

Ralph Bunche

the odyssey continues...



International Troubleshooter

■ Synopsis



28 minutes

“International Troubleshooter” follows Bunche as he travels to various “hot spots” around the globe where U.N. peacekeeping forces are stationed. As Undersecretary-General for Special Political Affairs, Bunche is responsible for all U.N. peacekeeping operations. While this involves trying to establish order and control in situations that have already turned violent, Bunche also tries to prevent conflicts from escalating into violence, a tactic he calls “preventive diplomacy.” The module includes:

- Bunche’s role in handling crises in Cyprus, Kashmir, Yemen, and Bahrain;
- his unsuccessful efforts at the U.N. to prevent the renewal of hostilities between Israel and Egypt in 1967 and his concern about the ultimate consequences of that conflict;
- a first-hand account of how the Crips and the Bloods, two warring street gangs, sign a truce in 1992 modeled after the Middle East armistice that Bunche brokered back in 1949.

■ Historical Background

For over two decades after World War II, competition between the Soviet bloc and the Western bloc continued to play out in those parts of the world that had been colonized by various European powers. Even after former colonies gained their independence, the two major power blocs continued to vie for influence with the newly independent nations and a new form of economic colonialism arose. With independence came other conflicts, as well. These usually involved conflicts over land and resources claimed by different peoples and groups living within the new nations and, often, in areas surrounding those nations. When these regional and local conflicts threatened to involve the major power blocs, it often fell to the Security Council to try to put an end to the fighting.

This was the case in 1956, when Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal owned by British and French interests. When Israel, France, and England invaded Egypt to defend their interests in the Suez Canal, the Soviet Union threatened to use military force to protect Egypt. War between the two power blocs was narrowly averted when the United Nations stepped in by creating and deploying the first U.N. Emergency Force under the direction of Ralph Bunche. Bunche had previously distinguished himself as the chief mediator who forged an armistice ending the 1948 war between the newly created state of Israel and the surrounding nations of Jordan (then called Transjordan), Egypt, Syria and Lebanon, a feat that earned him the 1950 Nobel Peace Prize.

In This Module (in order of appearance)

TERMS TO KNOW

“preventive diplomacy,”
armistice, nationalism, UNEF
(United Nations Emergency
Force), breach, truce, “tragic hero,”
vendetta, revenge, enigma,
Crips, Bloods, the Stern Gang

PEOPLE REFERENCED

U Thant, John F. Kennedy,
Lyndon B. Johnson, Hamid
El-Kony, Gamal Abdel Nasser

PLACES REFERENCED

Cyprus, Greece, Turkey, Kashmir,
Yemen, Pakistan, Israel, Egypt,
Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Bahrain,
South Central Los Angeles, Bosnia-
Herzegovina, former Yugoslavia

PEOPLE ON SCREEN

Sir Brian Urquhart, Dr. Benjamin
Rivlin, Dr. Robert Edgar, Dr. Anwar
Dil, Dr. Herschelle Challenor,
Abba Eban, Clovis Maksoud,
Major General Indar Jit Rikyhe,
Abdeen Jabara, Daude Sherrill,
Dr. Charles Henry, Dr. Edwin Smith,
Dr. Jonathan Holloway

Background to Crips and Bloods Truce

In 1991, four Los Angeles police are captured on video repeatedly and viciously beating Rodney King, a black motorist they are attempting to arrest. The video is widely broadcast over national television and the entire nation follows the subsequent arrest and trial of the police officers with intense interest and concern. When a not-guilty verdict is handed down in April 1992, widespread rioting and looting erupts in South Central Los Angeles. In the midst of the violence, the Crips and the Bloods, two warring L.A. street gangs that have been rivals since the 1970s, sign a truce that will make it possible for them to work together to reconstruct their badly damaged neighborhood.

■ Relevant Standards

National Council for the Social Studies Strands

Strand II. Time, Continuity, & Change

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of *the ways human beings view themselves in and over time*, so that the learner can: (f) apply ideas, theories, and modes of historical inquiry to analyze historical and contemporary developments, and to inform and evaluate actions concerning public policy issues.

