

Virus Under the Microscope

A Play within a Play for teachers, parents and students
about the COVID -19 virus with the introduction and naming of another virus

An educational story (a play) that concludes with hope.
by Robert Hicks

A "Play within a Play" is a play that is performed in the confines of another play. The general audience is not the intended audience, the characters in the play are the audience. In this play, the characters are terrible viruses. The viruses, always silent, are watching and listening to two laboratory technicians in a research lab in Canada.

Black text is read by Teacher/Parent

Green/Red/Blue text is read by Students

For historical record, COVID-19, was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization on March 11, 2020. Since then, many regions around the world, including all Canadian provinces and territories, have declared states of emergency and implemented strict public health measures effectively putting cities under lock-down.

The world's reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic is historic. In the near and far future, people will want to retell the history of this challenging time. This is a unique and teachable event that provides an opportunity to tell thoughtful stories that deliver important lessons.

Stories are a powerful tool to increase understanding and build complex issue engagement. American author Joseph Campbell said, "If you're going to have a story, have a big story, or none at all." The following is a big story - not big in size, big in importance. It is a thoughtful story about the COVID-19 Virus, its effect on people, our human relations and our future. This story could be best depicted as a play.

This is a story about seven slides examined under a microscope in a laboratory. It is a bit frightening. It introduces bad viruses that can infect our bodies, minds and spirits. Many people love a scary story, including children from toddlers to teens. Some love to shiver in response to something creepy or scary. Parental discretion is advised.

Both technicians are very experienced at microscopic examination, collecting and assessing samples, and running different diagnostic tests. They know how to apply their advanced technical knowledge and skills to run the most recent technologies in their field. They are smart people. They have been in the business a long time. They have seen several viruses. They put creepy things on slides and look at them up close all day long. They know what they are doing.

A microscope slide is a thin flat piece of glass used to hold objects for examination under a microscope. Typically, the "object" is mounted on the slide, and then both are inserted together in the microscope for viewing. This arrangement allows several slide-mounted objects to be quickly inserted and removed from the microscope, labelled, transported, and stored in appropriate slide cases or folders thousands of times a day, all over the world.

This story begins with the first technician admitting to the second technician that the COVID-19 Virus really scares him.

Although the majority of people infected by COVID-19 will not require hospitalization and about 80 percent of cases appear to be mild, the virus has a remarkably high rate of severe, and fatal cases compared to the regular flu.

It is believed the virus came to Canada on January 27th, when a man returning to Toronto from Wuhan, China, tested positive. Maybe it came from the United States? It is difficult to know where the first case came from. In 87 days, there were 42,100 confirmed cases and 2,147 deaths in Canada, and it only took 48 days for all Canadian provinces and territories to declare states of emergency.

Tech #1 “This COVID-19 Virus is really bad; it scares me, and we don't even know what the solution might be. We haven't seen anything like this before. The entire world is going to have to come together to fight this.”

Note: In the play the COVID-19 Virus enters the stage, it is ugly, big in size, bigger than the lab technicians, but it is invisible to them. It does not speak. It sits down on a stool at the end of the lab table. It makes itself comfortable and just listens.

Tech #2 agrees with him but wants to reassure him and says, “We shouldn't worry too much. The world is showing a sense of community like nothing we have seen before. If we are lucky, this pandemic may result in our differences fading away, our similarities becoming clearer, and countries may begin to think less about fighting each other. That would be a very good thing. I prefer to be an optimist. It doesn't matter who finds the solution, what matters is we find it fast. This is a rare moment in time; we are all together. I believe the world will come together and we will beat this virus. We have to.”

Tech #1, still very concerned and stressed says, “I have been thinking a lot about this since it first hit the news. We are going to have to conquer this thing as fast as possible, and we are going to have to face a messy aftermath economically. Many people will find themselves out of work because of this, and many businesses will be hurt badly. However, trying to think on the bright side, I do think Canada is resilient. I think people will be willing to cooperate and help each other to survive this. Our strong multicultural society has been working hard, we have been getting along very well for a long time; it has to stay that way!”

