

Unit: Seeking Social Justice -- A Research Project

Prepared by

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Title: Seeking Social Justice -- A Research Project

Content & Subject Areas with Key Words: Language Arts, Research, Human Rights, Social Justice, Writing, Oral Histories, Political Poetry, Protest, Reading, Violations, Activism

Grade Levels & Time Required: 10th Grade Language Arts - 4-6 Weeks (depending on number of examples chosen by the teacher)

Instructional Objectives:

The student will research a specific, global Human Rights violation, gather evidence and present in both a written and digital way, *after* learning about Human Rights, violations, and examples of activism.

Arizona State Standards:

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation. (9-10.W.7)

8. Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation. (9-10.W.8)

Guiding Questions:

What are Human Rights?

What is the role of testimony (written, spoken, etc.)?

What are some examples of Human Rights violations?

How can a marginalized group push back against their attackers?

What are various forms of protest? Most effective and why?

What is the role of human rights activists?

What is the cost of social activism?

What is an example of a global (non-U.S.) Human Rights violation?

Introduction:

Will Rogers once said, “We will never have true civilization until we have learned to recognize the rights of others.” Sadly, many people don’t realize there is a Declaration of Human Rights. Furthermore, many people don’t realize rights of specific groups are constantly violated or are in danger of violation. As a result, it’s crucial to provide access (regarding Human Rights) to students who will one day exercise agency in civic responsibilities.

Before students engage in Human Rights research, they need a solid introduction.

This unit begins with basic comprehension of the Declaration of Human Rights and will ultimately lead to researching a global (preferably non-U.S.) Human Rights violation. Leading up to the research portion are a series of accessible and flexible ways to engage students in not only what Human Rights is, but what this looks like as it applies to violations, oral histories (testimonies), speeches, activism, and more.

Because the end product focuses on a global Human Rights violation, all activities leading up to this are concentrated on the United States for the most part.

Also, because Human Rights content is graphic in nature (at times), class discussion and an open, respectful dialogue is crucial. Students need time to process this information in a comprehensive way. Implore students to engage in conversations with their peers, their teacher, and their parents/guardians.

Instructional and Suggested Lesson Activities:**Activity 1: Understanding the Declaration of Human Rights**

Essential Question: What are Human Rights?

Objective: Students will summarize and explain the Declaration of Human Rights in their own words.

Materials Needed: Printed copies (for annotating purposes) of [Declaration of Human Rights](#)

Description: Begin an open class discussion on what it means to have rights. Who is given rights? What rights are these people given and why? Why is it important to abide by the rights of others? What might happen when rights are violated (examples)? Next, distribute a copy of the Declaration of Human Rights to each student. Allow them the time to read and summarize (and annotate) each section on their own. Once students are finished, read aloud as a class and allow time for clarification. This is the guiding text for this unit, so it's necessary for students to understand the importance of this document.

Checking for understanding: Ask students to write a one page reflection on what they learned by reading the Declaration of Human Rights.

Activity 2: Listening to Oral Histories and looking for Human Rights Violations

Essential Questions: What is the role of testimony? What are some examples of Human Rights violations?

Objective: Students will convert knowledge of the Declaration of Human Rights to listening to oral histories.

Materials Needed: Examples of [oral histories](#) can be found under the [UTEP's Bracero Archive](#) and within PBS's [Austin Revealed series -- Chicano Civil Rights 'Chicano Identity'](#).

Description: Begin an open class discussion on testimony. What is testimony? Where have students seen this word used before (probably when referring to the judicial system)? What is the importance of testimony? Next, allow students time to listen to 1-2 oral histories focusing (specifically) on Human Rights violations. Assign each student (alone or in groups) to listen for a specific section of the Declaration of Human Rights. Preview and select oral testimonies/histories prior to student viewing. This activity might take 2-3 class periods depending on the length of conversation and the length of chosen testimonies.

Checking for Understanding: After listening and/or watching oral histories, allow time for a class discussion on findings. What did students see as human rights violations and why? Ask students to reference the Declaration of Human Rights to cite and support their findings. As a ticket out the door, students can choose one violation and explain which part of the Declaration of Human Rights that it violates.

Activity 3: Using Speeches to Identify Human Rights Violations

Essential Question: What are some examples of Human Rights violations?

Objective: The students will identify and discuss human rights violations embedded in various political speeches.

