

Activities for Learning About the Life and Work of Eleanor Roosevelt

The following pages contain a set of twelve activities that you can use with your students to develop skills for analyzing primary source documents, explore Mrs. Roosevelt's work in helping to create the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and identify and practice using diplomatic skills.

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Vocabulary

Article - an individual portion or section of a document, often used to introduce an important point or information

Atrocities - shockingly bad and/or violent events

Cold War - conflict over ideological differences, a condition of rivalry, mistrust and sometimes even open hostility, such conditions developed between the United States and the Soviet Union at the end of WW II

Colonialism - control of one country over another's territory, people and resources with a disproportionate benefit going to the controlling country

Declaration - an official statement, announcement or proclamation

Diplomat/Diplomatic - the act of conducting negotiations between nations

Eleanor Roosevelt - Chair of the Committee on Human Rights, former First Lady of the United States

General Assembly - highest deliberative body of the United Nations

Inalienable - incapable of being violated, surrendered or transferred and taken away

Idealistic - acting or behaving based on a strongly held set of principles, values or beliefs

International Standards - generally accepted norms of behavior held by nations around the world

Non-Binding - having no legal force to compel compliance or adherence

Personhood - a human individual, often used to avoid reference to gender

Post War - the time period occurring after the end of the Second World War

Propaganda - the spreading of ideas, information or rumors for the purpose of helping or injuring an institution, cause or person

Repression - the act of holding back or keeping down something or someone

United Nations - world political organization established in 1945 with the goal of keeping peace and advancing the needs of humankind

Western Ideas - relating to the values, beliefs and customs of Europe and the United States

Primary Source Analysis

Activity 1) Photograph Analysis: Eleanor Roosevelt with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Carefully examine this photograph and answer the questions that follow as best you can.

At First Glance...

- 1) What do you see in this photograph?
- 2) Who is the woman in this photograph?
- 3) What is she holding?
- 4) What is she doing?
- 5) What do you think she is thinking?
- 6) What do you think she is feeling?

A Closer Look...

- 1) What do you notice about the document she is holding?
 - 2) What words can you see?
 - 3) What do those words mean?
 - 4) What symbols or special markings do you see on the document?
 - 5) What do you think happened before this picture was taken?
 - 6) What do you think will happen next?
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Activity 2) Document Analysis: Letter Asking Eleanor Roosevelt to Serve as a Delegate to the United Nations

Carefully read this letter and answer the questions that follow as best you can.

At First Glance...

- 1) When was this letter written?
- 2) Who is the letter to?
- 3) Who is the letter from?
- 4) Where was it written?
- 5) Where is it going?

A Closer Look...

- 1) What is the letter asking of Mrs. Roosevelt?
- 2) How does the writer describe the United Nations? What does that mean?
- 3) What role does the letter writer attribute to Franklin D. Roosevelt?
- 4) What role does the letter writer say Mrs. Roosevelt will play?
- 5) Why wasn't Eleanor Roosevelt able to be a delegate at the San Francisco Conference?

- 6) Carefully read the third paragraph of this letter and briefly summarize it using your own words.
 - 7) The writer says that he believes ‘millions of [his] fellow-Americans’ think her joining the committee would be a good idea. Why do you think he believes that?
 - 8) Do you agree or disagree? Explain why or why not.
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Activity 3) Document Analysis: Eleanor Roosevelt Letter Resigning her Membership in the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR)

In February 1939 Mrs. Roosevelt resigned her membership in the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) in protest because African American singer Marion Andersen was not permitted to perform at Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C. because it was a segregated venue.

A Look at Her Letter...

Carefully read the letter Mrs. Roosevelt sent and answer the questions that follow.

- 1) How do you feel about the action taken by Mrs. Roosevelt?
- 2) Why do you think Mrs. Roosevelt felt it was important to take a stand on this?
- 3) How might she have handled this situation differently?
- 4) What would you have done?

A Look at Yourself...

- 1) Describe a situation in your life where you took a stand against something you believed to be wrong.
- 2) What was the issue?
- 3) What was the situation?
- 4) What did you do?
- 5) How did your taking action improve the situation?

Classroom Activities

Activity 4) Questions Before the Delegates of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Committee

Ask your students to consider and discuss each of the following questions. Then ask them to write a brief statement that answers the question. How do their responses compare to the answers derived by the Human Rights Committee?

- 1) What are Human Rights?
 - 2) What rights should be guaranteed to every human on earth?
 - 3) Are Human Rights the same for everyone?
 - 4) Are Human Rights the same everywhere?
 - 5) What is personhood?
 - 6) From where do Human Rights derive?
 - 7) What comes first, the rights of the individual or the interest of the community?
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Activity 5) What Does This Mean?

