

13. Human Rights and the Holocaust

Universal Declaration of Human Rights
www.un.org/Overview/rights.html

Definition of Genocide — with links to the word's creation, history, and related laws
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genocide

Methodological Considerations:

Avoid comparisons of pain.

A study of the Holocaust should always highlight the different policies carried out by the Nazi regime toward various groups of people; however, these distinctions should not be presented as a basis for comparison of suffering between those groups. Similarly, one cannot presume that the horror of an individual, family or community destroyed by the Nazis was any greater than that experienced by victims of other genocides. Avoid generalizations that suggest exclusivity such as "the victims of the Holocaust suffered the most cruelty ever faced by a people in the history of humanity."

From the teaching guidelines in "Teaching About the Holocaust: A Resource Guide for Educators." Written and published by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington D.C.

Discussion Questions:

Look at the newspaper. Pay attention to current events.

- What human rights violations do you find?
- What groups are being oppressed? And where?
- What opportunities are available for you to do something? What groups are helping?

Activity 1: Brainstorming

Definition: Human rights are those things which ALL humans are entitled to, regardless of race, religion, gender, ethnicity, or other "ascribed" characteristics. One is entitled to these rights simply by being a member of the human species.

Is there such thing as a human right, or do rights need to be earned?

- **Ascribed status** — characteristics that a person is born with, such as race or ethnicity
- **Achieved status** — characteristics that may change, and that can be earned, such as profession or educational level

BRAINSTORM

What rights should every person have, just because they are a human being?

After you have a list, identify which are guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution, and which are not.

Example:

In the Constitution	Not in the Constitution
Due process	education
No censorship	one meal per day
Religion	medical care
Free speech	personal space
Privacy	choices
Equal treatment	individuality
no discrimination	freedom from violence
have children	
etc.	

Compare your list to the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights (www.un.org/Overview/rights.html)

1. What is the justification for developing a list of human rights?
2. Which of the rights listed also appeared on our list?
3. Which rights did not appear on our list?
4. Are there any rights that you would add or subtract from the UN's list? What are they, and why would you make these changes?
5. Choose three of the articles of the UN resolution and give an example from the 20th century of those rights being violated.

***This activity was written and developed by Kari Averill, a teacher at Cascade High School in Everett, Wash., and a member of the Washington State Holocaust Education Resource Center's Education Advisory Committee.*

Studying the Holocaust

RESISTANCE, RESCUE AND SURVIVAL

Activity 2: Poster on Human Rights

Choose one of the articles of the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Create a poster that illustrates the rights described in the article.

You can use any medium, including collage, paint, pencils, markers, etc.

Criteria:

A poster that meets standards will ...

- Be at least 11x17 (the size of a normal piece of construction paper, or two pieces of typing paper put together)
- Be clearly labeled with what right is being described (a title of some kind)
- Include the full text of the article within the design (this does not have to be a dominant part of the design, however.)

- Use principles of good design (balance, rule of thirds, use of color, etc.)
- Be neatly and carefully made
- Be understandable by the casual viewer who may not be familiar with the U.N. Declaration
- Include at least one reference to an historical or current event
- Have the artist's name clearly visible on the front of the poster

You will present your poster to the class. Then we will display them (hopefully in the library or some other public area in the school).

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Activity 3: Reading Reflection — Speaking Up

"I believe in the sun even when it is not shining.

I believe in love when feeling it not.

I believe in God even when He is silent."

—Inscription on the wall of a cellar in
Cologne, Germany, where Jews hid

*"The only thing necessary for the triumph of
evil is for good people to do nothing."*

— Edmund Burke,
18th Century English philosopher

*"Tell your children of it, and let your children
tell their children, and their children another
generation."*

— Book of Joel, Chapter 1, verse 3

*"In Germany, they first came for the
Communists, and I didn't speak up because
I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for
the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I
wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the trade
unionists, and I didn't speak up because I
wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for
the Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I
was a Protestant. They came for me, and by
that time no one was left to speak up."*

Martin Niemoeller (1892 – 1984)
Pastor of a Protestant Church in Dalem,
a suburb of Berlin
Imprisoned in Sachsenhausen
and Dachau concentration camps

*"It may be too late for the victims ... but not
for our children, not for mankind."*

— Elie Wiesel, Holocaust survivor, author,
Nobel laureate

**On a separate piece of paper, select one of
the quotations and write a response.**

Consider the following:

- Your initial reaction to the quotation
- Why it spoke to you
- How it relates to the study of the Holocaust
- How it relates to your life today

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