



## Theme: Treated as Equals? - Human Rights

In order to explore the theme of human rights we have created three distinct sections of work. Each section investigates a particular aspect of the theme, offering different insights and challenges.

<b>Section 1</b>	My rights
<b>Section 2</b>	Your rights
<b>Section 3</b>	Rights in action

Each section consists of:

- Teachers' Guidance Notes
- Activities
- Supporting visual and textual resources
- Suggested online resources

**Activities may include teacher-led discussions, group work, self-directed learning and use of primary and secondary source historical materials. Teachers can decide what classroom and group activities are carried out.**

### Overview of theme

'Where, after all, do universal human 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 neighbourhood 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.'

*Eleanor Roosevelt, 'In Our Hands' (1958 speech delivered on the tenth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights)*

What are rights? Rights are freedoms given to people based on a legal system, social pact or ethical theory. Rights are often viewed in relation to specific social groups (minority groups) or to all individuals. This second category of universal rights is called human rights. Human rights are basic human freedoms, based on the principle of respect for the individual and the hypothesis that every human being deserves to be treated equally and with dignity. Although human rights are not respected or applied in many parts of the world, all people everywhere are entitled to these rights. Developing a thorough understanding of human rights is an important part of our collective status as members of the global human community. Focusing on the history of human rights is equally important so that we have an overview of the effect that rights (or lack of) have had in societies. People have been deprived of their rights throughout history and often had to resort to either



peaceful or violent means to reclaim them. These struggles continue to this day in many parts of the world.

To understand how human rights affect us in our daily lives and to acknowledge our responsibilities in recognising the need to balance those rights with the rights of others, we require an understanding of what human rights are. So what are human rights? Where did they come from? How do they impact on humanity? How do they affect me?

## Definitions

### *Human right*

Human rights are basic rights and freedoms that all people are entitled to regardless of nationality, sex, national or ethnic origin, race, religion, sexuality, language, or other status.

Human rights include civil and political rights, such as the right to life, liberty and freedom of expression; and social, cultural and economic rights, including the right to participate in culture, the right to food, and the right to work and receive an education. Human rights are protected and upheld by international and national laws and treaties. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is the foundation of the international system of protection for human rights. It was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10 December 1948. This day is celebrated annually as International Human Rights Day. The 30 articles of the UDHR establish the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of all people. It is a vision for human dignity that transcends political boundaries and authority, committing governments to uphold the fundamental rights of each person.

(As defined by [Amnesty International](#), 2015)

### *Ethics*

Moral principles that govern a person's behaviour or the conducting of an activity.

The branch of knowledge that deals with moral principles.

(As defined by the [Oxford Dictionary](#))

### *Minority rights*

Efforts by non-dominant groups to preserve their cultural, religious or ethnic differences emerged with the creation of nation states in the 18th and 19th centuries. The recognition and protection of minority rights under international law began with the League of Nations through the adoption of several 'minority treaties'. When the United Nations was set up in 1945 to replace the League of Nations, it, too, gradually developed a number of norms, procedures and mechanisms concerned with minorities.

(As defined by the [United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights](#), 2010)

### *Privilege*

A particular and peculiar benefit or advantage enjoyed by a person, company, or class, beyond the common advantages of other citizens. An exceptional or extraordinary power or exemption. A right, power, franchise, or immunity held by a person or class, against or beyond the course of the law. Privilege is an exemption from some burden or attendance, with which certain persons are indulged, from a supposition of law that the stations they fill, or the offices they are engaged in, are such as require all their time and care, and that, therefore, without this indulgence, it would be impracticable to execute such offices to that advantage which the public good requires.

(As defined by the [Law Dictionary](#))