Tech #2 agrees with him and says, “Yes, in Canada there is a positive connection between people and the community. There is a bond or ‘glue’ that binds people together. We care about the overall health of our country and everyone wants others to be okay. In Canada, when people need help, they can get it; there is a will to help each other. We can get through this virus problem; don't worry.”

Tech #1 says, “I have been studying this. I think a healthy and resilient society, is a cohesive society, a society that wakes up every morning and asks itself, “Is today a day I ask for help, or a day I offer help?”, and then decides to do both every day. Sort of a please help me and let me help you attitude every day. I think that describes Canada fairly-well; at least I hope it does. Every citizen has a right to expect the assistance of society in times of need, if not by government action, through a voluntary organization. That is who we are. It is just one of the things that makes Canada a wonderful place to live.”

Tech #2 says, “Yes that is true, the way you described Canada makes me think hope resides in our social cohesion. That is a very positive statement; however, this moment in time is negative. Now, because of COVID-19, every level of government will be on the hottest-of-hot-seats to deliver the economic and social assistance required to take care of people and get them back to work. Let me read to you what is in today's (April 25,2020) Hamilton Spectator newspaper.

Canada's minister of economic development Melanie Joy said, "We stand at a unique juncture in Canadian history. More than ever, our decisions will ensure not just the success of our economy, but our communities. More than ever, the personal is political. More than ever, we must get this right. Canadians can rest assured that government has their backs. Our message to Canadian workers and business is clear: we're here with concrete measures and supports in all regions of our country. We'll be here for you in the weeks and months to come. And we'll get through this together."

That was well said, but at this time a lot is going to be expected from her and many other leaders. They are going to have work a lot of hours on this problem. I hope they don't get burned-out from stress. If they can't take-the-heat, maybe we should replace them with young people; after all, the future of Canada is going to belong to them soon. Canada will come through this, it might look different in some ways, or many ways, but we are strong and together we will be fine!"

Tech #1 says, "I wish I shared your confidence about that. Although I am proud of our multi-cultural society and Canada's world-wide reputation for tolerance and goodwill among all people, we do have problems that I have been thinking about; problems with our human relations that exist as bad viruses. They can get in the way of a smooth recovery, not only here in Canada but in every country.

I have been doing some research and would appreciate if you would take a look at something and give me your opinion. I put together a slide-deck of seven slides that I am very concerned about. Will you put them on your microscope, take a very close look, and tell me what you think?"

Tech #2 says, "Sure I'd be happy to, but you're scaring me. I hope it is not something like the COVID. Where is this slide-deck?"

Tech #1 says, "I will get them. I call the first five slides "The Terrible Five". The sixth slide is the scariest of all; so scary it has its own name. The name I have given this virus is 23 letters, so I abbreviated it to RPDBB-20. The thought of it keeps me up at night. As we know, some viruses have high mutation rates that allow for fast evolution; this could be one of them. It could become very infectious and develop into a virus that could really mess up our future and be a big threat to mankind. I will hold onto Slide 7 until you have looked at the first six. The first five are scary but Slide 6 is terrifying!"

Virus

"The Terrible Five" – Microscope Slide 1

The Racism Virus

I am racism. My racist attitudes and beliefs are born from my misconceptions about people based on perceived racial lines that are often founded on my fear of difference, including differences in customs, values, religion, physical appearance and ways of living and viewing the world. I destroy community cohesion and I create divisions in society. I violate principles of justice. I stand in the way of building respectful, inclusive and safe societies where everyone has an equal opportunity to participate in the economic, social, cultural, recreational and political life of the community.

I continue to be manifested in various ways in society where there is a denial of my contemporary racial oppression. As the diversity in the world continues to grow, people are trying to remedy me, but I try every day to stay strong and grow stronger. I am number one of "The Terrible Five".

Note: In the play, the Racism Virus now enters the stage. Like the COVID-19 Virus, it is also ugly, big in size, bigger than the lab technicians, but it is also invisible to them. It does not speak. It sits down on a stool at the other end of the lab table. It makes itself comfortable and just listens.