Ask your students to consider and discuss the meaning of each of the following:

- 1) “We won the war, now we need to win the peace.”
 - 2) Freedom
 - 3) Justice
 - 4) Peace
 - 5) Living Document
 - 6) Character
 - 7) Courage
 - 8) Conviction
 - 9) “Eleanor Roosevelt needed all of her diplomatic skills.”
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Activity 6) A Question for Mrs. Roosevelt

Ask your students to think of a question they would like to ask Mrs. Roosevelt if she came for a visit in your classroom. Collect the questions and select one to three that seem to be most representative and send those questions to the Roosevelt Presidential Library’s Education Specialist for a response.

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Activity 7) Finding Common Ground

It is often easy to see what makes us different from one another. It is often harder to see what makes us the same.

ONE: Divide your class in small groups or pairs and ask them to fill in the worksheet below. Give them 3-4 minutes to create a list of things **they have in common**.

List things **you have in common** with the person/people in your group.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____

TWO: Now give the groups or pairs 3-4 minutes to create a list of things they **do not** have in common.

List things you **do not have in common** with the person/people in your group.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____

THREE: Now ask the students to think about and respond to the following questions.

1) Why do you suppose you share things in common with the person/people in your group?

2) Why do you suppose you do not share things in common with the person/people in your group?

3) Are there more differences or similarities in your thinking with the person/people in your group?

4) How important are the differences really?

5) How might you use the things you have in common to reach agreement on the things you don't have in common?



Activity 8) What Can You Do in Your “Small Place?”

Mrs. Roosevelt once said that Human Rights begin in small places. So small that they cannot be seen on a globe or a map. In other words, right where we are - in our classes, in our schools, in our families, and in our communities.

Challenge students to come up with three things they can do to make things more positive, peaceful and inclusive:

In your class:

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____

In your school:

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____

In their families:

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____

In their communities:

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____

Post the lists around the room or school to inspire others to join in promoting Human Rights in their own “small places.”

Always encourage your students to:

Do what you can, where you can, while you can.



Activity 9) Universal Rights in the World Today

Have your students select an area of conflict or an issue with global ramifications in the world today.

- a)** Ask them to research and analyze the situation and then list and describe which of the 30 articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is being violated or is under threat.
 - b)** Compare the lists among students to determine which of the rights seem to be most under attack in the world today.
 - c)** Ask them to research and identify what the United Nations, individual nations and/or non-governmental agencies and organizations are doing to correct the situation.
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Activity 10) The Critics Have Their Say

The video presentation highlights four key criticisms of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

- 1) The document is idealistic and non binding*
- 2) The document forces Western ideals on the world as a new form of colonialism*
- 3) The great powers manipulate it for the purposes of propaganda*
- 4) Oppression and atrocities still continue to make the news*

a) Working in small groups, ask your students to think about and discuss each of these four criticisms. Then ask them to :

1) determine how valid they believe each of the criticisms to be by ranking them on a scale from one to ten with one being not valid and 10 being totally valid. Have the students compare their answers and get a gauge showing where the class stands collectively on each one.

2) Cite examples where they believe these criticisms have been shown to be true

Then ask them:

3) To consider as a class, the 31 articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and select 10 that they feel should be removed. How hard is it to reach a consensus on which 10 should be eliminated? When (if) you reach a consensus, ask the class to determine the validity of the criticisms using the same scale as above. Continue the process by

eliminating 7 more rights in a next round and then 4 in a next round. How many rights are left by the time the class reaches a 'validity equilibrium' that they can feel good about? Ask them if they truly believe 'watered down' UDHR serves the world better than the existing one? Have them explain why.

4) At what point is addressing the criticisms worth the trade off?

5) Is it better to have an imperfect document than no document at all?

b) Much of the success of the United Nations does not make headlines in the news. Ask your students to research the work of the United Nations' health, agriculture, development, peacekeeping, investment, environment, and cultural agencies and activities. How do these stand up to the four key criticisms? About how many people are served by these efforts and organizations each year?

c) Ask your students to do some research about the role of the United Nations in the Korean Conflict (commonly known as the Korean War) of the early 1950s. How might South Korea be different today if the UN had not intervened? Ask your students if they believe the ceasefire agreement that ended the armed conflict between North and South Korea is a success or failure? Have them explain their reasoning. How did/ does the Korean example illustrate the criticisms of the detractors of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?

