

Eleanor Roosevelt & Human Rights

Primary Source Set Teaching Guide

This Primary Source Set is designed to help students analyze the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Throughout this set students will consider the importance of human rights and the impact this document has had on the lives of people around the world. Students will begin by reading a short biography of Eleanor Roosevelt to understand the historical time period and Eleanor's efforts as a social reformer. While analyzing the UDHR students will compare these rights to those included in the U.S. Declaration of Independence and Bill of Rights. After students examine the UDHR they will debate which rights might be included in a Universal Declaration of Student Human Rights.

Target Grades & Subject(s): Grades 7-12; Social Studies/History

Learning Objectives

- Students will understand the role of Eleanor Roosevelt in protecting and advocating human rights in the United States and around the world. (CCSS RI.1, RI.3)
- Students will use evidence from the UDHR to make inferences about fundamental human rights and recognize the viewpoints of various groups and philosophies in the human rights debate. (CCSS RH.1)
- Students will compare and contrast the UDHR and the U.S. Bill of Rights and explain the significance of each document. (CCSS RI/RH.9)

Before Teaching this Set

- Prior to analyzing the sources in this set, discuss the difference between civil liberties, civil rights, and human rights. (To review these concepts, have students watch this [video](#) or read this brief [overview](#) of civil liberties and rights.) Define each of these terms and have students brainstorm possible political/social examples of each.
- Remind students of the difference between primary and secondary sources.

Texts in this Set (download texts [here](#))

Text 1: Eleanor Roosevelt - Biography (3 pages)	
<p>The first text in this set introduces Eleanor Roosevelt and her work as an activist and social reformer. This text provides background about the historical time period in which the UDHR was created. The questions and notes in this text prompt students to consider why a document defining fundamental human rights might be important. Students will use evidence from the text to make inferences about the values and philosophies that might have led to the rights detailed in the UDHR.</p>	<p>Extension Activity*: Distribute copies of quotes on human rights by Eleanor Roosevelt, President Carter, and President Reagan (attached). In groups, have students summarize each quote and compare and contrast each person's view on human rights. After each group has analyzed the quotes, ask students to discuss the following question: According to each speaker, why is it important for nations to uphold human rights for all citizens?</p>
Text 2: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (6 pages)	
<p>Next, students will analyze the UDHR. As students read, they will answer document-based questions to understand the authors' purpose for creating the UDHR. Students will also compare and contrast the UDHR to other foundational documents in the U.S. such as the Declaration of Independence and Bill of Rights. After reading, encourage students to reflect on whether they believe that these rights are being upheld in the U.S. and other countries around the world.</p>	<p>Extension Activity*: Lead a whole-group discussion of the following questions: <i>Are there any limits on rights that you (as students) have? Why are governments sometimes forced to limit freedoms and rights of individuals? Are limits on rights unfair?</i> Next, divide the class into groups and have students create a Universal Declaration of Human Rights for Students. (see attached task card). After groups have created their list of rights, hold a "convention" where each group presents their rights and all students vote for which rights to include in their final Declaration.</p>

Quotes on Human Rights

“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 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 concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.” (Eleanor Roosevelt)

“America did not invent human rights. In a very real sense, it is the other way round. Human rights invented America. The battle for human rights — at home and abroad — is far from over. We should never be surprised nor discouraged because the impact of our efforts has had, and will always have, varied results. Rather, we should take pride that the ideals which gave birth to our nation still inspire the hopes of oppressed people around the world. We have no cause for self-righteousness or complacency. But we have every reason to persevere, both within our own country and beyond our borders.

If we are to serve as a beacon for human rights, we must continue to perfect here at home the rights and values which we espouse around the world: A decent education for our children, adequate medical care for all Americans, an end to discrimination against minorities and women, a job for all those able to work, and freedom from injustice and religious intolerance.” (Jimmy Carter)

“It was 195 years ago this coming Monday, on December 15, 1791, that our forefathers put legal force behind their ideals when they ratified the Bill of Rights, the first 10 amendments to our Constitution. Our forefathers knew that they were writing the first lines of a new chapter in human history. Another page in that same chapter was written 38 years ago today when the General Assembly of the United States [United Nations] adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. That document, a triumph for the higher aspirations of mankind, is but words on paper unless we're willing to act to see that it is taken seriously. We owe it to ourselves and to those who sacrificed so much for our liberty to keep America in the forefront of this battle. Lincoln, the Great Emancipator, once said, "Our defense is in the spirit which prized liberty as the heritage of all men, in all lands everywhere. Destroy this spirit and you have planted the seeds of despotism at your own front door.” (Ronald Reagan)

Universal Declaration of Student Human Rights Task Card

Congratulations! The United Nations has voted to create a Universal Declaration of Student Human Rights. You and your class have been selected to participate as delegates in a convention representing different points of view. You'll work together to investigate a student human rights issue, and then develop a presentation that explains your position and your suggestions for the Declaration.

Your class will be divided into groups that will focus on one of the following student human rights issues:

- Student due process (this includes searching student possessions; locker searches; right to contest a suspension, expulsion, or other disciplinary action; etc.)
- Student freedom of expression (this includes students' freedom of speech and press; right to carry and use electronic devices such as cell phones; right to hold demonstrations in school; etc.)
- Inclusion of students in school governance (this includes the opportunity for students to help shape and determine school policies, sit on school boards and administrative councils, help in determining policies related to curriculum and teachers, etc.)
- Student civil rights (issues related to race and gender, such as whether one gender (male or female) should be allowed to participate in programs or sports traditionally reserved for the other gender, issues where students of one race or gender may receive preferential treatment over another, etc.)
- Rights of nontraditional students

Each group should work together to develop a statement of at least five "student human rights" to present to the entire convention for ratification. Remember, to consider different viewpoints (not just students) as you create your list. Some perspectives to keep in mind include: school administrators, parent groups, and public safety officials.

Once your group has developed their list of five student human rights, the group will create a presentation highlighting their decisions. Then, the class will work as a group to review, change if necessary, and either ratify or reject individual right proposals. You will want to work collaboratively with your group and other groups, but you will want to advance the statement of rights you've developed as well.