

ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

[The essential question is introduced at the beginning of the unit and the questions relating to it are used as prompts for discussions.]

Who is responsible for guaranteeing human rights?

1. Does everyone enjoy the same rights?
2. Do some people have more rights than others?
3. What provisions does the Constitution provide for Human Rights?
4. What is my role in insuring Human Rights?
 - a) How do my actions impact on society?
 - b) How can I work towards solving social problems?
 - c) What positive actions can I take?
 - d) How can *kids* bring about changes at the local, state, federal level? [How can kids initiate laws?]
 - e) What tools can I use to help affect change?
[letter writing, interviews, surveys, petitions, proposals, news releases, lobbying, etc.]

CURRICULUM GUIDING QUESTIONS:

[Curriculum Guiding Questions are used to guide specific lessons and as prompts to journal reflections.]

1. What is a human rights issue?

Points of Inquiry:

- a) What are human rights?
[basic; entitlement under the law/societal/cultural/legislative]
- b) What are your rights?
- c) Why do some people lose their rights?
- d) What are the rights of groups?
[e.g. minorities: women, children, ethnic groups, illegal aliens, elderly, criminals, etc.]
- e) Should there be equality for everyone?
- t) When might an individual's rights be put aside for the general good?
- g) In what ways do rights bring on responsibilities?

2. How do you present an issue fairly?

Points of Inquiry:

- a) How do you research an issue?
- b) How do you present an issue in an unbiased manner?
- c) How do you prepare a letter presenting a point of view /recommendations to a public official, group, or organization?
- d) Was there legislation to support or obstruct your right?

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES:

The teacher will:

- . establish a definition for human rights with the students.
- . establish a definition for human rights issues with the students.
- . expose the students to resources such as literature, multimedia and non-fiction materials both primary and secondary.
- . prepare checklists and rubrics with the class for assessments.
- . model research about...
- . model letter writing to a public official, group, and/or institution.
- . teach about graphic organizers and model their use.
- . teach and model note-taking skills.
- . guide students in the writing process through writing workshops.
- . discuss the qualities of a good oral presentation and develop a checklist with the students.
- . review checklist for cooperative group work behaviors.
- . guide students in the creation of a personal: *Bill of Rights and Responsibilities*.
- . lead discussion of reasons why the government displaced the Cherokee Nation.

TASK DESCRIPTION:

The student will:

- . write a personal journal entry describing their experiences and feelings about the day we had been uprooted from our classroom without prior notification.
- . use some mode of written communication to share their personal reflections on human rights.
- . develop their own *Bill of Rights and Responsibilities* as a class.
- . define and identify human rights issues through the use of primary and secondary sources as well as discussions. Each student will select one to research in a small group.
- . use library materials, texts, and interviews when possible and appropriate on-line resources to research/investigate their issue.
- . gather their research in groups.
- . organize their research and make an informed decision about the issue as a group.
- . write and mail their letters to a public official, group, or agency stating their position, as a group.

ASSESSMENTS:

Weeks 1-8

- . Record of observations of students' responses to questions and contributions to discussions.
- . Record of observations of students' cooperative working abilities during research project.

Week 2

- . Understanding of human rights. journal entry, poem, narrative account, etc. - exploring students' feelings.

Week 3

- . Students edit the class charter of Rights and Responsibilities.

Weeks 4 and 5

- . Students research types of human rights issues, select one to research, and begin research.

Weeks 6 and 7

- . Groups gather research.
- . Students organize information and make an informed decision about the issue.

Week 8

- . Students write a persuasive or informational letter to a public official, institution, or group stating opinion.

Week 2

The following are excerpts from the original journal selections students wrote as if they were on the actual "Trail of Tears."

[The first two pieces were taken from Dimension's students- gifted/talented and the third from a special education student.]

May 5, 1839

"It was a long day that I couldn't wait to pass. I heard death defying screams and screeches which were once screams of joy but now of hate, cries once of giving and sharing now of fear and hate. Settlers we once helped find there ways now come against us like strangers. Once a nation always a nation not true. We've heard of bad luck but this can't be so. Perfect land we once owned has now become white man's land Right when we were friends, Andrew Jackson this so called Chief of America takes over. He sends troops to take us away. This is the end of our time when I just started out in life. "

January 2, 1839

"Every day the winter gets colder, but today was colder than any other. The winds blew through my hair and then the wind slapped my ma down. The snow was so high it almost swallowed her up. I ran to help her up. As I reached for her hand, I felt nothing but ice. Her hand had froze. "Get up. Don't stop now. ... Her eyes closed into an eternal sleep. ..."

"Dear Diary,

One day we were told that we had to move to a new land in the West This was my experience in moving.

We woke up early in the moning and had are breakfast Just when we finished breakfast some people came in our house and told us we had to leave our home right then. So we left right away and joined the other peope. We chose a leader to lead us. If we didn't go fast enoygh they would hit us with their bayonnets. I got a lot of cuts by them doing that to me. On the way West most of my people died When we had time we'd bury them. We walked through snow and boiling hot weather barefoot It took a year to get to the West (800 miles).

WEEK 3

The following student work represents their personal definitions and understandings of what are human rights and what is a human rights issue. (We were also studying the Constitution and Bill of Rights at this time in the curriculum.)

PROMPT: What are human rights?

"Humans have the right for liberty and to speak of problems that could get solutions. In other countrys people don't have these rights. "

" You are aloud to be free - to vote... to think your opinion... to eat what you want "

".. .People have rights to go places, learn things, listen to people, and to talk to someone, to write things, and to read things. "

".. .Humans should be able to speak up and tell how we think. "

"Human rights are freedom and peace all around, and femis." (fairness)

PROMPT: What are your rights?

"I have the same rights as anyone elses."

"I don't get speacial rights just for myself. Everybodys equal Why should I get speacial rights?"

"My rights are to speak, to write, to read to speak out I have a right to buy something to trade something, and to make something. I have a right to go to school "

"My rights are to care and be loyal to other people. "

PROMPT: What is a human rights issue?

"Homeless people don't have all the rights we do. 77ey don't have safety rights. 77ey're not sheltered from the snow, coldness, dirtyness, health and much more. "

"In Bosnia they are fighting because of different religions. People in other country's are humans and they have the right to pick their own religion. "

"I don't get it "

June '97

Dear Mayor Guiliani,

In school, our class is learning about Human Rights. In our group we are studying about Homeless People's Rights.

We have been doing research on homeless people and it is very sad. New York is the biggest population for homeless people. Personally, we wouldn't like to be recognized like that.

To get back to the point, you're making our population of homeless people increase. If your law about raising rates for hotels and motels and rent controlled buildings, gets through, we might even be first place on the list of the population of homeless.

Homeless people walk the streets all day. With your law they'll come home to a cardboard box. At least some homeless people in the city live in hotels and motels. Now they won't even live there. Mayor Guiliani we know you want more money but don't take the money away from the homeless. People try to help and make shelter to invite homeless people in. But there is no warm blankets. These places are real dumps. This is New York State, the State we live in.

We understand why, there not enough shelters. And they should be safe!

If you need money, take some away from the criminals and jails. They've committed a crime. Why give the all these privileges and food? Take some of it for the homeless or to build bridges like you want to do.

Think about seeing this every time you turn around the corner. That what's going to become of New York City with your law.

Yours truly, J.
M.
L.