Using Diplomatic Skills

Activity 11) What Would You Do? Overview

One of the many hurdles in getting young people to learn and understand diplomatic skills and behaviors is the disconnect they feel in being able to impact real world decisions as children. To them, the activities of being a good diplomat all seem like activities that will only be available to them when they are grown up. The truth is that these skills - communication, cooperation, compromise, teamwork, participation, can (and should) be developing now. The extent to which we master these skills as young people creates the space and ability to participate and succeed later in life.

Communication - Diplomats need to express ideas, goals and values in a clear, concise and consistent manner. They need to be aware of if, and how, their message is getting across. They must also be certain that their actions back up their words so as to not send mixed messages.

Cooperation - Diplomats need to work together to determine what each brings to the negotiation table, set goals, decide how tasks will be divided, determine who will be responsible for accomplishing them, and deciding who will take the leadership role.

Compromise - Diplomats must be willing to give up or give in on some of their goals in order to get accommodations from the other side and reach agreement.

Teamwork - Diplomats depend on teamwork, assigning specific tasks to specific people who have the specific skills to accomplish those tasks. They must also be certain to coordinate all the parts to assure progress is being made.

Participation - Making sure that those who have an important stake or interest in a matter are included in the discussions, planning and implementation of what needs to be done is an important skill for a diplomat to have.

Resource Allocation - Diplomats must determine what skills, materials, time and people will be needed to accomplish a task and make sure they are acquired and distributed and used effectively.

Deliberation - Diplomats must think about what needs to be done, determine a set of goals and identify, evaluate and reach a consensus about which option to pursue.

Diplomatic Concepts

The activities in this section will explore the following diplomatic concepts: communication, cooperation, compromise, teamwork, participation, resource allocation and deliberation.

Key Objective

The activities in this section will help students recognize that the skills used by adults to handle complex real world problems are the same skills they use to handle problems in their own lives.

A: Problems at the Playground (United Nations)

B: Trouble at the Table (Japanese American Incarceration)

C: To Go or Not to Go? (Eleanor Roosevelt & the DAR)

A: Problems at the Playground (United Nations)

Your school shares a playground with two other schools, an after school program, a city-wide softball team and an adult center's fitness club.

Because there is so much demand for the space there are often conflicts over schedules, equipment, and sports fields and courts. Sometimes these conflicts grow into arguments and petty actions like deliberately leaving equipment out of place or not leaving the fields in proper condition for the next team of players.

It has become a real problem. What would you do?

Ask your students to carefully consider each of the three options below. Take a vote to see how many students would support each of the options. Then ask them to work together to debate and deliberate each of the options until they come to a consensus about what to do. Finally, ask them to share their experiences and how they felt about this process.

- 1) Just learn to deal with it, realizing that conflicts will continue to occur.
- 2) Create an alliance with one or two of the other groups to exert pressure to influence the other groups to your needs.
- 3) Organize a committee to discuss the problem and set up a system that fairly regulates who and when the fields and equipment will be used.

Historic Application

Throughout world history nations have come into conflict with each other over access and control of territory and resources. This has resulted in many wars - including two world wars – and much human suffering.

After the First World War (1914-1918) resulted in more than 16 million people being killed, American President Woodrow Wilson tried to create a League of Nations to talk over, not fight over, future disputes. It failed largely because the United States Senate would not approve American membership in the League.

The Second World War (1939-1945) resulted in more than 60 million people being killed, American President Franklin Roosevelt sought to create the United Nations to talk over, not fight over, future disputes and avoid a third world war.

Today the United Nations has over 190 member countries and though there are still armed conflicts in the world, the UN has thus far prevented a third world war. The UN also assists hundreds of millions of people

around the world with food, medical and educational assistance.

Lesson Learned

Organizing a group to discuss problems and reach agreements helps things run more smoothly and reduces conflicts.

B: Trouble at the Table (Japanese American Incarceration)

Your school lunchroom has just purchased really nice new tables for your cafeteria. Everyone really enjoys how clean and comfortable they are.

One day, two or three of your classmates made a big mess at one of the new tables and left it there for the lunch attendant to clean up.

If you were the lunch attendant, what would you do?

Ask your students to carefully consider each of the three options below. Take a vote to see how many students would support each of the options. Then ask them to work together to debate and deliberate each of the options until they come to a consensus about what to do. Finally, ask them to share their experiences and how they felt about this process.

1) Stand over the tables your class uses every day for lunch keeping an extra, an uncomfortably close eye on the students and have those you deem as “potential troublemakers” sit at one especially reserved table away from the other students.

