

Religions of Star Trek

Lesson 7: The Enemy, Part 2: “Know Thy Enemy, Know Thy Self.”

Star Date 3.21.2021

Objectives: Explore various “enemies” of the Federation, of how they reflect events in our current human history and how they relate to UU principles.

Materials: Teachers should download lesson plan and attachments onto their desktop, login to Unity’s YouTube account.

Time allotment: Suggested for 60 minute online class.

1. Zoom Welcome (as youth arrive into the breakout classroom)

- Teachers and youth are expected to log on to zoom at 11:15am (15 min before class begins at 11:30am) so that everyone can be organized into correct breakout classrooms. We want to make sure there is an attentive adult in each breakout classroom with youth.
- Greet youth and ask everyone to correct their display name as needed. Ask everyone to select “gallery view” to see everyone else.
- Staff will take attendance.

2. Zoom Icebreaker: Imaginary Ball (5 minutes, begin while waiting for everyone to arrive)

Pass the imaginary ball by calling out someone’s name! Invite youth to unmute and stand up as able. Have a teacher or eager youth start by describing their ball creatively, then using their hands to “throw” the ball at the screen. Call out someone else’s name to “pass” the ball, who is then asked to “catch” the ball, creatively describe a new kind of ball and “throw” it to the next person. Go around until everyone’s name is called.

3. Chalice Lighting

Light a chalice at your home, invite youth to light their own chalices and say together: “We light this chalice as a symbol of our faith, the light of truth and the warmth of love.”

Teacher reads: (from *Star Trek Generations* movie, Captain Jean-Luc Picard)

“Someone once told me that ‘time’ is a predator that stalks us all our lives. But I rather believe that time is a companion who goes with us on the journey and reminds us to cherish every moment because it will never come again.”

4. **Brief Check-in** (5 minutes)

Continue weekly ritual/check-in (e.g. sharing a joy or sorrow so that everyone feels present in class).

5. **Introduction: “Know Thy Enemy, Know Thy Self”** (5 minutes)

Teacher introduces: Last week we looked at Klingons and Romulans and how they actually relate to our human histories and current events. Today we are going to look at three more “enemies.”

6. **Cardassians: Warriors of Terror** (15 minutes)

Teacher asks: What do you already know about Cardassians?

Teacher summarizes: Cardassians first appear in the NG series. The writers were looking for new adversaries to play against their human characters, and they created a race driven by poverty to military extremism. Drawing from current human events, the NG and the Deep Space 9 series writers gave horrible character traits to many of the Cardassians. Using the excuse of procuring needed resources, the Cardassian military committed acts of aggression, such as unjustified murder of civilians, torture, and genocide. They even created a home culture where those who did not follow military dictates were punished, repressed, and made to “disappear.”

(a) **Screen share (with audio)** NG episode “Chain of Command, Part II”: Picard is captured and tortured. The torturer brings a child into where Picard is being held:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZ3EDTYZTOU> (3:44 min)

(b) **Screen share (with audio)** NG episode “The Wounded”: Chief Miles O’Brien talks to a Cardassian about his hatred of them:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Owyj_5TuHQw (1:56 min)

Questions for Discussion:

- What current events remind you of things that Cardassians have done?
- How does it make you feel to see and hear about horrible acts?
- Why do you think it’s important to talk about these issues in an “entertainment” venue?
- If you were a Star Trek writer, what would you have happen to these “bad” characters?
- How do those choices reflect your own beliefs?

Optional: Screen share lesson attachment 7a (UU Principals)

- The second UU principle is “justice, equity, and compassion in human relations.” How do we reconcile that in the face of atrocities that happen in war?

- How do you think we can use the seven UU principles to help reach “the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all” contained in the 6th principle?

7. Borg: Battle against the Individual (15 minutes)

Teacher asks: What do you already know about the Borg?

Teacher summarizes: The Borg Collective is different from most other hostile forces that the Federation fights. The Borg are not really a true “race” at all; rather, they are a collective of cybernetic beings, or cyborgs, whose sole purpose is to achieve “perfection” through the assimilation of other sentient species, absorbing their technology and knowledge. There are no individuals in the Borg; rather, they are like a hive with drones that carry out the goals of the collective mind.

