

## Lesson 4: Our Responsibilities

### OVERVIEW

Having explored the ideas about human rights in U.S. history throughout the unit, the intention of this lesson is to help students connect historical information with personal responsibility and information on current events. How can we, as citizens, reflect on past events in order to change the future? By “filtering” information, we can assess what students know about ideas and events related to democracy. More importantly, however, we can assess their understanding of how their actions as humans can support democracy or hinder democracy.

This lesson is designed for one 90-minute period or two 45-minute periods.

### OBJECTIVES

- Students will connect historical struggles for human rights with contemporary issues.
- Students will understand their personal responsibility to uphold human rights.

### GUIDING QUESTION

What can we do to remedy rights violations in the U.S. and the world?  
What are our responsibilities to uphold human rights?

### STANDARDS/Frameworks

PPE 1.1  
PAG 1.4, 1.5  
SSPS 1.4

### MATERIALS

Student research materials, such as newspapers, magazines, or computers with Internet access.

Student Activity Sheet  
Current Events Graphic Organizer

### ACTIVITIES

1. Ask a student to read the following definition aloud:

Human Rights- basic rights and freedoms to which all humans are entitled often held to include the right to life and liberty, freedom of thought and expression, and equality among the law. (From the American Heritage dictionary) Remind them that this is the definition they worked with in lesson 1. Refer back to the chart or butcher paper (or chalkboard) that contained students’ ideas about the three phrases, “life and liberty”, “freedom of thought and expression”, and “equality under the law”.

2. Divide students into four groups for investigation of current events related to rights of

the following groups: American citizens, Immigrants in the U.S. (legal or illegal), world citizens, and students. Remind students of the Venn diagram from lesson 1, in which they discussed the rights to which each of these groups is entitled. Have students complete research on the Internet, in recent news magazines or newspapers, or through interviews covering one of the topics pertaining to their interest group. They should determine how their issue relates to the rights to 1) life and liberty; 2) freedom of thought and expression, and 3) equality under the law.

Possible research topics for group 1 (issues affecting American citizens): Intellectual property rights, such as downloading music and movies, affirmative action and/or quotas in hiring and school admissions, racial profiling, gay marriage and/or adoption

Possible research topics for group 2 (issues affecting immigrants to the U.S.): California Proposition 187, access to health care, ability to obtain a driver's license, Elian Gonzales case, English as the national language, access to bilingual education, immigration quotas, President Bush's proposed guest worker program

Possible research topics for group 3 (issues affecting citizens of the world): Abu Ghraib prison abuse scandal, banning of *hijab* (headscarves) in European countries, access to education for boys and girls, ability to practice all religions openly

Possible research topics for group 4 (issues affecting students): censorship of school newspapers, dress codes and/or school uniforms, locker searches, see-through backpacks, *Tinker v. Des Moines* court case, prayer in school, Pledge of Allegiance

1. Model completion of the graphic organizer (current events and human rights) by choosing one or several of the events from the list below

Indian Removal Act of 1830, Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, Jim Crow laws such as segregation of schools, public facilities, bans on interracial marriage, Executive Order 9066

2. Student groups should present their research regarding the issue they chose to research. They should first summarize the issue. Then, they can discuss whether the human rights of 1) life and liberty; 2) freedom of thought and expression, and 3) equality under the law are being upheld or violated and explain their analysis. After each student presentation, the teacher may want to take time to discuss the issue and gather student feedback about what options are (or were) available as solutions.

3. Ask each student to select one person, event, or issue from lesson 2 or lesson 3. Ask them to create a written reflection:

Imagine you are living in the time when this event occurred. How would you react? Would your actions violate or support human rights?

4. Discuss the idea of responsibility. What are your responsibilities as an individual? As a student? As a family member? As a citizen? From where do our ideas about responsibility come? What are the consequences when we don't live up to our responsibilities?

#### EXTENSION OR CLOSING

Ask students to reflect and respond to one or more of these quotes. Encourage students to cite examples from the lessons in their reflections:

“You cannot make yourself feel something you do not feel, but you can make yourself do right in spite of your feelings.”

Pearl S. Buck

“America did not invent human rights. In a very real sense...human rights invented America.”

Jimmy Carter

“The hottest places in hell are reserved for those who, in times of crisis, have no opinion.”

Dante Alighieri

## Lesson 4: Our Responsibilities Current Events Graphic Organizer

<b>EVENT OR ISSUE</b>	<b>“Life and Liberty”</b>	<b>“Freedom of Thought and Expression”</b>	<b>“Equality Under the Law”</b>
Name of event or issue:	YES      NO  Explain your reasoning:	YES      NO  Explain your reasoning:	YES      NO  Explain your reasoning:
People involved:			
Date:			