Virus

“The Terrible Five” – Microscope Slide 2

The Prejudice Virus

I am prejudice. I am an unjustified or incorrect attitude (usually negative) towards an individual based solely on the individual's membership of a social group. I negatively prejudge another person or group without getting to know their beliefs, thoughts and feelings behind their words and actions. I am grounded in misconception, misunderstanding and inflexible generalizations.

Man is not born prejudiced like me, rather, my prejudice and my way of acting is learned. My prejudice is a hostile attitude. I am a judgment that resists facts and ignores truth and honesty. I am number two of “The Terrible Five”.

Note: In the play, the Prejudice Virus now enters the stage. Like the other two viruses sitting at the table, it is also ugly, big in size, bigger than the lab technicians, but it is also invisible to them. It does not speak. It pulls up a stool at the table which is starting to get crowded.

Virus

“The Terrible Five” – Microscope Slide 3

The Discrimination Virus

I am discrimination. I am the unjust treatment of people, or the treating of someone as inferior based on their race, sex, national origin, age or other characteristics.

I can be either direct or indirect, and can include; harassment, ‘unwanted conduct’, with the purpose or effect of violating a person’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

I can also include victimization which occurs when someone suffers a ‘detiment’ (a loss, disadvantage, damage or harm such as being left out and ignored or being denied training or a promotion). I am number three of “The Terrible Five”.

Note: In the play, the Discrimination Virus now enters the stage. Like the other three viruses sitting at the table, it is also ugly, big in size, bigger than the lab technicians, and invisible to them. It decides to pull up a stool at the next lab table to have room to be comfortable. It does not speak. It sits, watches and listens.

Virus

“The Terrible Five” – Microscope Slide 4

The Bullying Virus

I am bullying. I am unwanted, aggressive behaviour that is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. I humiliate, intimidate and threaten others. I tease and name-call. I make inappropriate sexual comments. I taunt and spread rumours. I deliberately hurt the reputation of others. I hit, push, steal possessions and I may do sexual assault. I can cause anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, feelings of despair and loneliness. I can destroy the lives of others. I am number four of “The Terrible Five”.

Note: In the play, the Bullying Virus now enters the stage. Like the other four viruses sitting at the tables, it is ugly, big in size, bigger than the lab technicians, and invisible to them. It decides to pull up a stool next to the Discrimination Virus. It does not speak. Like the others, it sits, watches and listens.

Virus

“The Terrible Five” – Microscope Slide 5

The Bigotry Virus

I am bigotry. I am the characteristic of a prejudiced person who is intolerant of opinions, lifestyles, or identities differing from my own. I am stronger than prejudice. I am a more severe mindset of hatred that is often accompanied by discriminatory behaviour.

I am the state of mind of a bigot. I am someone who, as a result of prejudices, treats other people with hatred, contempt, and intolerance based on their ethnicity, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status, or other characteristics. I am arrogant and mean-spirited. I am number five of “The Terrible Five”.

Note: In the play, the Bigotry Virus now enters the stage. Like the other five viruses sitting at the tables, it is ugly, big in size, bigger than the lab technicians. It decides to pull up a stool at the lab table and sit beside the Bullying Virus. It does not speak. Like the others, it sits, watches and listens.

Tech #2 has now viewed the five slides (“The Terrible Five”), and the conversation between the two techs resumes.

Tech #2 says, “WOW! They are five terrible viruses for sure. I see clearly, from the slide descriptions, we should be doing so much more to address them. If the world can come together so quickly to fight COVID-19, why haven’t we conquered these five terrible viruses that have been with us for such a long, long time?”

Note: If this was a theatrical play within a play, and not just a scary story, this is where the two lab technicians and “The Terrible Five” Viruses would sing a song titled “The Terrible Five”. If you have musical talent, you can write the song and insert it here – give it a try – you may be more creative than you think.

The lab technicians are unaware “The Terrible Five” Viruses are mocking them during the song. The COVID-19 Virus does not join in with this song and decides instead to stroll around the stage while rubbing itself on all nearby surfaces.

