



# Human Rights in the U.S.

Lesson Plan:  
Musical Chairs  
Human Rights  
Essay

Grade Level: 3-5



Copyright © 2010  
The Advocates for Human Rights  
330 Second Ave South #800  
Minneapolis, MN 55401

For further information, visit  
[www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org](http://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org)



# Lesson Plan: Musical Chairs Human Rights Essay

**Goal:** Students will write a 3-paragraph essay or story describing a scene in a photograph and describe how it relates to a human rights issue.

**Objectives:**

- Students will learn the basic elements of writing the beginning, middle, and end of an essay.
- Students will critically assess a photograph and use creative thinking skills to create an original story.
- Students will use their knowledge about human rights to connect each image with one of the 30 articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

**Essential Question:** How do the images for this essay depict human rights being upheld? Being denied?

**Materials:**

- Lined writing paper, one or two pieces per student
- Photographs cut out from magazines
- Music and CD player or computer with speakers
- Handout: Universal Declaration of Human Rights - abbreviated version (see page 5)

**Time Frame:** 2-3 class periods

**Grade Level:** 3-5

**Appropriate Subject Areas:** Language Arts, Creative Writing, and Social Studies

**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>.



# Lesson Plan: Musical Chairs Human Rights Essay

## Activity 1: Musical Chairs Human Rights Essay (approx. 1 class period)

1. **Prepare.** Cut out the magazine and newspaper images/photos in advance that will provide students with the type of images you think will foster creative and critical thinking. For example, if the focus is on world history, choose images that involve many different scenes from around the world. If the focus is on human rights, provide images that show either human rights being upheld or human rights being abused. In the case of human rights abuses, be sensitive to violence in images and tone. Provide pictures that tell a story or show a lot of action in each scene and represent a diverse mix of people, places, and activities.

To weave in a human rights focus from the beginning, select images that you feel effectively demonstrate a particular article of one of the 30 articles of the UDHR. For example, if the picture shows a scene where a group of children, boys and girls, are happy and walking with backpacks on their way to school, you could discuss Article 26 the “Right to Education” and Article 2 “Freedom from Discrimination” as both girls and boys are attending school. Or, you can select an image that shows an abuse of a human right, for example, a child laborer. Ask students to list or describe which rights are NOT being upheld. An abbreviated version of the UDHR is provided below. Small UDHR booklets can be ordered at [www.hreusa.org](http://www.hreusa.org).

2. **Set-up.** Tape one image onto each desk before the students arrive. Under the image, also tape one sheet of lined paper. It may need to be moved to make writing easier: for example, for right/left handed students. You will be using music throughout the lesson to indicate the starting and stopping of the writing. Select music that will not distract from the writing process. Music without lyrics is a good example. Prepare this in advance so when you're ready to begin, the music is too!
3. **Create a Beginning.** Ask students each to take a seat. Tell them that they will be playing a game similar to musical chairs. When the music begins they will write the **beginning** of the story based on the image on their desk. Tell them that when the music stops they should stop writing. Tell them when the music is playing, they can write anything. Emphasize that they should NOT be thinking about spelling or grammar but rather focus on the thoughts. Give them about 5 minutes to write. Then stop the music.
4. **Create a Middle.** Next, each student will get up and go to a new chair with a new image and sit down. Give them about one minute to read what the first person has written. Tell them that when the music begins again, they will create the **middle** of the story. Encourage students to follow the storyline already in progress but allow them to get creative. Give them about 5 minutes to write. Then stop the music.
5. **Create an End.** Again, after 5 minutes, stop the music and ask students to stop writing. Ask students once more to get up and go to a new seat. Have them read the first two paragraphs and look at the image. Again, play music to indicate that it's time to write. This time, they will create the **ending** of the story. They will complete the 3<sup>rd</sup> and final paragraph. At the end of the class period, collect the drafts and be sure that each picture is attached to each piece of writing.



# Lesson Plan: Musical Chairs Human Rights Essay

## Activity 2: Making the Human Rights Connection *(approx. 1 1/2 class period)*

- 1. Set-up.** Print the articles of the UDHR in large print and hang the articles around the classroom.
- 1. Edit and Revise.** In this class period, the students will edit then rewrite the final draft. Try to give a draft to a student who has not yet seen the image. Students will edit, rewrite, type or hand-write, and print a final copy.
- 2. Discuss.** Once students have finished, teachers may choose to have students discuss the writing process.
  - Did the story end in a surprising way?
  - How did it feel to give up control of the story when you had to move to different seats?
  - Can you see the benefit of having a fresh pair of eyes do the final editing?
  - How do you think the final essay turned out?
  - What did you like about this activity? What did you dislike?
- 3. Connect to Human Rights.** Introduce the students to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights if they haven't been already. For help, use the resources from the teacher background at the beginning of this lesson. Have students look at their edited version of the essay and accompanying image and identify one or more of the 30 articles they feel relates to it best. Ask students to place their edited essay under the appropriate article. (The display should end up looking like an inverted bar graph). Explain to students that the stories they created, like events in real life, may relate to more than one of the 30 articles.
- 4. Discuss.** Have students pair up with a partner, preferably someone whose story was posted under the same UDHR article. Have each pair discuss the following questions:
  - How are the stories similar and how are they different?
  - What human rights do you see represented in your stories?
  - Why are these human rights important? What would life be like if you didn't have them?
  - How can you respect human rights in your life?
- 5. Display.** Share the essays with others. Hang the UDHR and essay display somewhere in the classroom or the school and invite another class to read and discuss what you have learned! Or display the project during parent conferences and teach the parents about human rights!



# 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



**The Advocates for Human Rights • 330 Second Ave South #800, Minneapolis, MN 55401 • 612-341-3302**

The Advocates for Human Rights is a volunteer-based, non-governmental, nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to the promotion and protection of internationally recognized human rights. Since 1992, The Advocates for Human Rights' Education Program has been a local and national leader in bringing the principles of international human rights to the classroom and the community. We partner with schools to provide training and support on how to incorporate human rights into the school curriculum. We also create, pilot, and disseminate curricular resources for use in human rights education throughout the U.S. We believe that educating about human rights and responsibilities is the most important way to ensure long-term improvements in respect for human rights in the United States and around the world.

**For more information, please visit:**

*[www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org](http://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org)*