Strand V. Individuals, Groups, & Institutions

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of *how people create and change structures of power, authority, and governance*, so that the learner can: (f) evaluate the role of institutions in furthering both continuity and change; (g) analyze the extent to which groups and institutions meet individual needs and promote the common good in contemporary and historical settings.

Strand IX. Global Connections

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of *global connections and interdependence*, so that the learner can: (f) analyze or formulate policy statements demonstrating an understanding of concerns, standards, issues, and conflicts related to universal human rights; (g) describe and evaluate the role of international and multinational organizations in the global arena.

National Center for History in Schools Standards

Standard 3. Historical Analysis and Interpretation

The student engages in historical analysis and interpretation:

Therefore, the student is able to

- B. Compare and contrast differing sets of ideas, values, personalities, behaviors, and institutions by identifying likenesses and differences;
- D. Draw comparisons across eras and regions in order to define enduring issues as well as large-scale or long-term developments that transcend regional and temporal boundaries;
- J. Hypothesize the influence of the past, including both the limitations and the opportunities made possible by past decisions.

Standard 4. Historical Research Capabilities

The student conducts historical research:

Therefore, the student is able to

- A. Obtain historical data from a variety of sources;
- F. Support interpretations with historical evidence in order to construct closely reasoned arguments rather than facile opinions.

Standard 5. Historical Issues-Analysis and Decision-Making

The student engages in historical issues-analysis and decision-making:

Therefore the student is able to

- B. Marshal evidence of antecedent circumstances and current factors contributing to contemporary problems and alternative courses of action;
- E. Formulate a position or course of action on an issue by identifying the nature of the problem, analyzing the underlying factors contributing to the problem, and choosing a plausible solution from a choice of carefully evaluated options.

■ Map Connections

On a world map, locate India, Pakistan, Kashmir, Cyprus, Greece, Turkey, Yemen, the Suez Canal and Bahrain.

■ Before You Watch

For suggested preview strategies and activities, see page 4 of the general reference section of the *Guide*.

If this is the first module screened: Have you ever heard of Ralph Bunche? What do you know or think you know about Ralph Bunche? What do you predict you might find out about him in the video you are about to watch?

OPINION How do you handle your feelings when you are hurt or angry with someone you feel has taken advantage of you? Do you try to defuse the situation? Do you think the methods individuals use to defuse a conflict between them would be applicable to groups of people or entire nations?

RECALL How successful was the use of U.N. peacekeeping troops first deployed in 1956 in the Suez Canal crisis?

HISTORICAL CONTEXT What are some of the biggest trouble spots in the world today? What issues are at the root of the problem in each of these areas?

■ While You Watch (with teacher's answer key)

For suggestions on how to use these questions, see pages 4-5 of the general reference section of the *Guide*.

1. What is the purpose of an armistice?

[Answers may include the following: To stop the fighting in order to work out a permanent settlement; to buy time; to reduce the emotional "temperature" so the parties can sit down and talk instead of killing each other.]

2. What U.N. operations is Bunche responsible for overseeing?

[All major peacekeeping operations in Cyprus and in the rest of the world.]

3. What ability does Bunche have that serves him well in this role?

[Answers may include the following: An ability to listen to people; the ability to put himself in other people's shoes and to understand each side's position; his power came from the aura he projected of being a person of wisdom, tenacity, and great ability.]

