



Sharing the Art and Story of Holocaust Survivor Esther Nisenthal Krinitz

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS: SHARING ESTHER'S STORY

Resources: [History of Human Rights](#) (video), [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), [Social Justice and Human Rights](#) (Sutori). Students should be familiar with the story and artwork of [Esther Nisenthal Krinitz](#). Have the book, [Memories of Survival](#) or [Fabric of Survival: An Interactive Gallery](#) (Sutori) and "[Meet Esther](#)" [close read](#) (PDF) available for this lesson.

Subject Areas: Social Studies, Social Justice, Law, History, Civics

Grades: 7-12

Topics/Themes: Social Justice, Equity, Holocaust, Genocide, World War II (WWII), Human Rights, Civic Engagement

OVERVIEW:

Educate, Explore and Engage

Esther Krinitz's story is an excellent springboard for students to start thinking about human rights, social justice and the various ways their knowledge, voice and actions can impact the lives of others. WW II was a catalyst for international human rights support as well as a catalyst for the Civil Rights movement in the United States. The following lessons and suggested activities can be incorporated into existing programs or can help your students get involved in something meaningful in your community.

The concept of human rights is that people around the world, no matter their age, gender, religion, race, or socioeconomic status, are entitled to basic rights, such as access to food, water and shelter, as well as freedoms based on shared values such as dignity, fairness and equality. As educators, we can inform our students about what these rights are and how to ensure that they are protected.

By learning about universal human rights, students will make connections between their rights and their responsibilities to uphold these rights. They will have a better understanding of the underlying principles of freedom, equality, fairness and justice and how there is much still to be done around the world to make sure that stories like Esther's don't happen again.

After learning about Esther's journey and her life story, students will make connections to social justice issues, human rights and ways they can make a difference through small actions in their own communities. By sharing Esther's story and looking at ways to help others, students will gain compassion, understanding, and mutual respect.

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OBJECTIVES:

Students will be able to:

- develop an understanding of what human rights are.
- understand the history of the idea of human rights, especially how WWII sparked a movement to create the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- begin to appreciate the relationship between rights and responsibilities.
- apply the concepts of human rights to their own lives.
- make connections to world events and the Civil Rights movement in the United States.
- understand how they can be agents in upholding rights and educating others through civic engagement.

LEARNING STANDARDS:

- Integration of knowledge and ideas
- Read and comprehend complex literary and informational text
- Comprehension and collaboration - Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

EDUCATE:

Lesson Plan - Understanding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Duration: Two 60-minute class periods

Activity Setting: Classroom, collaborative

Grades: 7-12

PART ONE:

1. Have students create a list of basic human rights.
2. Have students read the Declaration of Human Rights - How many of the items on their lists were reflected in the document?
3. Ask students how these rights are protected.
4. Have students discuss ways they can ensure that these rights are not diminished and that they are protected.
5. Discuss how Esther's rights were progressively reduced before and during the war.

Explore: Once students have a basic understanding of human rights, they can continue to explore the importance of these rights and the means to protect those rights. In this second part activity, students will explore the history and evolution of human rights.

PART TWO:

1. Ask student what they know about the formation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
2. Remind students that there are 30 rights according to the United Nations in the Universal Declaration.

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3. Have students write down as many of the rights as they can recall.
4. Have students think about other documents that have been designed to protect the rights of individuals.
5. Have students watch the short video about the history of human rights.

Questions to consider:

- What is natural law?
- What has happened in history when these rights are taken away?
- Before WWII, did Europeans have specific rights?

ACTIVITY ONE: THE HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS**Activity Setting:** Classroom, collaborative**Duration:** Varies depending on your goals - it can be a project or it can be a short research mission to find a couple of facts that can be shared.

Assign small groups to explore one of the following documents and share back what they discovered. Who declared the rights? Which incidents in history were sparked by the restriction of rights? Why don't the Universal Rights have laws attached to them? Who were some of the heroes who refused to be silent when it came to human rights?

