

## 5. RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The aims of this unit are to introduce students to their legal position in relation to their rights within society and to provide discussion about rights and responsibilities; it will also help students understand why conventions exist and how they have helped resolve conflicts that appear between individuals or between the individual and the society in which the person develops.

Students read the definition of *right* and *duty*. Make sure students can tell one from the other. Bring dictionaries to class, if necessary.

Next, students do the *Think about it* point (students' own answers). Point out that people's rights have (and are) constantly been breached and that remains one of the issues to be addressed in the present and in the most-immediate future of mankind.

### PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

#### Brainstorm

(Possible answers: responsibility, duty, freedom, need, choice, support, protection, education, etc.)

### CHILDREN'S RIGHTS – 1989 UN CONVENTION

Let students read about the UN Convention using a dictionary if necessary. It is important for them to realise that up until 1989 there was no clear protection for children in a number of countries around the globe. The UN Convention of that year marked an inflection point in the protection of children.

- **The little book of rights** (to be found in the *Additional Materials* section)

Students may work in groups to complete this activity. The teacher hands a copy of the book of rights to each one of the groups and, after going over the contents of the book, the students do the activities immediately below. Ask students to write a list of key words for each and every right cited in the book.

(Note: answers will vary)

#### TASK: POSTER

Students do this activity in pairs. Instruct students to plan posters carefully: the pictures and the text should be carefully chosen to give a clear idea of the meaning of the right. The teacher might consider putting the best examples up on the walls.



#### READING

Students look at both growth charts and answer the questions on both children.

1. Say what rights you think are endangered for both children.  
(*their right to good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food and a safe environment; their right to an education has also been neglected*)
2. Draw a similar chart on your own growth. Point out the differences between the growth of these children and that of any child in your country. (students' own answers)
3. Complete the growth charts with one ending that explains the children's future. (come this point the teacher ask students to imagine what kind of future awaits these two children. Ask them to introduce two more steps within the chart: ages 10 and 15)



## LOOK IT UP ON THE WEB!

Ask students to do some research on The guardian paper website. They should find some articles describing instances of cases in which children's upbringing was neglected. Ask them to use the book of rights, again, and say which right was violated on each occasion.

## • CHILD CHIMNEY SWEEP

Students read the job description and then imagine themselves working under those circumstances. (teacher may want to have this done in writing – ask students to use their imagination to describe how they would feel performing that job).



## VIDEO

Students watch the video, which reports on Somali children and how they lack some of the most basic rights most Western children take for granted. Next they answer the questions (answer in italics).

- x What do children in Somalia lack? (*they do not have any access to education; nor do they have any food or clean water or, most basic of all, protection*)
- x What do they dream of? (*they dream of food*)
- x According to the UNICEF Somalia Representative, what kind of environment do children there live in? (*they are living in the most difficult environment*)
- x What do the children of Somalia remind us of? (*that children of the world should enjoy the same basic rights regardless of their country of origin*)

## WANTS AND NEEDS

This section seeks to help students make the distinction between wants and needs; to introduce the idea that basic needs can be considered rights. The activity enables pupils to look at what children need to be provided with to survive and grow up healthily, and realise that rights are distinct from fulfilment of materialistic wants.



## Creative writing

Students are offered here the chance to think about the differences between needs and no-needs. It is a good chance for them to address the issue in a rather constructive way: convincing someone of something about which some still have not formed a clear opinion themselves.

### TASK

(allow 40 to 60 minutes for this activity)

To do this task you will need the set of *wants* and *needs* cards to be found in the Additional Materials section to be given to each pair of participants.

### Procedure

Each pair of students receives a set of cards which they distribute evenly. Next students imagine that the local government is setting up an office that will cater for the basic things young people want and need (20 things in all). Each card represents a wanted or needed item. Ask students to decide and write four additional items they think they miss on the blank cards.

The teacher next tells the group that, because of economic reasons the government can only provide them with 16 items, rather than all 24. The pairs should decide which 8 items they are willing to give up (have them return the discarded cards).

