

Documented Rights Educational Lesson Plan

Background:

The following lesson plan is designed as an educational component of the Documented Rights Online Exhibit. It is designed to be a unit plan that requires students to research, analyze, and create a finished product using documents from the exhibit.

Essential Questions:

What are our inalienable rights as humans?

Topic Specific Essential Questions

How have people struggled to have their rights recognized?

How has the federal government responded to these struggles?

Enduring Understanding:

A variety of different individuals and social groups have used different legal methods to have their unalienable rights recognized by the Federal government. The success of protecting these rights has depended on a variety of outside factors.

Introduction:

Since the signing of the Declaration of Independence, our rights as citizens of the United States have been debated, contested, amended, and documented. While the Bill of Rights established our basic civil rights, it took later amendments, Presidential proclamations, court decisions, and direct civic action over periods of time to more fully define our human rights.

The struggles for freedom and equality throughout our history have occurred with Americans of all walks of life. From larger than life figures of world renown to the huddled masses yearning to breathe free, our national story is very much a story of seemingly insurmountable odds.

These endeavors cross all racial, social, ethnic, gender and ideological borders. From runaway slaves taking emancipation into their own hands to women defying both law and convention by illegally executing their right to vote, the recognition and growth of personal rights to more people is a constant theme in American history. The efforts of the disenfranchised cross all geographic and time boundaries as well. During both times of war and peace, in the deepest South to the extreme reaches of the Aleutian islands and the expanses of the Great Plains between, from the Revolutionary era until today, activists have fought to achieve social justice.

This growth of personal liberty did not go uncontested, however. Whether its opponents were intolerant others, local governments, or the federal government itself, Americans fighting for their fair share had to use a variety of methods to achieve their goals. Some used words as weapons while others took direct action to the streets or brought their fight to the legal corridors of power.

The story of America in many ways is the story of the expansion of rights to ever expanding spheres of people. In this learning experience, you will have the opportunity to become a part of this story in order to continue America's promise of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness to all people.

Task: As a member of a committee of renowned historians, you have been selected by the Human Rights Council of the United Nations to explain the successes and challenges to human rights in the United States. The United Nations wants to look at how human rights have blossomed and been threatened in a variety of contexts around the world in order to better protect these rights in the future.

The committee will be broken into 8 teams that will examine the struggle for freedom and equality experienced one of the following historical groups from America's past:

- African-American Slaves
- African-American Civil Rights activists
- Women
- Hispanic-Americans
- Native-Americans
- Foreign-National/Immigrants
- Asian-Americans
- People with unpopular Ideas

Your task will be to explain the history of your specific group's struggle for equal rights in the United States using the resources of the Documented Rights exhibit. Your overall goal is to provide the United Nations Council with a suitable answer to the following questions:

- How have people struggled to have their unalienable rights recognized?
- How has the federal government responded to these struggles?
- How can current civil rights activists learn from past successes and failures?

To explain the answers you uncover to the Human Rights Council, you have been asked to create a finished product to present at this year's annual Human Rights Day. When creating your finished product, you should incorporate the appropriate primary source documents. Your finished product can be in any of the following formats:

- PowerPoint Presentation
- Dramatic Performance
- Historical Documentary

After each group presents their finished product, the entire UN Council (i.e. the entire class) will discuss their findings. They will compare and contrast, examine the historical context, evaluate the success, and assess the role of the government in the process.

Recommended Time Frame:

- 2-3 Days Research and Analyze Primary Sources
- 3-4 Days Create Product
- 2-3 Days Presentations of Materials and Discussions

Process:

In order to successfully create your finished product, you should do the following:

Step 1 Explore: Visit the Documented Rights online exhibit and discover all of the documents that relate to your specific topic. These documents might be in several different sections of the exhibit.

Step 2 Analyze: Using document analysis worksheets from <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/>, start investigating the documents to determine the overall significance.

Step 3 Research: Read secondary sources from the National Archives additional resources page and other sources from around the web to get a variety of perspectives about the actions of your social group.

Step 4 Create: Decide on a format for your finished product and start designing it using the information you discovered in your exploration of Documented Rights. Examine the assessment rubric in order to understand how you will be evaluated for this assignment.

Step 5 Present: Groups will present their findings to the UN Council. The UN Council will have the opportunity to question each group to clarify their positions.

Step 6 Compare/Contrast: After all groups have discussed their findings, they will look for similarities and differences among the different social groups and their struggle for rights. They will evaluate the successes and failures and discuss the role of the federal government.

Step 7 Drawing Conclusions: The UN Council will decide the lessons learned from our history of human rights struggles and recommend a way to move ahead to deal with current rights issues.

Evaluation

Assessment Rubric - Use this rubric to assess individual students' performance. You may wish to weight certain aspects more than others.

	Exemplary 4	Accomplished 3	Developing 2	Beginning 1
Analysis of Primary Sources	Students always actively examined documents and made sufficient effort in understanding or interpreting their significance.	Students usually actively examined documents or mostly made sufficient effort in understanding or interpreting their significance.	Students sometimes actively examined documents or sometimes made sufficient effort in understanding or interpreting their significance.	Students rarely actively examined documents or did not make sufficient effort in understanding or interpreting their significance.
Selection of Primary Source Material	Thoughtful selection of primary source material which supports product content and themes	Most of the primary source material chosen from the DR exhibit supports the content and themes of their final project.	Some of the primary source material chosen from the DR exhibit does not support the content and themes of their final project.	The primary source material chosen from the DR exhibit does not support the content and themes of their final project.
Historical Accuracy, Analysis and Interpretation	Content is historically accurate and shows critical analysis and interpretation. The content is placed in historical context.	Content is historically accurate and shows some critical analysis and interpretation. The content is placed in historical context	Content contains some historical errors and includes little analysis or interpretation. Content is not placed in historical context.	Content contains historical errors and does not include analysis or interpretation. Content is not placed in historical context.
Teamwork	Student always participated actively in group activities and helped the group complete tasks.	Student mostly participated actively in group activities and helped the group complete tasks.	Student sometimes participated actively in group activities and helped the group complete tasks.	Student rarely participated actively in group activities and helped the group complete tasks.
Presentations and Discussions with the UN Council	Students accurately represented the views of the role they assumed. Arguments were sufficient in number.	Students mostly accurately represented the views of the role they assumed, with not more than one uncharacteristic argument. Arguments were sufficient in number, but may have needed at least one more point.	Students gave some arguments that accurately represented the views of the role they assumed, with more than one uncharacteristic argument. Arguments were sufficient in number, but may have needed more than one additional point.	Students gave insufficient arguments that accurately represented the views of the role they assumed, with more than one uncharacteristic argument. Arguments were sufficient in number, but may have needed more than one additional point.