Tech #1 says, “Exactly! Why? - that is what I have been wondering about for a very long time. If we don't address them soon, they could mutate into Slide 6. If that happens, the world will have a harder time dealing with the multitude of problems we are sure to be confronted with. Look at Slide 6; it is the scariest slide of all. When you are done, I will share some good news.”

Note: In the play, the Raceprejdisbullybigotism (RPDBB-20) Virus now enters the stage. Like the other six viruses sitting at the tables, it is ugly, big in size, bigger than the lab technicians. It decides to pull up a stool in the middle of the stage. It is the “new” Terrible Virus in Town and it wants to show off. The other six viruses get off their stools, wander over to it, walk around it and stare at it, wondering who this very mean-looking Virus is?

Virus

A Possible New Virus - Microscope Slide 6 The Raceprejdisbullybigotism (RPDBB-20) Virus

Raceprejdisbullybigotism is a portmanteau word, which in linguistics is a blend of words formed by combining or morphing existing words that all relate to a singular concept.

The reason I created this word, in this story/play, was to draw your attention to the words I call ““The Terrible Five””. Think about these words and realize how terrible they are. Our society is not addressing these words enough.

It is also a neologism. A neologism is a Greek word that means "new" "speech/utterance", and is a relatively recent or isolated term, word, or phrase that may be in the process of entering common use.

Raceprejdisbullybigotism 2020 (RPDBB-20) is combining Racism, Prejudice, Discrimination, Bullying and Bigotry into one word describing the potential for a very dangerous disease impacting humankind.

People suffering with raceprejdisbullybigotism will see their daily reality connected to the characteristics of racism, prejudice, discrimination, bullying and bigotry. When they think these thoughts, their views can become infectious. This virus can lead societies to the dark side of moral conviction were “oughts”, “shoulds” and “musts” to accomplish anything positive, can become can’ts, won’ts and will-nots that oppose everything. Thinking in this negative way, and living with these terrible values, can do great harm in our physical world and population.

Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau, has said, “We need to make sure we’re all working together to change mindsets, to change attitudes, and to fight against bad habits that we have as a society.”

I named Raceprejdisbullybigotism 2020 (RPDBB-20) because it represents the “bad habits” our Prime Minister was talking about. It has the potential to mutate into a very dangerous virus within society. We must keep in mind that mutations can occur silently and spontaneously and can be induced by environmental factors. In the case of RPDBB-20 those environmental factors can be the stresses of economic hardships and the many stresses we are experiencing now and are yet to experience with climate change.

People infected with the RPDBB-20 virus will not wear masks and they will not distance themselves from others to protect others from their views. They think they have power over others. The morphing of “The Terrible Five”, Racism, Prejudice, Discrimination, Bullying and Bigotry, will damage our world in ways beyond our imaginations. They are hindering our ability to live together in peace and harmony, and this can prevent a safe and healthy future.

Tech #2 has finished viewing scary Slide 6 and the conversation between the two techs resumes:

Tech #2 says, “You said Slide 6 was the scariest of all. I can understand why! This RPDBB-20 virus is a dangerous mutation of the viruses you called ““The Terrible Five””. It combines the terrible characteristics of each of them.

If this virus spreads, it could cause a tsunami of hateful ideologies and bias-motivated incidents of aggression everywhere at a time when communities should be working together to get through the COVID-19 crisis. A world-wide spread of RPDBB-20 would target specific communities in many places with discriminatory or racist incidents. A single bias crime can ignite intense and long-standing inter-community tensions and the impact of bias crimes may spread well beyond the target society to general society. This would be TERRIBLE!

Maybe it is a good thing that during the COVID-19 crisis we are forced to reflect on a new way of being, a new way to think and wonder what we will be faced with next. Our emotions are raw from the COVID-19 crisis and we are having to face some pressing answers to questions we never imaged we would be asking.

This would be an especially bad time for a Raceprejdisbullybigotism RPDBB-20 virus to take hold and spread. If it does, people will have to commit to confront it to help end the spread of all forms of hate crimes and bigotry.