4. What are some of the underlying beliefs that sustained and motivated Bunche throughout his life?
[Answers may include the following: He felt he had a mission to do something about world peace; that it was possible to work out a peaceful solution to every conflict if there was enough good will and determination on the part of the parties to the conflict; that if peoples and nations treated each other fairly and poverty and racism were eliminated, there would be no reason for war.]
5. What does Bunche say are the functions of U.N. peacekeeping troops?
[Not merely to report and try to stop breaches of the peace, but to prevent breaches before they occur.]
6. What qualities in Bunche's personality define him as a negotiator?
[Answers may include the following: Straight talk; humor; determination; fairness; restraint, tenacity.]
7. What demand does Egypt make to the U.N. in 1967? What is Bunche's response?
[The Egyptians ask the U.N. to withdraw U.N. peacekeeping forces from Egyptian soil; Bunche asks Nasser to reconsider this decision.]
8. What happens when the U.N. troops are withdrawn?
[Answers may include the following: The Six Day War; Egypt and Israel go to war; Israel starts war with a surprise attack.]
9. What is proven by the events that followed the withdrawal of the peacekeeping forces?
[The importance of the peacekeeping forces: how few were needed to keep the peace, but how disastrous the results were when they were gone.]
10. What surprises the Crips and Bloods when they discover who drafted the armistice agreement on which they modeled their own truce?
[They are surprised that it was written by a black man from their neighborhood of South Central Los Angeles.]
11. How does the conflict Bunche was dealing with in the Middle East compare with the conflict between the Crips and Bloods?
[Both reach visceral and bloody levels; both involve long-term animosity and conflict over territory.]
12. What makes it so difficult to eradicate gang, ethnic, racial, and religious warfare, such as that which took place in Los Angeles, or the violence that is happening in such places as Iraq, Darfur, and the Occupied Territories?
[Answers may include the following: Historical patterns of conflict between different groups; historical debts being paid; vendettas being played out; competition for land and resources.]

■ After You Watch

For suggestions on how to structure post-viewing discussions or activities, see page 5 of the general reference section of the *Guide*.

1. Dr. Bunche advocates preventive diplomacy to avoid war because he believes that international conflicts can be resolved through negotiation without resorting to violence and war. Do you think this is a valid policy? Why or why not? Cite specific evidence for your position.
2. How did the Six Day War signal a change in the way Israel related to its Arab neighbors? What events since then provide evidence of this?
3. Did the decision to remove peacekeeping troops from the Sinai Peninsula, and the consequences that resulted from that decision, weaken the power of the United Nations? If so, in what ways?
4. In what ways can the Crips and the Bloods be compared to the Egyptians and Israelis? How did Dr. Bunche influence both sets of adversaries?
5. Can conflicts between historical enemies ever be put to rest? If not, why not? If so, how? How can vendettas and the urge for revenge be overcome?
6. Are there instances in your own life where someone intervened to help you resolve a conflict (for example a sibling, friend, parent, or teacher)? What did that person do that was effective? Have you ever been a mediator for others in conflict? What did you do that was effective?

■ Digging Deeper—Activities and Research Projects

1. Have students research the locations where the U.N. currently has peacekeeping missions and ask them to select one area or nation. Have them create a poster that includes a drawing of the political boundaries of the nation or area, a description of the reason why the peacekeepers are there, troop strength of the peacekeeping mission, duration of the mission to date, losses incurred by the peacekeepers (if available), and the countries involved in the mission. In a related opinion paper, have them provide their assessment of whether the mission has, or has not, been successful and the reasoning behind their assessment.

2. Have students create a visual display that includes
 - what is unique to U.N. peacekeeping forces: (helmets, armbands, vehicle insignias);
 - a list of locations where the United Nations has peacekeeping missions;
 - a list of nations that are contributing forces to these missions;
 - national flags of all nations contributing to peacekeeping missions.
3. Remind students of President John F. Kennedy's warning that the U.N. either "will grow to meet the challenges of our age, or will be gone with the wind... If we were to let it die...we would condemn our future, for in the development of this organization rests the only true alternative to war." Ask them to research the ways in which the U.N. has changed since its inception, in particular since Kennedy's speech in 1961. What role(s) does the U.N. play in the world today? What are some of the U.N.'s greatest successes in preventing war? What are some of its greatest failures? Have them write an editorial based on their research that takes a position on how the U.N. should change to meet the challenges of current times.
4. Ask students to identify an area of potential or actual conflict in their world (in their school, community, the nation or the world) that affects their lives. Ask them to formulate a plan to address the conflict using principles of preventive diplomacy. Explain that this will begin with them identifying what they believe are those principles. In their plan, ask them to include responses to the following questions:
 - What will happen if the conflict is allowed to escalate?
 - What will each party in the conflict stand to lose if it is not solved?
 - What is the goal of the mediation or negotiation?
 - What will each party gain if the negotiations are successful?
 - Who would be a good mediator (a "preventive diplomat") whom all sides would respect and who would be fair to all sides?
 - What support would the mediator and the parties to the negotiations need in order to implement and maintain the agreement?

Name: _____ Date: _____

While You Watch “International Troubleshooter”

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