

TITLE: RECOGNIZING PEACE

OVERVIEW: Students review the origin of the Nobel Peace Prize and consider recognizing local peacemakers.

SUBJECT AREA / GRADE LEVEL: Civics and Government, Social Science Analysis 7-12

STATE CONTENT STANDARDS / BENCHMARKS:

- Understand the civic responsibilities of American citizens and how they are met.
- Identify, compare, and evaluate outcomes, responses, or solutions, then reach a supported conclusion.

OBJECTIVES: The student will demonstrate the ability to...

- Know the origins of the Nobel Prize.
- Know the criteria and selection process for the Nobel Peace Prize.
- Recognize the Dalai Lama as a Nobel Laureate, and
- Apply knowledge and understanding of the Nobel Peace Prize process to the student's own school/community.

MATERIALS:

- Overview statement of the Nobel Peace Prize
- Copy of excerpt from Alfred Nobel's will and testament
- 1989 Nobel Peace Prize summary

PRESENTATION STEPS:

- 1) Read the statement of Alfred Nobel, including the excerpt from his will and testament.
- 2) Discussion questions regarding Nobel and his intentions.
- 3) Read the Nobel Peace Prize overview statement.
- 4) Discussion questions regarding Nobel Peace Prize and criteria.
- 5) Read the summary of 1989 Nobel Peace Prize.
- 6) Discuss questions regarding the Dalai Lama as recipient of the Nobel Prize.
- 7) Students consider criteria and selection process to establish a school or community peace award.
- 8) Students consider potential recipients for the peace award and why each would be worthy of the recognition.

ASSESSMENT: Students apply their knowledge and understanding of the Nobel Peace Prize to their own school or community level by developing criteria and scoring guide for such an award and processing potential recipients through the scoring guide.

ADAPTATIONS: Students will know what a peace prize is, why The Dalai Lama received one, and take part in class discussions on the project.

EXTENSIONS: Implement the school or community Peace award established by your class. Start a new tradition for your school or community.

The Nobel Peace Prize 1901-2000

by Geir Lundestad

Secretary of the Norwegian Nobel Committee since 1990

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I. Introduction

This article is intended to serve as a basic survey of the history of the Nobel Peace Prize during its first 100 years. Since all the 106 Laureates selected from 1901 to 2000 are to be mentioned, the emphasis will be on facts and names. At the same time, however, I shall try to deal with two central questions about the Nobel Peace Prize. First, why does the Peace Prize have the prestige it actually has? Second, what explains the nature of the historical record the Norwegian Nobel Committee has established over these 100 years?

There are more than 300 peace prizes in the world. None is in any way as well known and as highly respected as the Nobel Peace Prize. The Oxford Dictionary of Twentieth Century World History, to cite just one example, states that the Nobel Peace Prize is "The world's most prestigious prize awarded for the 'preservation of peace'." Personally, I think there are many reasons for this prestige: the long history of the Peace Prize; the fact that it belongs to a family of prizes, i.e. the Nobel family, where all the family members benefit from the relationship; the growing political independence of the Norwegian Nobel Committee; the monetary value of the prize, particularly in the early and in the most recent years of its history. In this context, however, I am going to concentrate on the historical record of the Nobel Peace Prize. In my opinion, the prize would never have enjoyed the kind of position it has today had it not been for the decent, even highly respectable, record the Norwegian Nobel Committee has established in its selections over these 100 years. One important element of this record has been the committee's broad definition of peace, enough to take in virtually any relevant field of peace work.

On the second point, the selections of the Norwegian Nobel Committee reflected the insights primarily of the committee members and secondarily of its secretaries and advisors. But, on a deeper level, they also generally reflected Norwegian definitions of the broader, Western values of an idealist, the often slightly left-of-center kind, but rarely so far left that the choices were not acceptable to Western liberal-internationalist opinion in general. The Norwegian government did not determine the choices of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, but these choices reflected the same mixture of idealism and realism that characterized Norwegian, and Scandinavian, foreign policy in general. As we shall see, some of the most controversial choices occurred when the Norwegian Nobel Committee suddenly awarded prizes to rather hard-line realist politicians.