(a) Screen share (with audio) NG episode *Best of Both Worlds, Part I*: Picard is captured by the Borg and is faced with losing his individuality and being used against his friends: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ieR9AwnHyo> (1:04 min)

Questions for Discussion:

- What do you think is scarier, losing your individual rights and self-will, or dying?
- The hive mind is a very efficient way for a group of beings to live and function; it works well for bees and ants. Why do you think it’s not something humans strive for?
- But are there ways in which humans already live in a kind of “hive” community?
- Which of the seven UU principles do you think would be impossible to live out as a Borg? Are there any that would work?
- The Borg are a very powerful force to deal with, and they provide a very frightening possible end to the human race. They show up in NG, Deep Space 9, and Voyager series. In fact in Voyager, an ex-Borg becomes a part of the crew. (It seems that underneath the hive mind, there are still individuals. They just can’t think as individuals until they are disconnected from the collective.)

(b) Screen share (with audio) NG episode “I Borg”: Guinan confronts a single Borg who has become separated from his Hive:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h8oyCGrbhpc> (1:34 min)

Questions for Discussion:

- Do you think the introduction of individual traits would make the Borg collective stronger or weaker?
- Can you think of any human groups – cultural, historical, political – that share traits with the Borg?
- Do you think that the Borg wonder about the nature of God?

8. Ferengi: Capitalist Combatants (15 minutes)

Teacher asks: What do you already know about the Ferengi?

Teacher introduces: The Ferengi first appear in the NG series. They were crude, insulting little creatures who held unpleasant prejudices against others unlike themselves.

(a) Screen share (with audio) from NG episode “The Last Outpost”:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z4gtPUP5H6o> (stop at 1:52 min)

The Ferengi civilization was built on the ideals of “free enterprise” in which the acquisition of wealth/profit is the sole meaningful goal in life. They are the über capitalists of the galaxy, with their culture centered around greed and profit. Quark (a Ferengi from DS9) once said, “*there is nothing beyond greed. Greed is the purest, most noble of emotions.*” The idols in Ferengi culture are businessmen.

Interestingly, the Ferengi do not stay enemies, mainly because being an enemy of the Federation is unprofitable! They show up in several NG episodes, but the Ferengi really became interesting in the Deep Space 9 series. The character Quark is a regular on DS9, and the writers had the opportunity to explore and evolve the Ferengi race, revealing the Ferengi to have many “good” qualities as well, though their treatment of Ferengi women is something we would consider atrocious. But even that got better over time, rather a lot like our own human history.

(b) Share screen (with audio) from DP9 episode “The Jem’Hadar.” Quark compares Ferengi to Humans: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W5J_qn93Nkc (1:01 min)

(c) Share screen (with audio) from DS9 episode “The Maquis, Part II”: Quark points out that peace at any cost is illogical: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hdQcGzbpN7s> (2:35 min)

Questions for Discussion:

- What do you think about the Ferengi?
- What parts of our human culture do you think they reflect?
- What do you think about their treatment of women by not letting them wear clothes, own property, or participate in business?
- Why do you think that particular part of their society is slow to change?
- Why do you think that it does change? (*Hint: it has to do with profits. The Ferengi discovered that it expanded their bottom line when they allowed women to enter into business. Plus, it was thought that if women had pockets, they would have a place to put their bars of latinum, and so would spend more.*)

9. Extinguish the chalice, saying together: “May the light of truth and the warmth of love go with us in our hearts.”

10. **Leave zoom breakout classroom:** wait until all youth have left, click “Leave” then “Leave Meeting.”

Viewing clips, in order of sequence:

Cardassians:

- NG episode “Chain of Command, Part II”, Picard is captured and tortured. The torturer brings a child into where Picard is being held:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZ3EDTYZTOU> (3:44 min)
- NG episode “The Wounded”: Chief Miles O’Brien talks to a Cardassian about his hatred of them: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Owyj_5TuHQw (1:56 min)

The Borg:

- NG episode “Best of Both Worlds, Part I”: Picard is captured by the Borg and is faced with losing his individuality and being used against his friends:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ieR9AwnHyo> (1:04 min)
- NG episode “I Borg”: Guinan confronts a single Borg who has become separated from his Hive: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h8oyCGrbhpc> (1:34 min)

The Ferengi:

- NG episode “The Last Outpost”: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z4gtPUP5H6o> (2:55 min; only watch to 1:52 min)
- DS9 episode “The Jem’Hadar”: Quark compares Ferengi to Humans:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W5J_qn93Nkc (1:01 min)
- DS9 episode “The Maquis, Part II”: Quark points out that peace at any cost is illogical:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hdQcGzbpN7s> (2:35 min)