The world will have to come together to denounce the hateful speeches that a RPDBB-20 virus would encourage while it spreads misinformation, casts blame, and promotes racism, discrimination or violent action against many communities that deserve to be treated with respect.

Tech #1 says, “You have summed up my concerns exactly. If this RPDBB-20 virus takes hold, it could unravel the solidarity the world is feeling at this moment in the fight to address the COVID-19 crisis. This RPDBB-20 virus is just in my imagination; however, I think it should be in the minds of everyone. At the very least, I think the world should be nervous enough about this proposed 23 letter word to think hard about it. Maybe it could be used as a teaching tool to help people think about ““The Terrible Five”” and why we have to do everything we can to confront them.

It would be a good thing for the world to focus on RPDBB-20 and how it harms our ability to live in harmony. However, everyone would have to be careful not to falsely and unfairly accuse others of being infected and unjustly damage reputations. That would be a symptom that the virus is within ourselves. It is likely everyone will experience moments of ““The Terrible Five”” virus in themselves at times throughout their lives. We all need to be aware of that and we should self-diagnose ourselves sometimes.

To err is human, everyone can have a bad day, but when people become deeply infected by ““The Terrible Five”” (RPDBB-20 virus), when they deeply harm or intend to harm others, that is when the world needs to stand up and stand against them.

The good news is, I think we can beat this. I describe an antidote for RPDBB-20 on Slide 7 – take a look.”

Antidote

Fighting the Virus – Microscope Slide 7

The Good News

An Antidote to the Raceprejdisbullybigotism RPDBB-20 Virus

Note: The lab technicians return to the microscope to view Slide 7. The RPDBB-20 virus looks on silently; "The Terrible Five" watch also and they all look worried. They listen with a worried look because they know that Slide 7 is a danger to them. The COVID-19 Virus also watches and listens in silence because it realizes if people can attack RPDBB-20 effectively, they can also attack it more effectively and therefore Slide 7 is a danger to them also.

As the lab technicians hover around the microscope (>2m distance between them), the narrator reads the words on Slide 7:

Where is Superman when we need him? What would Superman fight for in the aftermath of COVID-19? Who on earth can we turn to in the year 2020 to protect our planet?

In these troubled times the closest person we have to Superman is 17-year-old Swedish Environmental Activist, Greta Thunberg. Greta is the world's most prominent climate activist. She has been given great strength by the support of the climate strike movement "Fridays for Future", and many other climate justice movements in other countries.

The youth of our world are the new "Superpeople" for our times. They may not be faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive or able to leap over tall buildings in a single bound like Superman could; however, unlike Superman they are human, and they will be faster than a streak of lightning, more powerful than the pounding surf, and mightier than a roaring hurricane in demanding the fundamental societal change that is required to improve the health of our world.

Fridays For Future says, "We are fighting for our future and our lives because they are directly threatened by the climate crisis and the ecological breakdown. We are taking action against it because we want to protect the beauty of the earth, the diversity of species and the lives of all beings. Our goal is to overcome the climate crisis and to create a society that lives in harmony with its fellow beings and its environment. Join us!"

They also say, "Our movement is independent of commercial interests and political parties and knows no borders. We strike because we care for our planet and for each other. We have hope that humanity can change, avert the worst climate disasters and build a better future. Every day there are more of us and together we are strong. Everyone is welcome. Everyone is needed. No one is too small to make a difference. Join us!"

Before the Climate Action Summit, Greta had 4.5 million followers on Instagram. Now her follower count is over 10 million and it is growing fast. There is no doubt - the youth of our world are now the "Superpeople" for our times.

Greta's influence on the world stage has been described as the "Greta effect". She has received numerous honours and awards including; *Time Magazine's* 100 most influential people, the youngest *Time Person of the Year*, inclusion in the *Forbes List of The World's 100 Most Powerful Women* (2019), and two consecutive nominations for the *Nobel Peace Prize* (2019 and 2020). Greta deserves all of these honours and awards - and more.

Greta recently said; "Everyone must fight the climate crisis and the corona virus pandemic simultaneously and not allow the health crisis to delay action on cutting carbon emissions".

I agree. We should all agree!