II. Nobel's Will and the Peace Prize

When Alfred Nobel died on December 10, 1896, it was discovered that he had left a will, dated November 27, 1895, according to which most of his vast wealth was to be used for five prizes, including one for peace. The prize for peace was to be awarded to the person who "shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding of peace congresses." The prize was to be awarded "by a committee of five persons to be elected by the Norwegian Storting."

Nobel left no explanation as to why the prize for peace was to be awarded by a Norwegian committee while the other four prizes were to be handled by Swedish committees. On this point, therefore, we are dealing only with educated inferences. These are some of the most likely ones: Nobel, who lived most of his life abroad and who wrote his will at the Swedish-Norwegian Club in Paris, may have been influenced by the fact that, until 1905, Norway was in union with Sweden. Since the scientific prizes were to be awarded by the most competent, i.e. Swedish, committees at least the remaining prize for peace ought to be awarded by a Norwegian committee. Nobel may have been aware of the strong interest of the Norwegian Storting (Parliament) in the peaceful solution of international disputes in the 1890s. He might have in fact, considered Norway a more peace-oriented and more democratic country than Sweden. Finally, Nobel may have been influenced by his admiration for Norwegian fiction, particularly by the author Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, who was a well-known peace activist in the 1890s. Or it may have been a combination of all these factors.

While there was a great deal of controversy surrounding Nobel's will in Sweden and that of the role of the designated prize awarding institutions, certainly including the fact that the rebellious Norwegians were to award the Peace Prize, the Norwegian Storting quickly accepted its role as awarder of the Nobel Peace Prize. On April 26, 1897, a month after it had received formal notification from the executors of the will, the Storting voted to accept the responsibility, more than a year before the designated Swedish bodies took similar action. It was to take three years of various legal actions before the first Nobel Prizes could actually be awarded.

The 1989 Nobel Peace Prize

The Norwegian Nobel Committee's decision to award the 1989 Peace Prize to His Holiness the Dalai Lama won worldwide praise and applause with exception of China. In its citation, "the committee wants to emphasize the fact that the Dalai Lama in his struggle for the liberation of Tibet consistently has opposed the use of violence. He has instead advocated peaceful solutions based upon tolerance and mutual respect in order to preserve the historical and cultural heritage of his people."

"The Dalai Lama has developed his philosophy of peace from a great reverence for all things living and upon the concept of universal responsibility embracing all mankind as well as nature.

"In the opinion of the Committee, the Dalai Lama has come forward with constructive and forward-looking proposals for the solution of international conflicts, human rights issues and global environmental problems."

Accepting the prize on behalf of the oppressed everywhere and all those who Struggle for freedom and work for world peace and the people of Tibet, His Holiness said on December 10, 1989, in Oslo, Norway, "The prize reaffirms our conviction that with truth, courage and determination as our weapons, Tibet will be liberated. Our struggle must remain nonviolent and free of hatred."

He also had a message of encouragement for the student-led democracy movement in China. "In China the popular movement for democracy was crushed by brutal force in June this year. But I do not believe the demonstrations were in vain, because the spirit of freedom was rekindled among the Chinese people and China cannot escape the impact of this spirit of freedom sweeping in many parts of the world. The brave students and their supporters showed the Chinese leadership and the world the human face of that great nation."

Norway's Prime Minister Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland issued the following statement on October 5, 1989: "The Dalai Lama has for decades been an advocate of dialogue and cooperation across religious and national barriers. He has consistently sought peaceful solutions based on tolerance and respect for his people's religious, historical and cultural identity.

"In his efforts the Dalai Lama stands out as an untiring spokesman for human dignity. His message is based upon reverence for all things living and upon the idea of universal responsibility which includes mankind as well as nature.

"This year's Peace prize is therefore a concrete support to all who strive for the increased awareness of an individual's responsibility for our common future."

His Holiness often says, "I am just a simple Buddhist monk - no more, or less." His Holiness follows the life of a Buddhist monk. Living in a small cottage in Dharamsala, he rises at 4 a.m. to meditate, pursues an ongoing schedule of administrative meetings, private audiences, religious teachings and ceremonies. He concludes each day with

further prayer before retiring. In explaining his greatest sources of inspiration, he often cites a favorite verse, found in the writings of the renowned eighth century Buddhist saint Shantideva:

For as long as space endures
And for as long as living beings remain, Until then may I too abide
To dispel the misery of the world.

Prepared by Tinley Nyandak
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