



**THEME:** The creation of modern myths and legends with non-violent role models as a way of challenging the promotion of violence and aggression through the creativity and co-operative effort of young people.

**DURATION:** 2 hours (up to 2 1/2 hours)

**NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS:** up to 40

**STAFF REQUIRED:** 1 leader and 5 facilitators, each in charge of a small group.

#### BACKGROUND

Ben Okri, Nobel Prize for Literature said: "Great eras are eras in which great stories are lived and told. Stories are the secret reservoir of values: change the stories individuals or nations live by and tell themselves, and you change the individuals and nations."

Myths and stories have always played a major role in shaping our societies and our understanding of reality. They provide a vital channel of communication between the conscious and the unconscious, helping us to better understand ourselves and the complexities of life. Today, however, we are faced with two major challenges.

In many societies, the long-inherited timeless universe of symbols which myths and stories represent are being replaced by symbols of our increasingly materialistic world. To understand the kind of stories society is telling itself today, we need only look at the symbols of progress people are constantly bombarded with in the form of advertising. Advertising and the media are clearly having a major impact on our cultural values. The spiritual guidance that traditional stories provided is being drowned out by the pervasive and ever more sophisticated voices urging us to consume and consume.

## Legends of peace

the foundations of a new culture



There is an urgent need to reclaim our stories, reconnect body and soul. However, this does not mean simply retelling the same stories as our ancestors. Those stories were created for their era, and although the underlying structures and messages remain valid, the symbols used to communicate that deeper level need to be re-examined. Many of them tell of violent heroes and adventures, characters celebrated not only for their intelligence, but also for their ability to destroy. That has carried through to today, where a large proportion of the most popular films and computer games involve high levels of violence – with the accompanying heroes for role models. We need to recreate the culture of stories and myths with symbols that celebrate the power of peace and non-violence.

In the light of the above, this workshop is an appropriate way to start this kit.



### CROSS-REFERENCE

This kit proposes various workshops that tackle the subject from different angles. For example, Workshop No. 2 deals with intercultural education, while Workshop No. 3 tackles the same subject from the angle of a traditional African folk-tale. Concerning the subject of the media, you may refer to Workshop No. 10, "Violence on the screen"; and concerning real-life legends of peace, e.g. Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, etc., reference is made to Workshop No. 12, "Religion: men and women of peace".

The content of this workshop fulfils the objectives of the eight "peace treasures" because it provides a symbolic background where the heroes and heroines dreamed up by the young people personify the positive characteristics of peace, democracy, respect of the environment, rejection of violence, and so on.

### KEY MESSAGES

- Present culture suffers from the promotion of increasingly materialistic and aggressive symbols. They can be seen in advertising, the media, films and computer games.
- The creation and dissemination of "peace legends" can be a powerful educational tool for young people.
- Legends reflect our wishes and aspirations. By inventing peace legends, with new role models, young people reflect the kind of world they want to live in.



## PURPOSE/AIMS/OBJECTIVES

- To involve participants through participatory drama in inventing a legend, including the concept of a non-violent hero/heroine.
- To help participants realise to what extent non-violent legendary heroes can become role models for present generations.
- To develop ideas for a peace legend over the successive workshops of a (World) Scout Jamboree.
- To provide experience for the development of a longer-term legends of peace project.

## METHOD AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE ACTIVITY

### Preparation

The leader and the facilitators should meet well in advance to ensure full agreement with the objectives and development of the workshop.

The following material should be prepared:

- Material for the warm-up game (ball or equivalent).
- For the plenary session: flipchart and/or blackboard.
- Any material that might be useful for helping the groups prepare their short piece for presentation at the end (box or cardboard for making masks, various pieces of cloth for multiple uses, markers of different colours, rough paper, scissors, and any other low-cost material available for making costumes).

