



Theme: Treated as Equals? - Human Rights

Section 3: Whose rights? / taking action

This section focuses on the historical aspects of human and minority rights and the basic principles underpinning them.

Learning Outcomes of this Section

Your students will be able to:

- Discuss the links between totalitarian regimes and deprivation of rights
- Formulate better their views and opinions on the topic through creative means
- Form their own articulated judgement on the importance of human rights

Resources provided

Resource 9	Quotes from famous human rights activists
Resource 10	Quotes from people living under totalitarian regimes
Resource 11	Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
Resource 12	Quote
Resource 13	Article
Resource 14	Songs and paintings related to rights issues

Class Activity 1: Inspiring Human Rights Activists

Ask your students: 'How safe do you feel in your everyday life?' Encourage them to express their views and justify their replies. Then ask them to reflect on their country's history and identify examples where breaches of rights have taken place. Their replies might be linked to a major event, such as a war, a dictatorship or an equivalent incident. Explain the difference between direct and indirect breach of rights. To do this, ask them to think of everyday expressions or language they or the people around them use that may in fact be offensive to other people and social groups. Do they think that such expressions are harmless? Can they come up with some arguments as to why such language might be harmful and why it is offensive? Also, ask them to think of a person who has fought for human rights. Use Resource 9 to support this activity.

Class Activity 2: Totalitarian Regimes: What Would You Get in Exchange for Rights Deprivation

Distribute Resource 10 to your students, and explain that they will read personal views of people who lived in totalitarian regimes and did not object to or did not mind the deprivation of human rights, each for their own personal reasons. They will also read a short passage from a renowned book called 'Animal Farm', which describes life in a totalitarian system. Can your students identify common elements with the views expressed in Resource 9? Ask them if they think that everybody felt the same way as these individuals did.



HOUSE OF EUROPEAN HISTORY

Focus the discussion on people's needs and wants (and their meanings) as reasons behind the birth of a right. Both wants and needs are very important in our daily lives but do both these things come with rights? Is one concept more important than the other? To help your students explore the relationship between wants, needs and associated rights, distribute Resource 11. In 1943 a psychologist named Abraham Maslow proposed a hierarchy of human needs, the base of which is the physiological needs, or physical requirements for human survival. If these requirements are not met, the human body cannot function properly. Physiological needs are thought to be the most important; they should be met first. Safety needs follow, which include personal, financial and health-related security. Going back to the UN's Declaration of Rights, we can see that these needs are documented as basic human rights. Ask your students to link the rest of the rights in the UN Declaration with Maslow's pyramid.

Following this, discuss how this hierarchy can help us explain how sometimes individuals, when deprived of some rights, such as free speech, movement etc., may not object as long as their basic rights are met. But then what stops an authoritarian regime from depriving us of further rights? Sometimes an authoritarian regime may protect a large part of the population but target specific social / minority groups.

Class Activity 3: Defending our Humanity

Distribute to your students Resource 12, which contains a famous quotation from Martin Niemöller, a survivor of the Nazi concentration camps. What are your students' reactions to the quote? Our common human nature connects us all and basic human rights are directly linked to such a concept. The protection of these rights is a universal matter that applies to all, regardless of ethnic, religious, social or other backgrounds.

If you wish to further enhance this discussion, distribute Resource 13 to your students. It contains an article written in 2012 by a professor of criminology who argued that the characterisation of large groups of people through imagery connected to animals dehumanises the target people in the eyes of others. Such dehumanisation has led to tragic consequences both in the past and today. Can your students think of any examples where this has occurred?

Group Activity 1: Responsible Rights Researchers in Action

Divide your class into 5-6 teams of roughly the same size, and assign one right or one minority group's right to each team. Alternatively, you can let them choose a minority group's right, either real or fictional. Explain to the students that they are marketing experts working for human rights groups, and have recently been assigned a marketing campaign around a specific (category of) rights. Each group must prepare the whole campaign, including texts, promotional material, action plan and social media presence. In deciding on the campaign's name, they may use the fictional one proposed above (Responsible Rights Researchers in Action) or invent one of their own. They can also create their visual identity through posters and banners, or even write a song. The paintings in Resource 14 can be used as a source of inspiration. Each group must present the campaign to their peers as if presenting their case to potential supporters and see who they manage to persuade to join their cause. Explain that you expect them to be objective and to avoid expressing personal views.