Materials Needed: Speeches (audio and PDF) can be found at [American Rhetoric](#) and [The Library of Congress](#).

Description: Carefully select 2-3 speeches to use with students which clearly address a Human Rights issue. Note: Not all speeches contain Human Rights issues, so reading and selecting appropriate documents ahead of time is imperative. Students should actively listen, watch, and/or read by taking notes about possible mentions of violations. Once students interact with the speeches, discuss which rights were violated and by whom. Students should demonstrate location of the evidence to support their claims. Discuss interpretation and what this means as it applies to the purpose/goal of speeches. Who was this speech written for? What do you know about the person who wrote/delivered the speech? Finally, discuss the role of the audience and the conclusion of the speech (was action initiated?).

Checking for Understanding: Assign students a speech to watch/listen to on their own. After evaluating the speech, have students write a reflection on any mentions of Human Rights violations as well as the any action initiated. This assignment can mirror what was completed in class, but this time the student is on their own.

Activity 4: Activism and Protest

Essential Questions: What is the role of Human Rights activists? What are various forms of protest? Most effective and why?

Objective: The students will discuss and explore various forms of Human Rights activism and forms of protest.

Materials Needed: Access to specific examples of activism and protests such as: [Ni Una Mas](#) (translates to “not one more” referring to the femicide which took place in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico), [The Women’s March](#) (in D.C. after the Presidential Inauguration in 2017)), [A Day Without Immigrant Workers Strike](#) (also following the 2017 Presidential Inauguration), [The North Dakota Oil Pipeline Protest](#) (seeking protection of drinking water on sacred land),[The National Farm Workers Association](#) (lead by Cesar Chavez beginning in 1962), [M.E.Ch.A.](#) (first assembled in 1969) and so many more.

Description: Begin an open class discussion on activism. What does an activist do and why? What does an activist look like? What does a protest look like? What happens as the result of a protest? Is one type of protest more effective than another and why? After there has been a class discussion, show various examples (3-5 if not more) of activists protesting. Have students take notes on the issue being protested, who are the activists, and what does their protest included/excluded.

Checking for understanding: Consider assigning one movement as homework where students seek articles, videos, images, etc. on their own, write a one page reflection on their findings, and collectively discuss the following day with peers to determine commonalities.

Activity 5: The Role of an Activist and the Potential Cost

Essential Questions:*What is the role of human rights activists? What is the cost of social activism?*

Objective: The students will discuss and explore the role of activists and the cost of being an activist.

Materials Needed: Articles on activists who have been killed such as: [“Killed Defending Women’s Rights...”](#), [“Afghan Female Rights Activists Killed...”](#), [female journalists and activists killed in Mexico](#), [the death of Human Rights activist, Liu Xiaobo](#), and so many more.

Description: Begin by reflecting on the previous activity. Engage students in a discussion about the possible downsides to activism. Is activism worth the potential cost -- why or why not? What happens when an activist dies or is killed? How does the death of an activist effect a movement? Next, select a few texts (articles) for students to consider. Ask students to annotate the articles noting the person, their death, the Human Rights violation the activist was protecting, etc. This can be completed by assigning a

specific article to groups of 3-4 students. Conclude by collecting discussing what was read and talk about the importance of activism as well as the dangerous consequences.

Checking for Understanding: Ask students to write a one page reflection about everything learned up to this point. Which Human Rights are they most intrigued by? Which protests and activists are most interesting? If they (the student) were to defend a Human Rights violation, which fight would they support and how would they accomplish this?

Activity 6: Human Rights Violations on a Global Level (Research Portion)

Essential Questions: *What is an example of a global (non-U.S.) Human Rights violation?*

Objective: The students will research a global (non-U.S.) Human Rights violation and report their findings.

Materials Needed: Access to the internet and Google Docs.

Description: Ask students to research and report (on paper and then through a digital collage of images connected to their research) on the following items:

1. A brief understanding of Human Rights
2. Choose a specific group (outside of the U.S.) who has had their rights violated
3. Identity which Human Rights (specifically) have violated and provide examples
4. Highlight activists and protests associated with this violated group
5. Collect artifacts (visual and print) to evaluate
6. Provide a personal reflection: What were you surprised by? What did you learn? How can you take part in global agency over Human Rights violations? Why should people care about Human Rights issues?