Speaking at an event in New Zealand in May 2019, the 9th Secretary-General of the United Nations said, his generation was, "not winning the battle against climate change" and that it's up to youth to "rescue the planet".

To "rescue the planet", young people everywhere will need to appeal to the attitudes and understandings that shape public morality with the aim of strengthening them, but they now have the social media network to help them do this. Millions of young people are focused on what must be done.

According to the World Bank, 42% of the world's population was under 25 years old in 2017, and according to Statista as of 2018, there were about 7.6 billion people, and as of mid-2019, about 26 percent, or close to 2 billion of the world's population, were under 15 years old.

With the help of young people, we must not, and we can be sure they will not, let the word "justice" lose its meaning. Its meaning has more to do with "fair play" than with "payback." The real meaning of justice is not found in revenge but in reparation, reconciliation, and restoration. The meanings of words like justice, love, honesty, truth, good, evil, hate, peace and morality are critically important in our world of contemporary tolerance.

People of every age must know that much the same way that love is blind, hatred of raceprejdisbullybigotism is also blind and makes human beings prone to believe things that are simply not true. They know that too many of us fall victim to this offensive, repulsive and socially inappropriate behaviour and way of thinking. They know that they must address the hate within raceprejdisbullybigotism the same way that they must address climate change – together – forever united and never divided.

Looking beyond everyday news of politics and the violence in different parts of the world, young people are taking-in the wider view of how people treat other, and how they should treat others better. In the light of the many lessons, they are learning from the COVID-19 pandemic, they are also learning that there is no better time than now to take this opportunity, to name it – its name is "raceprejdisbullybigotism" – to discuss it more – to condemn it – to denounce it and declare it to be reprehensibly wrong without reservation.

Note: Now the RPDBB-20 Virus and "The Terrible Five" are getting visibly upset. The lab technicians still cannot see them, but the audience can see them. They can see that the viruses are now alarmed, horrified and very frightened by the narrator's words. The viruses realize the control they have enjoyed for so long will become weaker as time passes. They know that they are now facing danger. The viruses are beginning to see they must fear the condemnation of billions of people of every age, but especially young people under the age of 15 who will act. Their actions will impact the future of their world over the next 10 years. All viruses are good at mathematics, they are frightened by the numbers.

Raceprejdisbullybigotism is a recommended new word for this decade. The antidotes for it exist in every country; they have for hundreds of years in young people. The difference today is the world's young people are very connected, very focused and very powerful. Now, in the same way the world has come together to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, the world has to come together, and will come together led by young people to fight raceprejdisbullybigotism.

Raceprejdisbullybigotism; a virus that could become (maybe should become) known world-wide as "RPDBB-20."

The conversation resumes to end the story:

Tech #2 comments, “I feel better now. Thanks for letting me view the slides. They are a real eye opener. I wish people all over the world could view them and read them to their friends and family. I think the slides (this story) should be posted in every corporation, every workplace - everywhere on this earth. Slide 7 gives me hope.”



Tech #1 ends this story by responding as follows:

“I agree, there is very good reason for hope. We can hope because we can rely on the world's youth to bring about required change.

Greta Thunberg said on Jan 29, 2020, “The aim of the Fridays For Future Global Movement is to promote ecological, climatic and social responsibility as well as mental health.”

These words make the viruses go into a frenzy on stage with a sudden and overpowering feeling of fear. They panic and head for the exit to get away from the words of the narrator, and the lab technicians, and Greta Thunberg. In the process of trying to escape, they touch the surfaces that are contaminated with the COVID-19 Virus.

As they leave the stage, they all begin to feel feverish. They know their immune systems are not strong. They know they will become weaker and weaker. They know the audience is becoming more powerful than they are, and they know that young people will come after them - faster than a streak of lightning, more powerful than the pounding surf, and mightier than a roaring hurricane - to make them disappear forever. The COVID-19 Virus watches the frenzy.