## Implementation

### Plenary session

#### 1. Warm-up exercise

Participants are divided in two groups of equal size of around 20 persons each. They sit in a wide circle. One group can use the plenary session room, and the other can use an outside space. The leader explains the rules:

- It is a game called "word association" or "kindred words" or "family words".
- One group will play with the word "Legend" and the other with the word "Peace".
- The first participant throws the ball to someone else in the circle. When this person catches the ball he/she should say the first word that comes into their mind when they hear the word "LEGEND". They then throw the ball to another participant, and so on.

The other group performs exactly the same exercise with the word "PEACE".

The leader gives the ball (or another object which can be thrown easily and without danger) to one of the participants and the game starts.

At the end, both groups come together in the plenary session room.

*Duration: 15 minutes*



## 2. Presentation of the “peace legends” project and workshop

The leader briefly describes the background to the project, and the role of the workshop. Participants are invited to suggest some examples of hero/heroines and reflect briefly on violent/ non-violent role models.

### *Small-group activity*

### 3. Story creation

Participants divide into five groups (maximum of eight persons per group). Each group is led by one of the facilitators. Each group works on producing an encounter that would prove the qualities of a peace hero/heroine, as in a “mythological” story. The encounter is developed through guided improvisation.

Participants are asked to give their hero/heroine certain characteristics:

- He/she should practice non-violence and be a unifier of people.
- He/she should show respect for the earth, and all life forms, safeguarding life for future generations.
- He/she should reflect concern for social justice, and particularly for the weak and vulnerable.
- He/she should be an inspirational character, promoting global understanding.

Facilitators explain the characteristics of the hero/heroine and then help the group come up with ideas for the encounter, and encourage them to start acting them out, then build on and develop the ideas through improvisation.

The final piece should be short (5-6 minutes) and very visual, with the minimum language necessary.

*Duration: 45 minutes-1 hour*





### *Plenary session*

#### **4. Presentations**

Each small group presents their 5-6 minute piece to the large group.

*Duration: 40 minutes*

#### **5. Debriefing**

Participants have the opportunity to:

- discuss any questions on the presentations,
- draw together some of the qualities of the hero/heroines that have emerged from the presentations, and
- link the presentations to the issues raised in the initial input.

*Duration: 15 minutes*

#### **6. Evaluation and farewell**

Participants are given time to make comments on the workshop and to reflect on how they might take these ideas and the methodology away with them to use back home.

The leader reminds participants of the Internet site where they can download the "Legends of Peace" project pack (see below: Sources).

*Duration: 5 minutes*



## REMARKS TO LEADERS

The story creation is the critical part of the workshop. Even though the participants will be asked to present a short piece at the end, the process of exploring the characteristics of the non-violent hero/heroine has value in itself and this should be uppermost in the minds of the facilitators.

The expected results of the workshop should be borne in mind by the facilitators. Participants are expected to take away with them:

- reflections on the nature of the hero/heroine and role models in their society,
- inspiration to value non-violent attitudes and behaviour more highly,
- ideas and enthusiasm for developing the concept of a peace legend in their Scout groups at home.

## SUGGESTED FOLLOW-UP

The workshop is very flexible and can be run virtually anywhere, from a small Scout unit to a large group (divided up) at camp. It can be used as a basis for discussing:

- The kind of role models we create in our society and how they affect our lives.
- The role of the media (NB: Reference can be made to Workshop No. 10, "Violence on the screen").
- How we can create different role models – what conclusions can we draw about our own behaviour?
- Wider concepts in non-violence and peace education, looking possibly at real-life legends of peace, e.g. Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, etc. (NB: Reference can be made to Workshop No. 12, "Religion: men and women of peace").

## SOURCES

- This workshop was conducted at the 19<sup>th</sup> World Scout Jamboree in Chile by Peter Merry, from the NGO "Engage! InterAct!"  
<http://www.engage.nu/interact>  
He can be contacted by email at:  
[peacelegends@beyondtheface.com](mailto:peacelegends@beyondtheface.com)  
or  
[peter@engage.nu](mailto:peter@engage.nu)
- It was also conducted by Mario Arreola at the 11<sup>th</sup> World Scout Moot in Mexico in July 2000.
- The "Legends of Peace" project pack can be downloaded from:  
<http://www.gn.apc.org/peacelegends>