2) Identify everyone in that class and ban them all from using the new tables for the rest of the year.

3) Keep an especially close eye out to catch and punish those who create a mess.

Historic Application

On December 7, 1941 Japan bombed the American naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. This attack brought the United States into the Second World War. President Franklin Roosevelt issued an executive order (9066) that led 120,000 Japanese Americans to be rounded up and moved from their homes and businesses in California to internment camps in the deserts of the mid-western United States. They were not allowed to go free and return home until after the war was over even though they had had nothing to do with the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

In the interests of National Security the government made everyone who was of Japanese ancestry suffer for the actions of Japan. Many historians believe this was unfair. At the time most people thought this was the right thing to do but some people did disagree. Over time public opinion evolved, flip-flopped, and today most people realize this was not the right thing to do.

Lesson Learned

The civil rights of American citizens must be carefully protected even in times of national emergencies.

C: To Go or Not to Go? (Eleanor Roosevelt & the DAR)

Your best friend Pat was born at the end of the year and ended up a grade below yours. Another friend, Gary is having a pool party and has invited you, but not Pat. He says he doesn't like hanging out with people he considers to be "below" him.

You think Pat and Gary would get along great and that the only thing that really separates them is the pure chance of when they were born which put them in different grades. You really want to go to the party, but you don't like the fact that Pat is being left out.

One friend has put you in a bad spot with another. What would you do?

Ask your students to carefully consider each of the three options below. Take a vote to see how many students would support each of the options. Then ask them to work together to debate and deliberate each of the options until they come to a consensus about what to do. Finally, ask them to share their experiences and how they felt about this process.

- 1) Feel a little bad for Pat but just go to the party without him.
- 2) Call out Gary for being unfair to Pat for no good reason and suggest that unless he is invited you won't come either.
- 3) Decide not to go and say nothing to either friend.

Historic Application

In February 1939 a talented young black singer named Marion Andersen was scheduled to perform at a concert in Washington D.C.'s Constitution Hall. The concert was sponsored by a group called the DAR (Daughters of the American Revolution) of which Mrs. Roosevelt was a largely inactive member.

Because the venue where the concert was to be held was in Washington, a segregated city at the time, Ms. Andersen was told that she would not be allowed to perform. In protest, Mrs. Roosevelt wrote a letter to the head of the DAR expressing her displeasure at the decision and resigning her membership in the organization.

Six weeks later a concert was arranged on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and 75,000 people attended. Mrs. Roosevelt's action in the face of discrimination raised nation-wide awareness of the unfairness of racial segregation.

Lesson Learned

Taking a stand for what is right through a public action can make those who were not aware of an issue aware of it for the first time. It may also make those who were aware, but unwilling to do anything, reconsider that perhaps they need to.

Extension Activity Ideas

1) Ask your students to identify several complex problems facing their community, our country or the world today and list these on the board. Then ask them to relate a “kid problem” they are familiar with, to the real world problem as the activities in this section have done. What skills are needed to bring about a resolution to these problems? What players need to be involved?

2) Select a real world problem and ask your students to develop and propose a set of solutions. What makes their proposal a viable solution?

Activity 12) Examining Some Key Rights

The video presentation highlights seven articles that describe key rights:

Article 3

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security...

Article 11

Everyone... has the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty...

Article 14

Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution...

Article 18

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion...

Article 19

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression...

Article 20

Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association...

Article 26

Everyone has the right to education...

a) Ask your students to list examples of these rights in action in everyday life.

b) Compare the articles to the American Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights. Which of these articles are similar to the rights listed in these important American documents?

c) Ask your students to list the seven highlighted articles in order of importance, with number 1 being the most important and number 7 being the least important. Then compare the answers across the class. Is there a consensus about which rights are the most important. Allow for a

friendly debate and then resurvey your students. Is there any shift in the results?

d) Ask your students to come up with examples from around the world, and in this country, where these rights are being threatened or endangered. Why is that the case? Who, or what is threatening these rights? What is being done about it?

Activity 13) Examining Some of the Other Committee Members

The video presentation highlights several of the other committee members:

India, Hansa Mehta

France, René Cassin

China, PC Chang

Canada, John Humphrey

Lebanon, Charles Malika

a) Ask your students to do some research on each of these people and to create a 2-3 paragraph biography of each. What skills, experience and knowledge did these people have in common? What specific skills, experience and knowledge did each contribute to the committee?

b) Ask your students to research who the other members of the committee were. What countries were they from? What skills, experience and knowledge did each of them contribute to the committee?