

An Introduction to Human Rights and Activism

Year Level: Junior High

Key Learning Area: Humanities and Social Sciences

Outcomes: After completing this unit, students should be more aware of what human rights are, how they are defined in the U.S. and internationally, and should be able to recognize, analyse, and question violations of such inalienable rights and why they need to be granted by a governing body instead of being automatically granted based on our shared humanity.

LESSON OUTCOME:

To know what human rights are and which national and international bodies grant said rights.
To understand that human rights belong to everybody, without exception.
To understand that every human right is important for human beings to thrive and survive.
To be able to challenge and expand upon national and international lists of human rights to see what's not but should be included.
To gain an understanding of activism and advocacy around missing rights.

LESSON STRUCTURE:

Time	Day 1: What Are Human Rights and Who Grants Them?	Teaching Approaches
20 M.	Students read the UN's " Universal Declaration of Human Rights "	Suggested approach for the readings: popcorn reading so students all take turns reading these aloud and pay attention to see where they need to pick up and start reading.
20 M.	The teacher leads the students in a discussion through the socratic method – asking questions, asking them for answers, letting them ask questions, letting their peers answer and filling in gaps in answers when needed.	
20 M.	Students read the U.S. " Bill of Rights "	
30 M.	Students break into groups of 4-5 students and compare and contrast the two documents that grant rights. Students should be guided and asked questions like given these two documents, what are human rights? Do these feel complete to you? Is one more thought out than the other? What would you add, if given the chance? Should bodies like the U.N. and the U.S. government “grant” rights? Does this contradict the idea that they are “inalienable?”	
15 M.	Students share what their groups did with the rest of the class. The student's answers can be compiled on the board so they can see a complete list of what they think rights are based on these documents and what rights should be added or they can be recorded on a Google Doc or other digital medium for later visiting (or in the case of a virtual classroom). Save their answers for the next day.	

5 M. flex window	End class with one question for next time – how do we learn about the upholding or violations of human rights? Who informs us and how reliable are they?	
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Time	Day 2: Everyday Human Rights	Teaching Materials
1 Hour	<p>Human Rights Poster Board Activity: now that students have a base knowledge of what human rights are according to the U.N. and U.S., students will be broken up into <i>different</i> groups than they were the day before into groups of 4-5 students.</p> <p>Students will be asked to make a board that includes articles that illustrate the five following things:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Rights being practiced or enjoyed 2) Rights being denied 3) Rights being protected 4) Rights in conflict 5) At least one example of something that <i>isn't</i> a right that they think should be <p>Students should take note of what papers their articles/examples come from as well as the tone of the paper: e.g. was it aware that it was showing a human right's violation or did it paint it as something else?</p>	<p>Multiple current newspapers – from the last month or so.</p> <p>Scissors</p> <p>Poster board</p> <p>Tape or Glue</p> <p>Note – if doing this virtually, students can make a Power Point or Prezi to act as their board to replace these materials.</p>
30 M.	Members of the group will present their poster to the class and explain how their examples fit into each category.	
10 M.	Teach leads the class in a thoughtful discussion of the media coverage of human rights – which papers were clear in what they were representing, and which obscured what was going on.	
5 M. Flex/End Class	End with a question leading into tomorrow's activity – what do human rights look like in their neighborhood? In their city? In their state?	

Time	Day 3: Thinking Locally About Human Rights	Teaching Materials
1 Hour	<p>Students are broken up into groups of 3-4, and these groups should yet again be varied (if possible) from the groups they were in before.</p> <p>Next, students are asked to draw their neighborhood, town, or city (depending on their setting and how far the teacher would like this project to extend) including major public buildings (parks, schools, etc.) and public services (hospitals, fire departments, etc.) and other places important to a community (movie theatres, stores, etc.).</p> <p>When the maps are complete, students will be asked to analyse their maps from a human rights perspective. What human rights do they associate with different places on their maps? For example, does a grocery store denote a right to food? Where is food easily accessible and where is it harder to access on their map?</p>	<p>Art supplies and chart paper and/or poster board</p> <p>This can also be made virtual – students can use a Paint program to draw as well.</p>
45 M.	<p>Each group will be asked to share their maps and explain the following points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Did any of your maps have a higher concentration of rights than other parts? How might you explain this? 2) Did any parts have fewer rights or no rights associated? Why might that be? 3) Can you connect any of yesterday’s newspaper activity with what you’re seeing on your map today? 4) When making your map, were there any places within the community where people’s rights are violated? 5) Are there people in this community whose rights are violated? 6) What happens to your community when someone’s human rights are violated? 7) Are there any places in this community where people can take action and protect human rights or prevent violations from occurring? 	
5 M. flex time/wrap up class	<p>Question leading into next class session: Given what you’ve seen in the news and what you’ve seen in your local area, what violations of human rights seem most prevalent and how do we, as members of a society, address those violations?</p>	

Time	Day 4: Activism and Human Rights	Teaching Materials
20 M.	<p>Students will, on their own (while sharing art supplies), make an action plan for addressing a human rights violation. The students will consider the following (which should be written on the board) and will have access to all of the projects and materials they've done in the past few days:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Selecting a problem. Pick one violation of human rights, either in your area or in your paper (or one that occurred in both) to focus on. Be specific in what the violation is and try to give a definition of the problem itself. 2) Research the problem. Looking back at the news paper articles and your local project, what do you think the root of this violation of human rights is? Where does it occur? Who does it occur to? Who is protected? 3) Brainstorm possible solutions for addressing this violation and choose one as a plan of action. 	<p>Art supplies and poster board</p> <p>Or a virtual medium like Power Point or Prezi</p> <p>A simple piece of paper to keep track of coalition mates.</p>
30 M.	<p>After the students have identified their human rights violation, researched their problem, and have a solution in mind, half the students should go around the room and set up a presentation of their work in a gallery-style setup. The other half of the students should walk around with their work and search out human rights violations/solutions that parallel their own and form coalitions. Students presenting and students walking around the room can switch roles after 15 minutes. The students should make a list of other students they are forming a coalition with.</p>	<p>If doing this activity online – half the students can be put into breakout rooms and the other half can tour the breakout rooms or students can post their projects and have other students respond virtually to form coalitions.</p>
30 M.	<p>At then end of the gallery, students should get together in their coalitions and brainstorm the following together:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What is the overarching problem their coalition is fighting? In which ways do their individual human rights violations link up with the others in the coalition? 2) What possible solutions do you guys have now that you are in a coalition that you didn't have alone? Is your plan of action changing based on numbers? 3) Who is your opposition? Who would challenge your coalition and the rights you are fighting for? How can you address them? 4) Focus on recruitment – how can you grow your cause? Who can you reach out to outside of your coalition that 	<p>Art supplies and a poster board</p>

<p>20 M.</p> <p>10 M.</p>	<p>might offer some support? Can you avoid or refute the opposition's stance in order to gain more support?</p> <p>5) If you were to implement your plan, do you see it working? What pitfalls might you face? Can you plan around those? What would help you achieve your goal in an ideal scenario?</p> <p>Coalitions present their answers to the five questions above to the room and get feedback/support from their peers for their plan of action.</p> <p>Teacher and students discuss what they've learned about human rights, human rights violations, and organizing around those violations.</p> <p>Teacher keeps the student's works up on the walls around them for the term to reinforce what they've learned for at least a month after the unit. If this is a virtual classroom, the teacher makes these works available on their digital class platform for the remainder of the semester.</p>	
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