

TEACHER NOTES:

- I've only had my ADV students listen to the TED podcasts. They just took notes for practice.
- I haven't developed comprehension questions yet.
- The Charter itself uses a lot of low frequency words, but several people have suggested that we contact her for an ESL version. There are some children's activities you may want to adapt.

Listening & Web Resources

ED 2008, filmed Feb 2008, Posted March 2008

Karen Armstrong makes her TED Prize wish: the Charter for Compassion

TED Global 2009 Filmed July 2009, Posted Sept 2009

Karen Armstrong: Let's revive the Golden Rule

<http://charterforcompassion.org>

The Charter for Compassion

Karen Armstrong, TED Talks 2008 Bio notes:

Religious thinker Karen Armstrong has written more than 20 books on faith and the major religions, studying what Islam, Judaism and Christianity have in common, and how our faiths shaped world history and drive current events.

A former nun, Armstrong has written two books about this experience: *Through the Narrow Gate*, about her seven years in the convent, and *The Spiral Staircase*, about her subsequent spiritual awakening, when she developed her iconoclastic take on the major monotheistic religions -- and on the strains of fundamentalism common to all. She is a powerful voice for ecumenical understanding.

Armstrong's 2008 TED Prize wish asks us to help her assemble the Charter for Compassion, a document around which religious leaders can work together for peace. In late fall 2008, the first draft of the document was written by the world, via a sharing website.

In February 2009 the words of the world were collected and given to the Council of Conscience, a gathering of religious leaders and thinkers, who are now crafting the final document. The Charter will be launched in November 2009.

"I say that religion isn't about believing things. It's ethical alchemy. It's about behaving in a way that changes you, that gives you intimations of holiness and sacredness."

Karen Armstrong on Powells.com

Quotes by Karen Armstrong

- "Look into your own heart, discover what it is that gives you pain and then refuse, under any circumstance whatsoever, to inflict that pain on anybody else."
- "If we don't manage to implement the Golden Rule globally, so that we treat all peoples, wherever and whoever they may be, as though they were as important as ourselves, I doubt that we'll have a viable world to hand on to the next generation."

The Charter for Compassion

The **principle** of compassion lies at the heart of all religious, **ethical** and spiritual **traditions**, calling us always to treat all others as we wish to be treated ourselves. Compassion impels us to work tirelessly to alleviate the suffering of our fellow creatures, to dethrone ourselves from the centre of our world and put another there, and to honour the inviolable sanctity of every single human being, treating everybody, without exception, with absolute justice, equity and respect.

It is also necessary in both public and private life to refrain **consistently** and empathically from inflicting pain. To act or speak violently out of spite, chauvinism, or self-interest, to impoverish, **exploit** or **deny** basic rights to anybody, and to incite hatred by denigrating others—even our enemies—is a **denial** of our common humanity. We **acknowledge** that we have failed to live compassionately and that some have even increased the **sum** of human misery in the name of religion.

We therefore call upon all men and women ~ to **restore** compassion to the centre of morality and religion ~ to return to the ancient **principle** that any **interpretation** of scripture that breeds violence, hatred or disdain is illegitimate ~ to **ensure** that youth are given **accurate** and respectful information about other **traditions**, religions and **cultures** ~ to encourage a **positive appreciation of cultural** and religious **diversity** ~ to cultivate an informed empathy with the suffering of all human beings—even those regarded as enemies.

We urgently need to make compassion a clear, luminous and **dynamic** force in our polarized world. Rooted in a **principled** determination to transcend selfishness, compassion can break down political, dogmatic, **ideological** and religious boundaries. Born of our deep interdependence, compassion is essential to human relationships and to a fulfilled humanity. It is the path to enlightenment, and indispensable to the **creation** of a just **economy** and a peaceful **global community**.