

2000



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Cartoon books against intolerance

Starting points for working with young people
on responses to intolerance

Part of the follow-up to the ALL DIFFERENT ALL EQUAL campaign

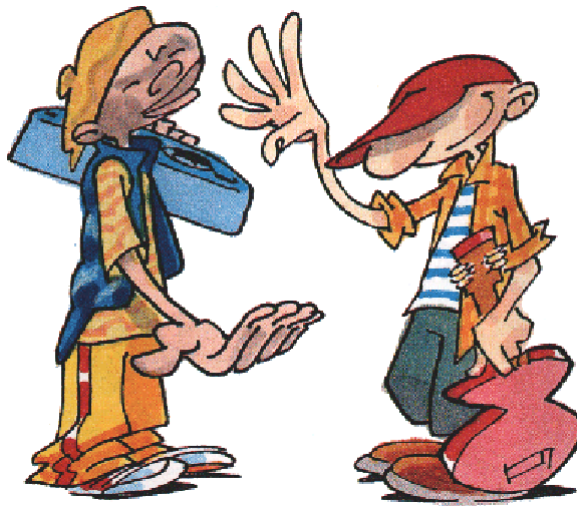
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Published by the Human Rights Information Centre
Council of Europe
Strasbourg, France

First edition, July 1997
Second edition, February 2000





Introduction

Sounds like a strange idea: using cartoon books to combat intolerance. It is.

This brochure has been produced to help teachers, youth workers and members of non-governmental organisations to put this strange idea into practice.

Using the cartoon book produced during the ALL DIFFERENT ALL EQUAL campaign as a working example, we look at some of the educational principles involved and go on to see what can be done with this sort of material.

Give it a try and see what you think.

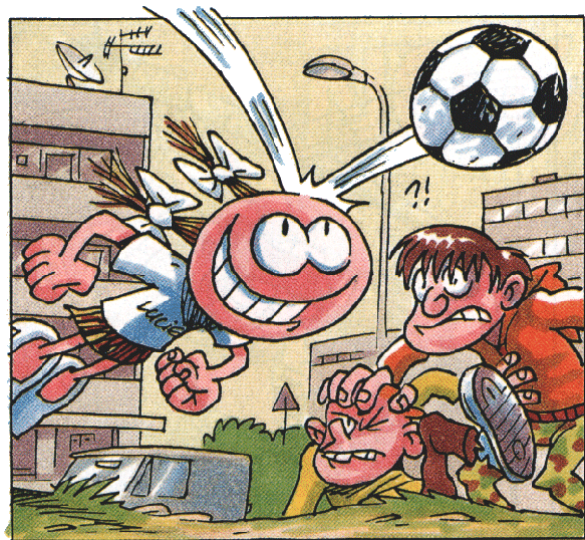
Cartoon books attract interest

Even when we are convinced that intolerance is a “bad thing” it is still difficult to find a way to start treating this vast subject.

Specifically designed to present some of the issues in an attractive way, the ALL DIFFERENT ALL EQUAL cartoon book has the potential to be a useful tool.

Symbols, images, comics and animated cartoons make up a large part of young people’s entertainment and fantasy worlds. From the very earliest of ages they become skilled in making sense of stories and scenes which some adults find almost incomprehensible. And some of us continue to read cartoon books all of our lives.

The great thing about cartoon books – especially those where there are few words – is that they provoke different interpretations. And it is here that an educator can stimulate people to discuss, argue and work with ideas.



Layers of intolerance



In the context of the ALL DIFFERENT ALL EQUAL campaign, intolerance was seen as having many faces. Basically, intolerance is a lack of respect for practices or beliefs other than one's own. This is shown when someone is not willing to let other people act in a different way or hold opinions different from their own. Intolerance can mean that people are excluded or rejected because of their religious beliefs, their sexuality, their skin colour, or even their clothes or lifestyle.

Many of the same mechanisms are at work in creating such varied layers of intolerance as:

- racism
- xenophobia (or fear of the foreigner)
- sexual inequality
- anti-Semitism
- homophobia (or fear of homosexuals).

Power, prejudice, stereotypes – all of them combine to convince us that those who are different from us are inferior: They do not need human rights and do not deserve our respect.