The COVID-19 Virus has been feeling bad about what it has done to the people of the world. It knew it could spread itself to “The Terrible Five” and “RPDBB-20” because they were not social distancing and they were not wearing gloves and face masks like the lab technicians were. The COVID-19 Virus leaves the stage feeling tired, knowing, that just like the other viruses, it's time will soon come to an end.

Tech #1 continues, “I have no doubt that Greta, with the help of the world's youth, will accomplish that goal and much more. I am confident they can be faster than a streak of lightning, more powerful than the pounding surf and mightier than a roaring hurricane, in demanding the fundamental societal changes that are required. Governments and corporations would be wise to recognize, and accept, their wishes now, to ensure a healthy and productive future for themselves and for society at large.

During this global COVID-19 crisis our common humanity has revealed itself. This is a teachable moment.

With an evolving society, the concrete demands of the common good will also evolve. This means the task of creating a good life for all members of society, in all parts of the world, will never be perfectly realized. With pervasive temptations of individualism and self-interest, and the existence of “The Terrible Five”, one of the most pressing demands of the common good is the persistent conversion of hearts in the realization that we do not exist for ourselves. We are all in this - one world - together.

We may soon face challenges bigger than COVID-19. We must prepare now for how our world will be transformed by the intense difficulty, trouble, and danger that the climate crisis will deliver. We must understand that even small increases in temperature will lead to large increases in evaporation, large increases in powerful storms and wildfires, and damage to our food supply. We must understand that even small changes in our human relations and our ability to get along and cooperate with each other - will matter.

The greatest discovery of this teachable moment may be that not only can individual people change their future by merely changing their attitude, so too could the entire world if we come together in solidarity.

In the hope of converting hearts, securing world-wide cooperation, confronting climate change successfully, and defeating “RPDBB-20” everywhere, it would help if people would read these seven slides in their schools, their homes, and pass them along to others.

Tech #2 comments, “I agree, that’s a good idea. I feel better. You really thought about this, and you worked hard producing the slides. Is there anything else you can say to give me hope that we will be okay?”

Tech #1 continues, “Well I wrote a poem. Would you like to hear it? For over 40 years, when not working, I have been a World Peace Activist, Environmental Activist, and a Poet.

Tech #2 says, “That explains why you took the time to make the slides. I’m glad you did. I live a busy life and to be honest, I have not been thinking about the need to confront the behaviours of “The Terrible Five”. I will try to do a better job at it since working to improve our human relations is important and there are a lot of people being hurt by “The Terrible Five”. I would like to hear the poem you wrote.”

Tech #1 continues, “The title of the poem is, “Let's Bake a Loaf of Peace”.

Let's Bake a Loaf of Peace

There is as much hunger for Peace in this world as there is for bread;
Conflicts starve us all.

There is as much love in the homes of ever country as there is in your own;
Love unites us all.

There is as much need for understanding in this world as there is for forgiveness;
Reconciliation can save us all.

To satisfy the worlds hunger for Peace;
Feed yourself with good judgment,
Feed your governments with good advice,
Feed all others with compassion and hope,
Feed them with opportunities to help them cope.
Let's grow more crops of goodwill and respect,
Let's grow more caring and more sharing,
Let's harvest the will to feed us all,
Let's bake a loaf of Peace.

Robert Hicks

Tech #2 says, “That poem - says it all - beautifully.”

The End

In 2002, I was nominated for the YMCA Canada Peace Medal, for the Hamilton and Burlington Ontario area, for organizing a special joint meeting for world peace talks between two Toastmasters clubs. The meeting was open to the public (10 speeches to promote world peace were presented in one evening).

World leaders should have been the ones giving speeches to promote Peace in 2002. They should be giving them today. I think all of us, and all world leaders, should be reminded of the speech that was given on June 10, 1963 by US President John F. Kennedy.

Speaking in Washington, D.C., Kennedy talked about, "The most important topic on earth: world peace." He said, "What kind of peace do we seek? I am talking about genuine peace, the kind of peace that makes life on earth worth living, the kind that enables men and nations to grow and to hope and to build a better life for their children—not merely peace for Americans but peace for all men and women—not merely peace in our time but peace for all time. Too many of us think [peace] is impossible. Too many think it unreal. But that is a dangerous, defeatist belief. It leads to the conclusion that war is inevitable—that mankind is doomed—that we are gripped by forces we cannot control. We need not accept that view. Our problems are man-made—therefore, they can be solved by man. And man can be as big as he wants. No problem of human destiny is beyond human beings. Man's reason and spirit have often solved the seemingly unsolvable—and we believe they can do it again."

