

**Title of Lesson**

*Human Rights Watch Position Papers*

**Anticipatory set**

The Human Rights Watch is watchdog group on issues concerning the violation of human rights around the world. Their website, [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org), has news articles, published reports, and calls to action. This lesson will ask students to choose a topic of interest and write a one page summary of the topic as well as a one page position paper. This paper is to be handed in each week. It is suggested that the instructor keep up to date on the issues presented on the website.

**Mental set****Objectives**

- By the end of the lesson, students will be able to describe disputes over borders, resources, and settlement areas.
- By the end of the lesson, students will be able to explain the role of multinational organizations.
- By the end of the lesson, students will be able to relate current events to the physical and human characteristics of places and regions.

**Purpose**

To have students connect to current issues regarding human rights.

**Content Standards**

**12.4.6** Students will analyze the forces of conflict and cooperation.

**12.4.7** Students will apply geography to interpret the past, understand the present, and plan the future.

**Materials**

- No materials necessary

**Grade Level**

7-12 grade (modify materials to adapt for 3-12)

**Time Period**

One 45 minute class period

## Skill Level

All

### How adapted to Diverse Populations

- Hearing Impaired
  - »» For HI students, all materials and directions can be printed and written.
- Visually Impaired
  - »» VI students can have all articles and materials can be read to them if no Braille or other visual aid is available.
- Emotionally/Behaviorally Impaired
  - »» No modification should be necessary.
- Developmentally Impaired
  - »» DI students can be given developmentally appropriate examples of articles and instructions can be modified for easier understanding.
- Physically Impaired
  - »» No modification should be necessary.

### Input

Ask students what comes to mind when they hear “Human Rights.” Make a list of rights they think would qualify. Ask them to draw from different countries and cultures, not just the United States and the Bill of Rights. Explain to them that the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. There were 30 articles adopted in this declaration. They are as follows:

1. Right to equality
2. Freedom from discrimination
3. Right to life, liberty, and personal security
4. Freedom from slavery
5. Freedom from torture and degrading treatment
6. Right to recognition as a person before the law
7. Right to equality before the law
8. Right to remedy by competent tribunal
9. Freedom from arbitrary arrest and exile
10. Right to fair public hearing
11. Right to be considered innocent until proven guilty
12. Freedom from interference with privacy, family, home, and correspondence
13. Right to free movement in and out of the country
14. Right to asylum in other countries from persecution
15. Right to a nationality and the freedom to change nationality
16. Right to marriage and family

17. Right to own property
18. Freedom of belief and religion
19. Freedom of opinion and information
20. Right of peaceful assembly and association
21. Right to participate in government and in free elections
22. Right to social security
23. Right to desirable work and to join trade unions
24. Right to rest and leisure
25. Right to adequate living standard
26. Right to education
27. Right to participate in the cultural life of the community
28. Right to a social order that articulates the articles of the UDHR
29. Community duties essential to free and full development
30. Freedom from state or personal interference in the above rights

Ask students if they agree with the articles. Did the examples on the class list make the list from the United Nations? Can you think of a time when these rights were violated for someone in the United States (examples would include: slavery in the US – a violation of article 4 and subsequently articles 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 17, etc., the historical treatment of Native Americans in the US, the historical treatment of women in the US, etc. If possible, have students come up with specific examples like Brown vs. the Board of Education, the Patriot Act, the trial of Standing Bear, etc.).

### **Modeling**

Allow students to access the Human Rights Watch Website in class. (If your classroom does not have internet capabilities, print an article of interest to you – one copy for each student). Have the students read the article and form points to defend their position. Students could also be put into groups and given different articles for each group to read. The groups would then have to come to a consensus as to a position to take on the issue in the article.

### **Check for Understanding**

Ask students (or groups) to summarize what they've read. Once a sufficient summary has been given, ask students how the article made them feel or what they thought about it. What else would they like to know about the situation? Did the article inspire them to do something about it? What is their position on the issue? Did the article sway a previously held belief? (For example, the student may have felt that homelessness was caused from people being lazy and not getting a job, but after reading the article, they realize there are a myriad of factors that have led to the problem of homelessness.)

### **Guided Practice**

Have students write down their position on the issue in the article after hearing the points of view of their classmates. In effect, they will be writing a position paper. Outline the parameters and expectations of the paper. Have students turn in this paper once it is finished. Tell them they will be doing position papers every week on one of the articles on the website with this same format and expectations. Give helpful feedback and comments on the papers to help students better their writing process in the future.

### **Closure**

Collect the position papers written in class. Post the 30 articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the classroom for students to refer back to and talk about. More information, resources and about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights can be found at the U.S. Human Rights Network or [www.ushrnetwork.org](http://www.ushrnetwork.org) or at the United Nations website at <http://www.un.org//events/humanrights/2008/declaration.shtml>

### **Independent Practice**

Each week, students will access the Human Rights Watch website on their own time. They will read articles of interest to them. Once they've found a particular article of interest to them, they will compose a summary of the article and a position paper on the topic. Each should be approximately 1 page in length. These should be handed in each week and 10 to 15 minutes of class time should be dedicated to discussing what the students learned from their articles.