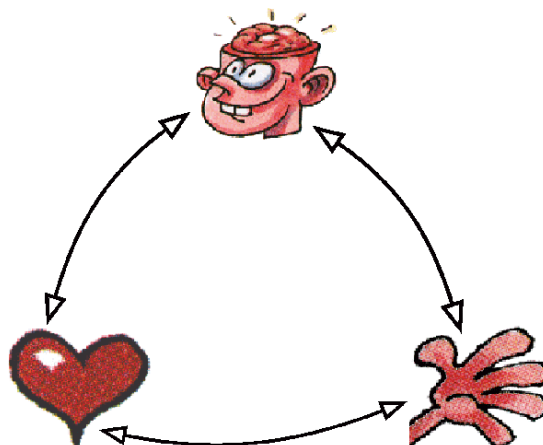
It is here that we need to be working with young people on exploring ways to redress the balance, encouraging the development of:

- active tolerance
- respect
- promotion and protection of human rights
- intercultural education.

This work is not easy and needs to be well prepared.

Things to think about

Achieving a balance between different styles of learning is an exciting challenge. Working against intolerance involves a combination of cognitive, emotional and pragmatic learning: linking the head, the heart and the hand as shown here. If only one type of approach is used, then opportunities for learning are left untouched. So this guide presents ideas which attempt to appeal to a range of learning styles to help participants relate to their own experiences and work with their own resources.



Target group

Deciding with which age group to work on such ideas comes with experience and experimentation; the ALL DIFFERENT ALL EQUAL cartoon book has been used successfully with young people from around eight years old upwards. There is no upper limit as everything depends on the complexity of the issues to be addressed. Young people are referred to throughout as participants taking into account the fact that this guide is intended to be used in a variety of settings.

Individual and group work

Space is provided for individual work, but most of the learning outcomes will come from sharing and working together in groups. This is where active tolerance can be practised.

Mix and match

The ideas presented here need to be adapted to the target group to be worked with and it is quite possible to take elements from one activity and combine them with another.

Use everyone's creativity

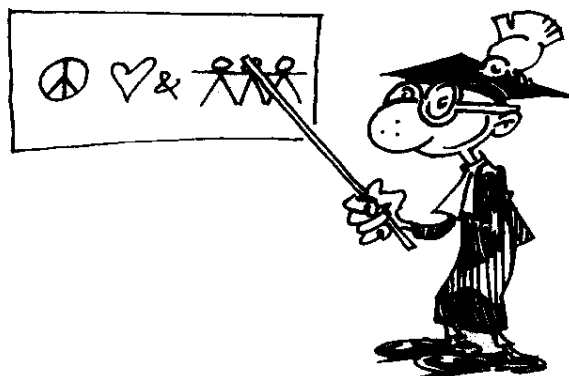


Some users of the cartoon book have found that it is enough to present it to a group of participants and ask them “What can we do with this?” (Indeed, this has also worked wonderfully with adults in training for trainers courses.) Try to leave room for participants’ ideas and suggestions about the kinds of things they would like to do.

A. Which cartoon books and comics do you like?

Basic idea

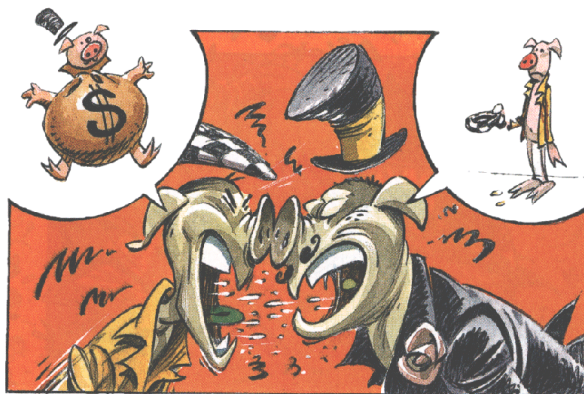
Cartoon books and comics are available to suit all tastes – Tintin, Mickey Mouse, Superheroes, Manga, Spirou, Peanuts, Larson – the list is endless. But which ones do your participants have at home? Perhaps a useful way to introduce working with cartoon books in general would be to find out what is on the participants' shelves and why they like them.



