from there, and gradually, other students found the courage to express their feelings, sharing moments of gratitude and appreciation. This exercise led to a deeply emotional and meaningful reflection, expanding on another critical element of peace education: compassion. Beyond respect, compassion emerged as a fundamental pillar in building a culture of peace.

“Being compassionate means feeling pity,” one student remarked, “but not in a way that diminishes the other person. It’s about moving beyond pity to truly understand the other person—recognizing the shared humanity that connects us.” This perspective, they explained, challenges us to see and understand the other person’s struggles, leaving no room for indifference.

Final Considerations

The work carried out during the workshop sessions proved to be deeply significant and stirred an emotional movement among the participants. The learning extended beyond simply assimilating content at a cognitive or repetitive level. Through reflection and the methodology applied in the Philosophy for Children (P4C) framework, along with the community of dialogue, the group was guided toward a deeper search for meaning and more reflective thinking.

The analysis of texts and the characters—Harry, Lisa, Ana, Suky, and others—served as valuable models for the students. These characters provided relatable references that helped the students draw connections to their own experiences and imbue them with greater meaning. The community of dialogue proved to be a highly privileged space, fostering communication and meaningful exchange between students and teachers. This space enabled critical, creative, and caring reflection, inspiring emotional and intellectual movement in the students. In moments of heightened sensitivity, it became clear that to focus on peacebuilding one needs to nurture a society capable of renewal—one that fosters inclusivity, respect, compassion, and freedom. In such an environment, we begin to respect each individual as a person, and the school transforms into a place where ethics are not only taught but lived. Here, human beings can both a) promote their own development as well as that of others through practice and coexistence; and b) strive for the creation of true democratic societies—so urgently needed in today’s world.

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