



Human Rights in the U.S.

Lesson Plan: Human Rights, Responsibility, and You

Grade Level: 6-8



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Lesson Plan: Human Rights, Responsibility, and You

Goal: To provide students with a basic understanding of human rights

Objectives:

- Students will be able to define what it means to be human.
- Students will relate human rights to human needs.
- Students will have a basic understanding of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- Students will be able to explain how they are responsible for upholding their own rights and the rights of others.

Essential Question: What are human rights?

Materials:

- Handout: Universal Declaration of Human Rights - abbreviated version (see page 6)
- Crayons and or markers
- Glue and scissors
- Old newspapers and magazines with lots of images
- Large pieces of roll paper (enough for the class to have one piece per group of 3 or 4 students)

Time Frame: 2-3 class periods

Grade Level: 6-8

Appropriate Subject Areas: Language Arts, Social Studies, and Student Council

Vocabulary: Human Rights, Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

Teacher Background:

The teacher will need a basic understanding of human rights and can gain this background from online resources: <https://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/Educators>.



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Activity 1: What Does It Mean to Be Human? (approx. 30-45 minutes)

Procedure:

Before you begin this activity, create groups of 3-5 students each for this project. Distribute one sheet of roll paper per group.

- 1. Trace Body.** Ask for one student per group to volunteer to be traced. Have them lie flat on the paper while another group member traces the outline of their body. Use pencil and then when the outline is done and the person stands up, have a different student outline in dark marker so that it's visible. This is a brave teacher moment as this is chaotic but the kids will love it!
- 2. Name Character.** Ask the group to name their character. Write their name on the paper somewhere so others can see. When all groups have named their "person", pass out the scissors, magazines, newspapers, and markers.
- 3. Human Being Collage.** Tell the class that each group will be searching through the magazines and newspapers for images and/or words that they feel answer the question, "What does it mean to be human?" For example they may find words like free, equal, think, work, or having opposable thumbs. They also may find images of a child learning or someone smiling. Have students cut them out and place them on top of their person. They may use glue or paste but don't fill in the entire person yet. Leave a blank space about 2 x 10 in. somewhere on the collage that will be explained later in the lesson.
- 4. Share.** Now get the attention of the entire class and have each small group share one item that they thought represented the word "human." Generate one answer per group and write each on the board for the rest of the class to see. Now ask the students to return their focus to their "person" and their small group. Write the words "human rights" on the board. Then ask the students if they know what the words "human rights" means to them. Generate a few ideas and write them on the board if you choose as you will define this more in the following activity.



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Activity 2: Small Group Discussion. Defining Human Rights and Responsibility (approx. 30-45 minutes)

- 1. Define.** Divide students into groups of three or four. Provide the groups with a large piece of paper and a marker, and ask each group to come up with a definition for human rights in their own words. Once they have finished brainstorming, they should write their definition on the large piece of paper. Post these definitions around the room. Encourage students to suggest any other human rights they can think of, and include these rights in the list on the board. Distribute the UDHR list at this point. Write a collective definition of the combined student ideas on the board or in a place visible to all. For example, “human rights are guaranteed to every person simply by being human.” Or, “human rights promote basic standards of living equally, with respect and in dignity.” Discuss the reason for the creation of the UDHR in 1948 and emphasize that it was the first international agreement made to protect people from inequality and oppression.
- 2. Human Rights Collage.** Assign each group one of the human rights listed on the board, or allow groups to choose the human right that interests them most. Choose five or six rights that will be easily understood by your students. Tell students to resume cutting images and/or words from their stack of magazines, now focusing on words and images relating to their assigned human right. They may also use the markers or crayons to write related words. Encourage students to be creative in finding words and images that connect to their right. For example, the right to education can include images of books, pencils and papers, schools, or young people. The right to health can include images of medicine and hospitals or people leading a healthy lifestyle. Each human right is broad and touches on multiple aspects of a person’s life. Encourage students to fully explore their assigned right.
- 3. Name and Display.** Once students are finished, ask them each to write their assigned right in the blank space on their collage from Activity #1. Display the human collages around the room, in the hallway or another visible place. They will be used again later in this lesson.
- 4. Regroup and Discuss.** Direct students to look at the human rights depicted on the collages around the room. Once they have looked for a few minutes, ask the following questions:
 - Which of these rights are necessary for survival? How are needs and rights related?
 - Which of these rights are necessary to live in dignity?
 - What would happen if you had to give up one of these rights?
 - Can you think of any other human rights essential to living in dignity?
 - Do you disagree with thinking of any of these things as a right? If so, explain your reasoning.
- 5. Explain.** Explain to your students that they have a responsibility to respect the human rights of others and themselves. Ask students to share ideas about how they can take responsibility for upholding the rights of others and claiming rights of their own. For example, they may say “Every child has the right to an education. As a student in this class I am responsible for making sure I work to the best of my ability and ask for help if I don’t understand something.” Or a student may say “I am responsible for others in my class and will respect others’ right to an education by not interfering in their learning by talking too much.” You may want to mention bullying, and discuss how respecting the human rights of others involves being responsible and standing up against those who bully. Listen to Get Up, Stand Up by Bob Marley for fun while students are working. This section could also be used for creating class rules!



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Activity 3: Lesson Closure (10 minutes)

- 1. Reflect.** Last, ask students to reflect on what they have learned. They may write and/or draw in journals. Allow ten minutes of quiet time to think and process these concepts. Write the following quotation on the board for students to consider while writing in their journals. The quotation is from Eleanor Roosevelt, Chair of the UN Commission on Human Rights that drafted the UDHR:

“Where, after all, do universal rights begin? In small places, close to home – so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerned citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.”

Invite students to consider in particular the last line. What does “concerned citizen action to uphold them close to home” mean? How can we take action to protect human rights? How are we all responsible for the rights of ourselves and others?



The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (abbreviated)

Article 1

Right to Equality

Article 2

Freedom from Discrimination

Article 3

Right to Life, Liberty and Personal Security

Article 4

Freedom from Slavery

Article 5

Freedom from Torture and Degrading Treatment

Article 6

Right to Recognition as a Person before the Law

Article 7

Right to Equality before the Law

Article 8

Right to Remedy for Violations of Rights

Article 9

Freedom from Arbitrary Arrest and Exile

Article 10

Right to Fair Public Hearing

Article 11

Right to be Considered Innocent until Proven Guilty

Article 12

Freedom from Interference with Privacy, Family, Home and Correspondence

Article 13

Right to Free Movement in and out of Own Country

Article 14

Right to Asylum in other Countries from Persecution

Article 15

Right to a Nationality and the Freedom to Change Nationality

Article 16

Right to Marriage and Family

Article 17

Right to Own Property

Article 18

Freedom of Belief and Religion

Article 19

Freedom of Opinion and Information

Article 20

Right of Peaceful Assembly and Association

Article 21

Right to Participate in Government and in Free Elections

Article 22

Right to Social Security or a Social Safety Net

Article 23

Right to Desirable Work and to Join Trade Unions

Article 24

Right to Rest and Leisure

Article 25

Right to Adequate Living Standard, Including Food, Housing, and Medical Care

Article 26

Right to Education

Article 27

Right to Participate in the Cultural Life of Community

Article 28

Right to a Society that Upholds this Document

Article 29

Rights Limited by Need to Respect Rights of Others

Article 30

Freedom from State or Personal Interference in the Above Rights



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