Those wise words were spoken 57 years ago. Today's leaders should be speaking with similar words!

Even though there is not peace on earth, everyone longs for it, yearns for it and strives for it, like they always have. Our world leaders need to work harder to secure peace everywhere, now and in the future. All countries shoulder important responsibilities on a host of major issues concerning the peace and development of mankind, and therefore all countries should be involved in the peace process. All calls for peace should be heard, listened to closely, taken seriously, and commented on by every country.

Young people have something to say about this. The world needs to listen to them. They are now very large in number, they are connected, and their words are powerful. Their opinion will have a significant influence on international foreign policy decisions in the future. The world should know by now, as young people do, that military options are never a solution. Violence, wherever it comes from and whatever form it takes, must be firmly condemned.

On March 5th 2003, as a member of Poets-Against-the-War, I headed the Canadian delegation of a world-wide effort to present the leaders of 7 countries with 13,000 Anti-War Poems that had been submitted to a Poets-for-Peace website over a period of just 6 weeks. Two days before the start of the Iraq War on March 17th, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien announced that Canada would not participate in the pending invasion saying Canada refused to declare war against Iraq without United Nations Security Council approval and because the people of Canada did not support it. Maybe the 13,000 poems helped to motivate that decision.



My presentation of poems
to MP Paddy Torsney



MP Paddy Torsney presented
the poems to PM Jean Chrétien

That was 17 years ago. Today, the voices of billions of young people are much stronger and far more powerful than 13,000 poems. The strength of young people today gives us very good reason for hope that a more peaceful and more environmentally healthy future for the world is possible.

About our Environment

In 2004, I formed an Ontario Public Interest Student Research Working Group at McMaster University called SMART - Student Math Action Research Team. The Slogan - making mathematics matter more for the environment. I gave presentations at a Natural Resources Canada Conference in May 2005 in Montreal, and to the Government of Ontario at Queen's Park . People listened politely and said, "Thank You", but not much else. Even back then (16 years ago), all the numbers that had to be crunched, had been crunched to tell us the most important thing we had to know.

The most important number we crunched in 2004 may still be the most important environmental number in the world today. Using numbers provided by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the European Environment Agency (EEA), and with the help of Natural Resources Canada we calculated the following:

Every 426 litres of fuel we burn (or every 113 US gallons) produces 1 metric tonne of CO₂ greenhouse gas. This means that an amount of gasoline that will likely fit under your kitchen table, (15.069 cubic feet and weighing 704 lbs), will send 1 tonne of GHG (3.13 times the weight of the gasoline) into our atmosphere to take up (19,683 cubic feet of space) 27 feet x 27 feet x 27 feet, and stay there for hundreds of years.

(The reason the CO₂ gas is heavier is because gasoline contains carbon and hydrogen atoms. During combustion, the carbon (C) from the fuel combines with oxygen (O₂) from the air to produce carbon dioxide (CO₂). The additional weight comes from the oxygen.)

The oil industry and the auto industry has known this 426-litre number for years, but they did not want the world's gas consumers to know this number. They successfully hid this very meaningful number that people would be able to understand, by talking instead about a very small and seemingly insignificant sounding number, "grams" of CO₂ per km (or mile) driven, numbers too small for people to visualize. The smallest numbers they could use that, in effect, pulled the wool over the eyes of the world.

This is largely the reason we have a serious climate crisis problem today. As a result of not knowing this sooner, we now find ourselves with a more difficult task ahead. The need to replace the over 1 billion gas engine vehicles driving on our roads every day with more efficient electric engine vehicles as fast as possible.

**The word “virus” has its roots in the Latin term for “poison.”
Our vehicles are a virus to the sky above us.
Please drive less.**