Suggestions

- Ask everyone to bring their favourite cartoon book or comic with them. Or, ask everyone to bring a cartoon book with them that deals with intolerance.
- Each participant introduces their favourite and describes the contents and the reasons for their choice.
- Make a top ten of favourites, or a bottom ten of ones that are disliked.
- Discuss what makes a cartoon book or comic successful.
- Which themes appear most regularly?
- How far is it possible to see themes related to intolerance appearing in their chosen cartoon books?
- Compare their favourites to the ALL DIFFERENT ALL EQUAL cartoon book.
- Make a new cartoon book involving all participants as characters. The story could show how the characters are confronted with intolerance and how they devise strategies to deal with it.

B. Telling the story



Basic idea

Containing very few words, the ALL DIFFERENT ALL EQUAL cartoon book leaves plenty of scope for interpretation. There are different styles of story represented which also means that some may appeal more than others to your group. We can all construct our own story while looking at the pictures. The fun lies in comparing with each other and trying to understand the ways we look at the world.

Suggestions

- In small groups of 4-6 each participant chooses one story and tells the story to the group. Discuss the different interpretations.
- Each participant chooses a different character and tells the story from that character's viewpoint. Where are the differences? What does this tell us about some of the causes of intolerance? How can we respect others' points of view?
- The story in relay. Open the cartoon book at the beginning. One participant starts to tell the story, after two pages another participant takes up the story, then another takes over. Repeat.
- Once the participants are familiar with the stories, ask for suggestions for new titles for each one. Try to agree on one title for each story.
- Where do the participants see parallels (if any) to everyday life in the stories?

C. Use the images

Basic idea

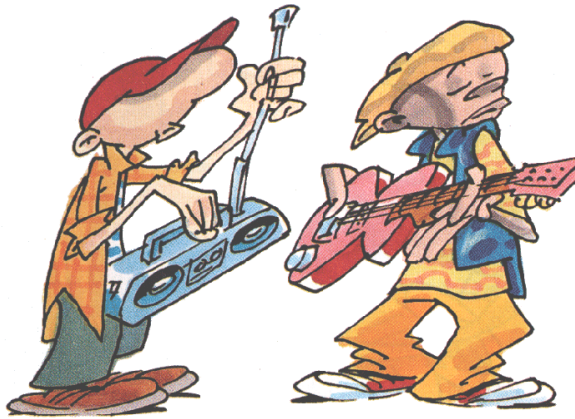
When designing their stories the artists made conscious decisions about the size, the colours, the characters, the order and the length. But what happens to the stories if any of these variables are changed? Can the themes be explored in a new way?



Suggestions

- (Especially for younger groups.) Enlarge the pictures on a black and white photocopying machine. Give the copies to groups and ask them to add colours with paints or crayons. Compare with the original.
- We do not know what the characters in the stories are saying. Add speech bubbles to the stories. How can we try to feel what the characters are experiencing? How can this help us develop empathy for others?
- Copy some of the drawings onto overhead projection sheets and project the pictures onto a wall covered in paper. Draw the characters following their outline. Does our relationship to the characters change when their size increases? Where does power play a role in intolerance?
- Ask participants to create a collage – cutting pictures from old magazines – based on a relevant theme they find in the cartoon book. This can be done individually or in groups, but the finished collages should be presented and discussed.

D. Play it, sing it, record it!



Basic idea

Changing the medium means changing perceptions. Active reconstruction of the stories in which participants play, or empathise with, the characters enables new insights to be gained.

Suggestions

- Give one story to each group. Their task: to make a play out of the story and perform it for the rest of the participants.
- Using a tape recorder make a radio show including the stories. Listen to the tape blindfolded.
- Write poems or songs based on the characters' lives.

E. Make something new

Basic idea

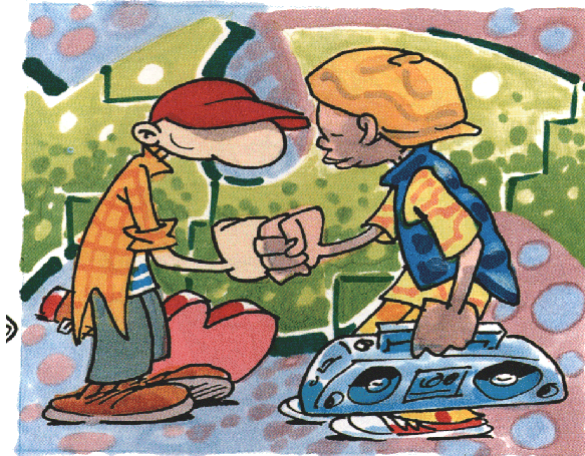
Following on from the previous idea, this one encourages participants to take the stories as a starting point for their own creativity.