Next, inform students that the government must make more cuts regarding items that can be provided to young people. Ask the pairs to eliminate 8 more items and return the discarded cards.

Discuss the following questions with the entire class:

- Which items were most commonly eliminated in the first round?

Why?

- Was the second round of eliminations more difficult than the first? Why?

- Did you and your partner have any disagreements over the items to eliminate? Which ones, and why?

- What is the difference between wants and needs? Which items on the list were wants, and which ones were needs?

- Do wants and needs differ for different people? Why, or why not?



## GAME

Students turn to this website and play the game.

### POSTER

Put two posters up on the wall. One which says “wants” and another one which says “needs”. Instruct students to bring pictures from magazines or newspapers and paste them on the right poster.

## RESPONSIBILITY

Tell students that responsibility might mean different things to different people in different contexts. Generally speaking, responsibility bears some negative consideration (the teacher may want to ascertain this fact by asking students themselves) because we see it as something that clips our wings or that limits our movements. Tell students, however, that human behaviour needs to be governed by responsibility. Without it, mankind would possibly run the risk of extinction. Responsibility has avoided lots of conflicts and, presumably, the lack of it has triggered a lot of them. Let students know that responsibilities usually fall into three different categories:

- Duties: things we do if we are told.
- Obligations: things we do because we are required to.
- Deeds: things that we do without being asked

(More information can be found on the following website on the *links* section: <http://www.unb.ca/democracy/English/Ideas/Responsibility/WhatIs/WhatIs1.html>)

### TEST

Ask students to take the test and find out whether they are responsible citizens (the more marks they get the more responsible they are). Ask them to compare each other's results.

### QUESTIONS

Students answer the questions individually.



#### Group work

In groups, students answer the questions. Let the groups share their answers with the rest of the class.



#### Creative writing

Ask students to write an 80-word long essay on either topic.

## RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Students read the list of expressions with the help of a dictionary. Once all the vocabulary issues are sorted, ask students to write each expression under the right category (*rights* or *responsibilities*).

### “Act-responsibly”

Students use their own wording to complete the sentences

## MAKING EXCUSES

Making excuses for some misconduct or for some wrongdoing is a typical reaction a lot of people have to evade responsibility. We have all to a greater or lesser extent done that at one point in our lives, and we still do. However, one thing is making an excuse for a particular incident and a very different thing is making excuses systematically and uninterruptedly: if this be the case, then we risk turning our reality into a big lie. We end up believing that every excuse we make up is true and that is not a responsible way of acting.

The teacher writes the following words on the board:

**He that is good for making excuses is seldom good for anything else  
(Benjamin Franklin)**

Next, ask students if they agree with these words. Ask them, too, whether they often make excuses and whether they have ever regretted having done so.

Then students are instructed to answer the questions below the coloured titles (students' own answers).



### Reading activity

Students read some of the typical excuses we/they make. The teacher makes sure they understand the meaning and then asks students to write three more excuses of their own making.

### Why Do We Make Excuses?

Students try to come up with possible reasons why we need to make excuses. Come this point the teacher may want to ask students to imagine a society in which no one makes any excuses. Ask them to consider what such a society would be like.

### Responsibility-taking

Here students are presented with a number of positive responses to certain events. Students should realise how simple it was, originally, to act responsibly. This is all it takes. Accidents or incidents happen, remember, but that is part of our learning/growing process. Next, the teacher retrieves the example in the previous point and asks what students living in that society would respond to the following situations:

- I am often late to school.
- I have failed the math test.
- The teacher has scolded me (I was not paying attention).
- I do not like the Literature class.



## **LOOK IT UP ON THE WEB**

This web site offers students the possibility to learn some quotes about excuses. Students usually like reading quotes, essentially because they stir their imagination and, therefore, quotes are a solid instrument for teaching purposes. Ask students to learn a few by heart and recite them to the rest of the class.



## **GROUP WORK**

In groups, students consider possible answers for the questions. This activity provides a chance for them to reflect on everything covered previously in the unit.

## **KNOWLEDGE QUEST**

Students write the report on their own progress throughout the unit and hand it to the teacher.