



The Rights of the Child

Lesson Plan: Who is Responsible for Children's Rights?

Grade Level: 8-12



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Lesson Plan: Who is Responsible for Children's Rights?

Goal: Build understanding about rights and responsibilities regarding children.

Objectives:

- Students will identify the rights of children and the barriers to realizing those rights.
- Students will consider the roles of different members of society in guaranteeing the rights of children.
- Students will evaluate the work of two countries in fulfilling the rights of children.
- Students will compare approaches to rights in the United States and another country.

Essential Questions

- ? Who is responsible for children's rights?
- ? What barriers do children face in the U.S. to fully realizing their rights?

Resources:

- *The Convention on the Rights of the Child* available at www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx. Youth-friendly versions are available at: www.unicef.org/rightsite/484_540.htm.
- *Rights of the Child Toolkit* available at www.discoverhumanrights.org/human_rights_toolkits.

Time Frame: 5-8 class periods

Age Level: Grades 8-12

Minnesota High School Social Studies Standards

- Citizenship and Government, 9.1.5.11.2: Explain the role of international law in world affairs; evaluate the impact of the participation of nation states in international organizations.
- Citizenship and Government, 9.1.5.12.1: Compare the philosophies, structures and operations of different types of governments in other countries with those in the United States.
- Economics, 9.2.1.1.1: Apply reasoned decision-making techniques in making choices; explain why different individuals, households, organizations, and/or governments faced with the same alternatives might make different choices.



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Procedure:

- 1. Establish.** Have the class name a few rights, and write them down on the board. Choose a right and have the students generate a list of what needs to happen for that right to be effectively executed. *For example, in order for someone to vote, ballots must be printed, information about ballot initiatives and candidates must be disseminated, ballots must be counted, and enough people must accept the democratic system that the change can in fact be made.* Ask the students who is responsible for guaranteeing each right. Several answers may be appropriate, such as the government or all people.
- 2. Explain.** Tell the students that children and youth have some rights laid out in particular, such as the right to play, the right to education, the right to stay with their families, and protection from abuse. In fact, there is a treaty on children's rights, called the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which gives children some unique rights and some rights that are shared by adults. However, remember the reason this treaty is needed is that children are also especially vulnerable.

Ask the students: "If you are four years old, what could be stopping you from claiming your own rights?" Allow them to generate some answers, which may include dependence on others for survival and the lack of a voice. Remind the students that this means other people, such as parents and the country or its government, are responsible for ensuring that children receive their rights.

- 3. Assign a Right.** Students will work in pairs or individually to evaluate the implementation of children's rights in the United States and another country. Give each student a copy of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Assign each student or pair one article from the CRC's Articles 6, 24, 28, 32, 34, 35, and 40. Ask students to write a one-sentence or shorter summary of what right the article is guaranteeing.
- 4. Research a Country.** Have each student or pair choose one country other than the United States. Ask students to find out how their chosen country realizes the rights of children in their article of the CRC. (The Library of Congress (<http://www.loc.gov/law/help/child-rights/index.php>) has information about children's rights in Argentina, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, Greece, Iran, Israel, Japan, Lebanon, Mexico, Nicaragua, Russia, and the United Kingdom. Reports on children's rights in other countries may be difficult to access for some rights, so you may consider giving these countries as a menu of options).
- 5. Research the United States.** Tell the students their next task is to find out how the United States realizes the rights of children in their article of the CRC. A list of federal laws relating to children is available at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws_policies/, but a search for laws protecting a particular right may be more fruitful). As a resource, refer students to the **Toolkit on the Rights of the Child in the United States** which can be found: www.discoverhumanrights.org/human_rights_toolkits.



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6. **Compare and Analyze Countries.** Ask the students to make a Venn diagram comparing compliance of their right in the United States and in the other country they have chosen. Then, instruct them to write an analysis that compares the two countries and includes changes that would need to be made in each country in order to fulfill the right and the factors that may be impeding these changes.
7. **Present.** Give each student or pair one minute to tell their classmates what their right was and what changes they found needed to be made. List the changes on the board, separated into the categories of "Other Countries" and "USA."
8. **Discuss.** As a class look over the changes required in the U.S. and discuss the following: (Teachers can choose to allow students to be a spokesperson for their assigned right).
 - Which rights do you think still need to be protected for children? (remind students, that this includes them if they are under 18)?
 - What do you believe are the major barriers for rights protection for children in the United States?
 - Which rights do you think are still important for adults and which rights should adults lose when they come of age?
 - What can we do as individuals and as a class to promote the rights of the child and work to change the obstacles we see to child rights protection?
9. **Take Action.** Based on the last discussion question, brainstorm advocacy ideas the class could do as a group, create a plan, and put it into action!