



## Theme: Treated as Equals? – Human Rights

### Section 1: My rights

What are rights? Where did they come from? And how do they affect each of us? And what is the relation between rights, wants and needs? This section provides an overview of what human rights are, how they were formed, and how they influence our daily lives.

*Warning: Note that this unit contains links to websites such as YouTube. Content on external sites is subject to change and should be monitored to ensure suitability for students.*

#### Learning outcomes of this section

Your students will be able to:

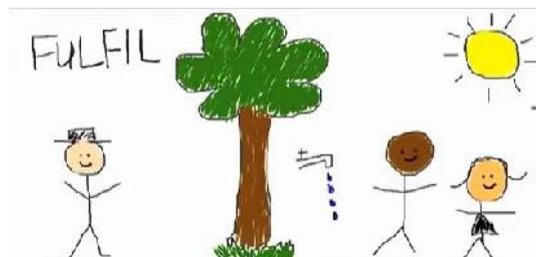
- Comprehend what rights are
- Learn the origins of modern rights
- Develop an understanding of their own rights and responsibilities

#### Resources provided

Resource 1	List of rights
Resource 2	Origins of human rights
Resource 3	What if ...?

#### Class Activity 1: Understanding rights

There is always lots of discussion going on around us regarding rights. But what are rights really? And what do they represent for us? To prepare for this exercise, show your students the short United Nations film clip on human rights that follows. Then, clear one wall in your classroom. Ask your students to work individually to choose one to three rights they consider very important for personal reasons. Ask them to write each of these rights on a post-it note. Then ask them to share these post-its with their friends and to stick them on the wall, explaining if they wish how each right affects their everyday life. If they are not sure on where to start, distribute Resource 1 with the list of rights.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JpY9s1Agbsw>



## Class Activity 2: Categories of rights

What are the different types of rights? Can we see a pattern in specific rights – or a categorisation of any kind? Ask your students to group the post-it notes so that they create thematic clusters. They can choose their own categories to proceed with this. Once they have completed this task, ask them to name the different clusters. Congratulate them for creating their very own very ‘Wall of Rights’! Discuss with them whether they found this task easy or difficult. Get them to explain their answers.

## Group Activity 1: Are rights exclusive in certain cases?

You are now going to discuss with your students the differences between minority rights and human rights. For this activity, break your class into four groups of roughly equal size. Begin by writing on your blackboard/whiteboard the phrase: ‘Rights are there to protect everyone and not just specific groups’ and ask them to discuss it in their groups. Each group must express their opinion on whether they agree with this statement or not, and why. Then you can prompt them to further enhance the classroom’s wall of rights with those rights that were not mentioned previously. To get further information to help them support their case, the groups should access the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (available in different languages) and the following resource packs:



Minorities' rights



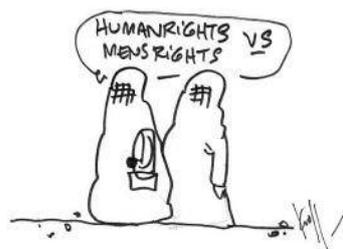
Children



Indigenous peoples



Women's rights



LGBTI



<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Pages/SearchByLang.aspx>



## Class Activity 3: Rights seen chronologically

It is important that your students realise that rights were not always present. They were established due to specific events or situations, or adapted through the ages and evolved. Ask them each to pick one right from their 'Wall of Rights' and reflect on the incidents that might have led to its establishment. Was it a revolution? Perhaps something connected to the United Nations or the abolition of slavery, or some other episode from history. For some rights the origin is straightforward, but for others it may not be as easy. To help them in this process distribute Resource 2 on the origins of Human Rights.

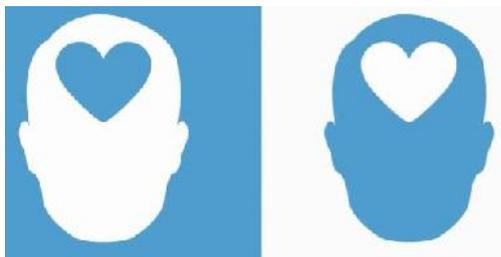
## Class Activity 4: Observing the birth of a right

Today's rights have a legal aspect. But what happened in the past, before specific rights were legally certified? Ask your students to think of individuals or minority groups that have or still are facing legal and/or social issues before the establishment of respective rights. You could give them suggestions such: as the voting rights of women, abuse of children and women, or discrimination against LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) people. You can also direct them to Amnesty International, ***Violence Against Women***, by clicking on the following link:



<http://www.amnestyusa.org/our-work/issues/women-s-rights/violence-against-women/violence-against-women-information>

You can also show them the following UN film clip:



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XvpHn\\_zdkTY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XvpHn_zdkTY)

## Class Activity 5: Needs versus Rights versus Needs

We can count ourselves lucky to live in societies where rights are respected. But is this respect a given? Give your students a moral scenario: imagine that the town or place where you live is experiencing some kind of threat! Which rights would you be willing to give up in order to ensure public security? Distribute Resource 3 to start this activity. Explain that the students should have to



## HOUSE OF EUROPEAN HISTORY

return to their 'Wall of Rights' and reorganise the post-it notes into two major categories of rights – those they would absolutely refuse to give up and those they would be prepared to sacrifice. Inform them that they should all work together in deciding on the final result. The outcome is basically their counter-proposal to the government or ruling authorities about what rights they would and would not be prepared to lose. Once they are finished, ask them to justify their choice to you; then, explain that the government does not agree with their categorisation of rights and wishes to impose stricter measures. They should now go back to the category 'rights they would absolutely refuse to give up', leave only 50 % of the rights there, and move the rest to the other category. Repeat the activity until the students all feel that they cannot move any more rights. Ask them if this was a difficult activity for them and why.

You can now have a concluding discussion with your students. Ask them: how far are we prepared to go in order to guarantee that we have everything we need? The students may also vote in secret on whether they would rather have access to the basic rights to food, shelter, employment, etc, while giving up other societal rights such as freedom of expression and speech, freedom of religious belief, etc. A challenging dilemma, but one your students need to consider carefully!

