

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

RESOURCE TOPIC

INTRODUCTION

After the Second World War, in 1948 the United Nations passed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights setting out a broad range of fundamental human rights and freedoms to which all people are entitled, wherever they are in the world. The Declaration is the most translated document in the world appearing across the globe in 380 languages and dialects.

Human rights, dignities and freedoms are central themes of a wide number of films suitable for young people. Although it is a rare for a film synopsis to draw audience's attention to this aspect of a film's narrative, such issues are often embedded strongly in what we experience as we watch the film.

This resource offers a menu of films for you to use with your students in order to develop knowledge and understanding about the rights covered by the declaration, the ways in which these are breached and how some people have fought to uphold and protect their rights and those of others. It is left to the teachers' professional judgement as to whether or not to use clips from a range of films or to spend time exploring one film in detail; the approach outlined below is suitable for both.



From: Made in Dagenham - All rights reserved Paramount Pictures

GETTING STARTED

In order to contextualise students' experience of watching the films, they ought to familiarize themselves with the Declaration. If you don't have time to work with the whole document, here are some of the 30 articles that might resonate.

As students read through these, consider situations in the UK or worldwide where these rights are not being respected.

ARTICLE 4.

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

ARTICLE 5.

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

ARTICLE 13.

(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.

(2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

ARTICLE 19.

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

ARTICLE 23.

(1) Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.

(2) Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.

ARTICLE 24.

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.



From: *The Lives of Others* – All rights reserved Sony Pictures

ASKING QUESTIONS

Using film as a pedagogical tool in the classroom means treating films (or clips of films) as texts. As with other texts such as novels, plays or newspaper articles, films are constructed for a specific purpose and are aimed at a certain type of audience. All texts, be they written, visual or multi-modal, construct and present specific meanings that readers may interpret differently.

When using film texts with students, it is helpful to introduce some key questions that will support them in deconstructing and analysing meaning within a film. Within the context of exploring the theme of human rights in films, it is particularly important for students to be aware that the world presented in the film is not real and they should interrogate the text in order to evaluate the authenticity of the representations. This aspect of the work will involve research and evaluation skills.

BEFORE VIEWING

Before watching any films, encourage students to reflect on films they have already seen that might deal with human rights themes. You might want to refer back to some of the extracts from the Declaration outlined above.

- What films have you seen that deal with an individual's rights being abused or where someone fights for his or her rights?
- How do these films represent the main characters?
- To what extent do the films you have mentioned feel like an authentic representation of someone's experience of human rights abuses or struggles?



From: Malcolm X – All rights reserved Warner Bros. Pictures

AFTER VIEWING

Questions that will help students understand the fact that the film is a construct, might include:

- What is the purpose of the film and who is it aimed at? What do you base your answers on?
- What devices are used to engage the audience?
- What do you think the central character(s) is feeling at key points and how has the filmmaker shown the audience their point of view?
- What is the setting and why do you think the filmmaker chose it?
- How does the soundtrack affect your viewing of certain sequences in the film?
- What do you think is the message of the film and how has it been communicated?
- What do you take away from the film on a personal level?



From: Africa United – All rights reserved Pathé

Remember, if you don't have time, you don't have to watch a whole film with your class. Working with your students on key scenes to explore how the struggle for human rights is represented - how sound, lighting and editing might impact on how we view the content – can inform discussions about this topic in more meaningful ways than consuming a whole film uncritically.

RELEVANT FILMS

Film Education has a range of resources linked to many films that deal in whole or in part with the issue of human rights. Some of our resources are online microsites; others are downloadable study guides. Some of these resources do not focus specifically on the struggle for human rights but do offer context to students' learning and are a useful springboard for discussion.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Africa United

The Kite Runner

The Lives of Others

Made in Dagenham

Persepolis

Red Tails

Salute

Skin

DOWNLOADABLE STUDY GUIDES

The Help

Malcolm X



From: Skin – All rights reserved BBC Films

The best place to watch a whole film is in the cinema where both the visual and audio effects have their strongest impact. You can liaise with your local cinema to request a screening of a film of your choice in the morning when the cinema would otherwise be empty. Film Education co-ordinates film programming hubs in a range of locations to support teachers wishing to work closely with cinemas for this purpose.

SHARING IDEAS

As well as providing excellent stimulus to concepts of human rights, film content can offer students easily accessible material to inform display and presentation work. Displays can be mounted around the school or in classrooms whilst presentations can work in the context of the classroom or larger group assemblies.

Activities in which students share their understanding of human rights and how these are breached and upheld in different parts of the world are ideal for project work during the week of Human Rights Day. Here are some suggestions:

- Students choose a sequence from a film to play to others followed by a talk about how human rights issues are represented and the extent to which this feels authentic.
- Students research images related to a particular film including the film's official publicity poster and press photos of the film's stars. Using this research, they compile a presentation about how human rights issues are represented in the film and the key messages that are communicated.
- Students choose a character who's rights are shown to be breached in a film and write a letter to this character showing empathy for them and making suggestions about what they might do to fight for their rights.
- Using techniques learned in their reading of certain film texts, students construct a short, filmed sequence (no longer than 2 minutes) to show an aspect of human rights that they have learned about

USEFUL LINKS

Amnesty International

www.amnesty.org.uk/content.asp?CategoryID=10673

Convention on the Rights of the Child

www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm

United for Human Rights – a short film

www.humanrights.com/#/what-are-human-rights

United Nations Human Rights Day 2012

www.un.org/en/events/humanrightsday/index.shtml

Positive? - awareness of and attitudes to HIV

www.learningpositive.com