



Exploring Humanitarian Law

Bringing Complex Issues to Life in the Classroom A Free Curriculum for Schools

Exploring Humanitarian Law is an Innovative, International Program that builds critical-thinking skills and character through understanding human dignity: instilling respect, fairness, caring, and the responsibilities of Global Citizenship.

- Developed by the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Educational Development Center for students ages 13-18.
- Curriculum aligns with the National Council for the Social Studies' ten thematic strands for secondary education.
- Modules may be used individually or collectively, for easy integration into existing lesson plans.
- Materials may be incorporated into a broad range of subject areas including social studies, international studies, history, law, literature, civics and gifted programs.
- The EHL toolkit provides an array of primary and relevant source materials, case studies and interactive lessons designed to engage and inspire students.
- EHL emphasizes positive changes in attitude: respect for life, human dignity, civic responsibility and leadership.

INTRODUCTION

IMAGES AND PERCEPTIONS

An introductory discussion, to find out what students know and think about armed conflict and the attempts to limit it.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- How can you promote human dignity?
- What can you do to make a difference?
- How can you develop awareness in others?

CONCEPTS

- Limits in armed conflict
- Human dignity

SKILLS PRACTICED

- Discussion
- Listening
- Disagreeing respectfully
- Supporting opinions with reasons

OBJECTIVES

- To be aware of central questions underlying international humanitarian law (IHL)
- To be aware that there are no easy answers to some questions that may come up while exploring IHL
- To construct a preliminary definition of human dignity

TIME: One 45-minute session

MODULE 1

THE HUMANITARIAN PERSPECTIVE

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What is a bystander?
- What dilemmas do bystanders face?
- What effect can bystanders have?
- What is a humanitarian act?

EXPLORATIONS

- What can bystanders do?
- Looking at humanitarian acts
- A bystander's dilemma

CONCEPTS

- Bystander
- Humanitarian act
- Social pressure
- *In all modules: Human dignity, Obstacles to humanitarian behavior, Dilemmas, Consequences, Multiple perspectives*

SKILLS PRACTICED

- Perspective taking
- Role-playing
- Story analysis
- Story-telling
- Dilemma analysis
- Identifying consequences

OBJECTIVES

- To understand the effect a bystander can have upon the actions of others
- To be aware of examples of bystanders acting in situations of violence to protect life or human dignity

TIME: Four 45-minute sessions

MODULE 2

LIMITS IN ARMED CONFLICT

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What limits are needed in war and why?
- Where do these limits come from?
- How do laws to limit war develop?

EXPLORATIONS

- Limiting the devastation of war
- Codes and traditions over time
- Focus on child soldiers
- Focus on weapons
- Widespread availability of weapons

CONCEPTS

- Limits in armed conflict
- Non-combatants
- Relationship between humanitarian law and human rights law
- Protection
- Needs of children
- Indiscriminate weapons and weapons causing unnecessary suffering
- Ripple effect

SKILLS PRACTICED

- Perspective taking
- Problem analysis
- Tracing consequences
- Estimating scope
- Identifying solutions

OBJECTIVES

- To understand some of the reasons why rules are needed in armed conflict
- To understand how IHL and human rights law complement each other
- To learn and understand some of the basic rules of IHL

TIME: Ten 45-minute sessions

MODULE 3

THE LAW IN ACTION

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- Which rules are most often violated and why?
- What dilemmas do combatants face?
- Who is responsible for respecting IHL?

EXPLORATIONS

- Identifying violations of IHL
- From the perspective of combatants
- Who is responsible for respecting IHL?
- A case study: My Lai – What went wrong? What went right?

CONCEPTS

- Violation of IHL
- Civilian/combatant distinction
- Chains of consequences
- Illegal order

SKILLS PRACTICED

- Perspective taking
- Brainstorming
- Working in groups
- Dilemma analysis
- Identifying consequences

OBJECTIVES

- To be able to identify violations of IHL
- To recognize examples of the way in which one violation leads to another

TIME: Seven 45-minute sessions

MODULE 4

DEALING WITH VIOLATIONS

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- Why is justice needed?
- How can justice be achieved?
- Who should judge the accused?

EXPLORATIONS

- Rationales and options for dealing with IHL violations
- Judicial options
- Non-judicial options

CONCEPTS

- Implementation
- Enforcement
- Civilian/ combatant distinction
- Social pressure
- War crime

SKILLS PRACTICED

- Perspective taking
- Identifying consequences
- Legal reasoning

OBJECTIVES

- To understand how dealing – or not dealing – with IHL violations can affect the well-being of a society after armed conflict
- To recognize that there are a number of ways of dealing with IHL violations

TIME: Seven 45-minute sessions

MODULE 5

RESPONDING TO THE CONSEQUENCES OF ARMED CONFLICT

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What are the consequences of war?
- What effort is needed to respond to them?
- What dilemmas does humanitarian action face?

EXPLORATIONS

- Needs that arise from the devastation of war
- Planning a camp for people displaced by war
- Focus on protecting prisoners
- Focus on restoring family links
- Ethics of humanitarian action

CONCEPTS

- Basic needs
- Non-material needs
- Refugees and other displaced persons
- Impartiality
- Neutrality
- Independence

SKILLS PRACTICED

- Perspective taking
- Estimating scope
- Estimating effort
- Dilemma analysis
- Identifying consequences
- Working in groups

OBJECTIVES

- To understand how war disrupts the ordinary supports of life
- To become aware of the scope of humanitarian action needed to prevent and reduce the suffering caused by armed conflict

TIME: Six 45-minute session

CLOSING

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- How can you promote human dignity?
- What can you do to make a difference?
- How can you develop awareness in others?

CONCEPTS

- Youth mobilization
- Target population
- Project goal
- Community strengths and resources
- Human dignity

SKILLS PRACTICED

- Identifying problems
- Assessing needs
- Planning actions
- Keeping records
- Assessing projects

OBJECTIVES

- To make use of what has been learned to design a project that promotes human dignity
- To carry out a project that promotes human dignity

TIME: The amount of time spent on student projects is up to each teacher. It will depend on your goals for the project and on the time available.