Checking for Understanding: Create a rubric aligned to standards used (note: there are many free rubrics available online, but one should be mindful of fair use practices). Grade students using this rubric, but make sure students have access to the rubric prior to starting their research. Additionally, make sure the rubric is MLA or APA specific so students cite properly and within these guidelines (consider using [Purdue Online Writing Lab](#) for citation guidelines and examples). As for the digital collage, no rubric is needed unless the teacher feels otherwise. The digital collage should represent the research (pictures, quotes, etc.). Some avenues for the digital collage include (but not limited to): [WeVideo](#) (a free online movie making resource), [iMovie](#) (an Apple device is required),

[Weebly](#) (a free website maker), or a PowerPoint. Consider a gallery walk of findings to allow students to see various instances of Human Rights issues once the research has been concluded.

Extended/Elaborate (Additional Learning):

1. Consider having students research and reflect on a Human Rights violation in their own community.
2. Have students read books featuring social activists (literature circles, personal reading, etc.).
3. Find poems connected to Human Rights issues to evaluate.
4. Create a memorial on campus (with permission of course) to commemorate a Human Rights violation, activist, protest, etc.
5. Ask students to participate in a march, protest, etc.
6. Create a public service announcement to be shown on the school announcements.
7. Ask students to write to their local congressperson regarding a Human Rights violation.
8. Have students create protest posters and display them in the classroom, on campus, within the community, etc.
9. Ask students to write an original poem about a Human Rights violation, activist, or protest.
10. Use the Declaration of Human Rights to write a Found Poem and read in class.

Evaluate (assessment): The final assessment is the research piece. The tool for grading is the teacher generated rubric (or a rubric found online) which supports the standards. If the teacher wishes to add a digital component, consider having students create a website using Weebly, a short film using WeVideo, iMovie, etc.

Accommodations and Modifications:

1. Written reflections can be assigned as ½ a page instead of a full page, OR student may discuss orally with teacher.
2. For the research portion, consider providing a specific Human Rights violation if student is having trouble finding one on their own.
3. Consider cutting some of the research questions in ½ (depending on the needs of the student).
4. Allow students to use visual and audio examples instead of found, written text (Youtube or any of the resources listed in this unit).

5. Consider altering the language of the rubric used to allow for altered grading (as needed).

College and Career Readiness:

Common Core:

Research to Build and Present Knowledge:

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.7](#)

Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.8](#)

Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.9](#)

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Additional Resources (Human Rights and Social Activist Resources):

[*Border Politics in a Global Area: Comparative Perspectives*](#) (book)

[*Courage, Resistance, and Women in Ciudad Juarez: Challenges to Militarization*](#) (book)

[*Fronteras No Mas: Toward Social Justice at the U.S.-Mexican Border*](#) (book)

["How to Tame a Wild Tongue"](#) (Chapter 5)

[NPR](#) (Human Rights)

[*The Devil's Highway*](#) (book)

[*Violence and Activism at the Border: Gender, Fear, and Everyday Life in Ciudad Juarez*](#) (book)

Reflection:

I've always wanted to teach a Human Rights unit, but I wanted to make sure I do the topic as much justice as possible. As I started to hone in on the end product, I realized a challenge would be making sure students understand what they are researching and why there is merit in this kind of research.

Therefore, the majority of this unit is discussion, written explanation, and exploration of various aspects of Human Rights and violations. I focused on the U.S. (primarily) to develop background knowledge because students may not realize all the violations taking place all around them let alone around the world.

Finally, the end product was a research paper and a digital image of some kind; however, the true end product is a social awareness of people...of humanity. It seems scarily easy to whittle away at the rights of people but at what cost? My goal is for students to hold a mirror up to themselves and truly ponder their role as a member of society. Upstander? Bystander? In the end, it's a choice. How we choose to connect with society is a choice. Seeking social justice is a choice.

Works Cited (this unit was inspired by the following texts):

Martínez, Oscar J. *Border People: Life and Society in the U.S.–Mexico Borderlands*. University of Arizona Press, 1994.

Mora, Pat. *My Own True Name: New and Selected Poems for Young Adults*. Piñata Books, 2000.

Ngai, Mae. *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*. Princeton University Press, 2014.

Urrea, Luis Alberto. *The Devil's Highway*. Back Bay Books, 2004.