Assign each group one of the following to research and share back:

- Cyrus Cylinder (539 B.C.)
- Magna Carta (1215)
- Petition of Right (1628)
- U.S. Declaration of Independence (1776)
- U.S. Constitution (1787)
- French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789)
- U.S. Bill of Rights (1791)

ACTIVITY TWO: HUMAN RIGHTS YESTERDAY AND TODAY**Activity Setting:** Classroom, collaborative**Duration:** Varies depending on your goals: It can be a project or it can be a short research mission to find a couple of facts that can be shared back

Have students research and make connections from pre-WWII, post-war and the contemporary status of one of the following:

- the rights of women
- the rights of children
- the rights of refugees
- civil rights in the united states

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- prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide

In addition, students can:

- Make a short video presentation, poster, or PowerPoint with the facts.
- Create a timeline showing the evolution of these movements.
- Do the [Unsung Heroes](#) (lesson plan or Sutori) assignment based on a person who was instrumental in one of these movements.

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ENRICHMENT/EXTENSION:

Current Events: Although the Declaration of Human Rights has been followed by many nations, genocide, torture and other violations of basic rights have occurred since WWII and are currently occurring. Have a discussion about current events. Consider using [Children Escaping War and Conflict](#), a related lesson on contemporary events.

Nuremberg Trials: The Nuremberg Trials were a series of military tribunals held by the Allied powers after WWII. The trials were to prosecute Nazi leaders for war crimes and crimes against humanity. It was the first criminal trial in history to prosecute crimes committed by individuals during wartime.

International Law: Students can investigate how the trials led to the formation of the United Nations and the Declaration of Human Rights as well as international criminal law. Students can see how the UN evolved and continues to act as a “watch dog” to protect the rights of humanity.

ENGAGE:

One of the most effective way of protecting human rights is by educating others about their rights and by learning about those whose rights are in danger or are being denied. By engaging civically at a local level, students can discover their voice and feel empowered to learn more about social justice issues and find ways to become agents to educate or promote greater equality and end discrimination.

Look at local groups, clubs, and movements for civic participation opportunities in which students can bridge their social justice interests and academic work and build community with others who are dedicated to promoting social justice. There are many non-political examples of civic engagement that are meaningful ways to participate in activities to help or enrich others in the community. Many human rights organizations have materials and resources for school groups to become informed and engaged in issues they care about. Students’ civic participation can help educate fellow students about current events.

Using the artwork, story and suggested activities from Art & Remembrance can provide your students with meaningful experiences that will launch their interest in social justice, world issues and protecting the rights that we often take for granted.

Here are some suggestions to help get you started:

Incorporating Esther’s Artwork

- Hold a screening of [Through the Eye of the Needle](#) and host a discussion.
- Have a parent/student book club featuring *Memories of Survival*.
- Start a club that will create story cloths that can be shared with your school or larger community. These clubs can be intergenerational or can include members of an ethnic community center/organization.

Engaging with and Assisting Refugees/Newcomers

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- Ask students to research organizations in the community that are working with immigrants and/or refugees.
- Put together a list and discuss the work each organization does, and ways students may be able to help.
- Have students reach out and partner with a local agency or organization in the community and have the school community assist in an activity that will engage or assist refugees and/or newcomers.

Some examples of projects that may be done with a local organization are:

- Volunteering at a food pantry for newcomers.
- Starting a community closet (especially communities with cold weather) for newcomers who may need gloves, scarves, snow boots, coats.
- Holding a book drive to collect books, magazines, and other materials for an English Language Learner library.
- Inviting newcomers/refugees in the school community to share their stories and [creating story cloths](#).

Advocating for Holocaust Education

- Research to see if your state or local school system has a mandate to teach about the Holocaust. If it does, write an op-ed or a thank you letter to state legislators or the school board. If it does not, start a petition, write letters to legislators, school board etc.
- Create posters that inform your school community about the importance of learning about the Holocaust.
- Work with the school librarian to create a display of books and resources about the Holocaust and other mass atrocities.
- Invite a survivor or the family of a survivor of the Holocaust or another genocide to share their experiences and discuss preventing these atrocities in the future.

Exploring Human Rights/Social Justice Organizations

- Have students research organizations that invite young people to get engaged in their mission. Have students share what they discovered and how the work of these groups resonates with them and how they think it impacts society. Some examples of organizations are Anti-Defamation League, American Civil Liberties Union, National Association of the Advancement of Colored People, Amnesty International, Close Up Clubs, Race Forward, The Center for Action Civics, American Bar Association (Division for Public Education) and many more.
- If your school has existing student-led chapters of these organizations, invite a student speaker to share about their involvement.
- Even if the opportunity to get involved doesn't exist in your school, learning about these organizations, the people who are dedicated to the work, and future career opportunities or civic engagement opportunities can be a benefit to all learners.

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Visit the [Art and Remembrance](#) website:

- See more [lesson plans](#).
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