Suggestions

- Remove the final pages from each story. Groups should find their own endings.
- Cut up the stories so that each frame is separate. Agree on a new order for the pictures. Tell the new story. (This is especially interesting when pictures from different stories are mixed up).
- Change the sexes of the characters in the stories. Would they react differently?
- Turn the people into animals and vice-versa.
- Think of new themes. Create a new cartoon book with the same characters.

F. Real life



Basic idea

When working on all of these ideas it is productive to encourage participants to bring their own experiences into discussions and proposals. It is possible that new areas will be discovered which can form the bases of common projects in the future.

Suggestions for questions

- ❗ How far do the stories reflect things we have experienced in our lives? in the lives of others we know?
- ❗ When would it be possible for intolerance to be a “good thing”?
- ❗ Are there other types of intolerance?
- ❗ What are we going to do to combat intolerance in our own group?
- ❗ What types of appropriate legislation exist in our country? in other countries? at European or world level? How effective is it?

Where to next?

Further sources of information and educational materials

The Council of Europe has long experience in protecting human rights and in teaching and learning about human rights. A wide range of publications is available which can help in the follow-up to the activities described in this guide.



Selection of publications

Those free of charge are marked with an asterisk.

The Council of Europe and the protection of human rights, 1999*

Illustrated booklet describing the vocation and activities of the Council of Europe in the field of human rights. Available in English, French, German, Spanish, Serbian, Slovak, Albanian, Bulgarian, Finnish, Norwegian (January 2000). Other languages in preparation.

The Council of Europe human rights postcard collection*

First series: European Convention on Human Rights, 1997

Second series: European Social Charter, 1999

English and French

The human rights album, 1992

An illustrated guide to the European Convention on Human Rights for children and young people. Albanian, English, French, German, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Swedish.

Stand up NOW for human rights!, 1995

Video introducing the history and contents of the European Convention on Human Rights. Examples are shown of action undertaken by youth groups around Europe to fight for and promote human rights. English, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Latvian, Slovak, Spanish, Bosnian, Greek, Macedonian, Portuguese, Romanian.

Stand up NOW for human rights! – Video support pack, 1997*

Educational materials for use with youth groups in conjunction with the video. Bosnian, English and French, Italian, Portuguese.

DOmino – a manual to use peer group education as a means to fight racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and intolerance, 1995*

European Youth Centre
English, French, German

ALL DIFFERENT ALL EQUAL education pack – ideas, tools and resources for intercultural education, 1995*

European Youth Centre
English, French, German, Russian, Slovene, Hungarian

For more information

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- European Youth Centre, Budapest
Fax: +36 1 212 4076
- European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)
Fax: +33 (0)3 88 41 39 87
- European Youth Centre, Strasbourg
Fax: +33 (0)3 88 41 27 77
- Point i – the Council of Europe's general information service
Fax: + 33 (0)3 88 41 27 80

They all have the same postal address:

Council of Europe, F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex, France.

Tel: +33 (0)3 88 41 20 00

On-line information is available on the World Wide Web sites of the Council of Europe. Home page: <http://www.coe.fr>; Human Rights Web:

<http://www.humanrights.coe.int>.

ECRI has its own Web site which includes educational materials such as the ALL DIFFERENT ALL EQUAL cartoon book. Home page:

<http://www.ecri.coe.int>.

Any comments or suggestions you might have for future editions of this brochure or the All Different All Equal cartoon books would be warmly welcomed.

Please write to: Human Rights Information Centre, Council of Europe, F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex.

Thank you!

Acknowledgments

Our gratitude to all those who have provided ideas and comments for this edition of the guide and especially to: Sonia, Roxana, Birgit, Floren, Antonia, Dana, Frank, Inès, Catarina, Davide, Gabi, Rosa, Roberto, Joaquim, Frances, Simona, Eva, Fernando, Javier, Kelly, Moritz, Andréa et Eva who helped bring the cartoon book alive.