



# The Universal Declaration of Human Rights



Teaching Guide and Resources



# Historical Background

- The **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)** was adopted by the United Nations' General Assembly in 1948. It was the first attempt to create a global standard of human rights – to define what human rights are and what they encompass. As such, the UDHR is highly relevant to each and every global citizen, regardless of age and place of living.
- The drafting and adoption of the UDHR was the **result of the harrowing experience of the Second World War**. World leaders decided to complement the UN Charter with a road map to guarantee the rights of every individual everywhere. The document they considered, and which would later become the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, was taken up at the first session of the General Assembly in 1946.

# A Suggested Lesson Plan

## Subject

- Modern History; Social Studies

## Grade Level

- K-4; 5-8

## Keywords

- United Nations; UDHR; Human Rights; Eleanor Roosevelt

## Goals

- Students will understand and be able to explain what are universal human rights and what is the UDHR.
- Students will gain awareness and analyze the relevance of the framework of human rights to their and others' everyday life.



UNIVERSAL  
DECLARATION  
OF  
HUMAN  
RIGHTS

# Overview

- **Despite its universality and importance for the modern history of human rights and the struggle to make the world a better, more just place,** the UDHR can pose a challenge from an educational perspective, **since its language can be dense, obscure, and legalized.**
- This lesson plan is designed to help students understand the UDHR and its various applications to their daily lives and the world around them. It is devised to **turn human rights in the mind of students from an abstract concept into concrete experiences** that the students can identify and name. The lesson takes inspiration from these Eleanor Roosevelt's seminal words:
  - *Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home [...] 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 seek equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere.*

*(Eleanor Roosevelt, 1958)*



# Part I: Understanding the UDHR

## K-4

Read aloud the opening pages of the Adaptation for Children of the UDHR by Ruth Rocha and Otavio Roth (pp. 1-8, see appendix) or have the students read them in turns.

## 5-8

Explain the background and the origins on the UDHR (find more background information here:

<https://www.un.org/en/about-us/udhr/history-of-the-declaration> )

, and/or watch the UDHR @ 70 video:

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/video/2021/udhr-70-history>

*Ask the students to define human rights, and discuss their answers. Ask guiding questions, like: does having human rights mean I can do as I please? Is [eating ice cream whenever I feel like it/not doing homework/going to bed when I wish/ always say what I think] a human right?*

# Part I: Understanding the UDHR

## K-4

Divide the class into pairs. Give each pair one of the rights that are included in the adaptation (notice: the adaptation does not fully follow the format of the UDHR).

Ask the students to explain the right in their own words, and to think of at least 3 examples of how the right is manifested/ can be withheld in the context of everyday life.

Have the pairs share their work with the class.

## 5-8

Divide the class into pairs. Give each pair one of the 30 articles of the declaration.

Have **the students** paraphrase the right in their own words and give it a title.

**Ask the students to** come up with at least 3 examples of how the right is manifested/ can be withheld in the context of everyday life.

Have the **students** share their work with the class.

# Part II: Everyday Human Rights

## K-4

Ask the students to describe their daily routines (getting up in the morning, brushing their teeth, eating breakfast, going to school, etc.), from waking up to going to sleep. Include special days and activities like weekend, vacation, holidays, etc.

Using the name for the rights, ask the class to match between the activity and the right it reflects.

## 5-8

Take a look at the map of the neighbourhood/town. Ask the students to identify spaces and locations where rights are being granted or withheld. Create a “Human right map”.

You can also end with a discussion of whether the students think that their lives include granting of human rights according to the UDHR. Where do they feel that the social and political institutions (family, school, community, municipality, state, country) accomplish the UDHR? Where do they lack?



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