

Act it out

Show me what you mean by "human rights"

Themes	General human rights, Children, Citizenship
Complexity	Level 2
Group size	9+
Time	90 minutes
Overview	This is a drama activity that encourages people to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review their general perceptions of human rights ▪ Find different ways of representing these perceptions
Related rights	All
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To review what participants know about human rights ▪ To develop intercultural and communication skills ▪ To develop co-operation and creativity
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Props: dressing-up clothes, toys, household items, etc. ▪ Paper and coloured markers, crayons ▪ Glue, string and card

Instructions

1. Explain that the purpose of the exercise is to come up with a dramatic representation of the general idea or concept of human rights that is understandable to people of different cultures, and who may speak different languages.
2. Explain that they will not be allowed to use words at all: this must be a mimed presentation. However, groups may make use of some of the materials or props, if they wish.
3. Ask people to get into small groups of between 4 and 6 people, and give each group a large sheet of paper and a set of crayons / markers.
4. Give the groups 10 minutes first to brainstorm all their ideas about human rights and then to identify two or three key ideas that they would like bring out most strongly in the mime.
5. Now give the groups 30 minutes to design and rehearse their mime. Explain that this must be a group effort and everyone should have a role in the production.
6. After 30 minutes are up, gather the groups together so that everyone can watch each other's performances.
7. Give a few minutes after each performance for feedback and discussion.
8. Ask the spectators to offer their interpretations of what they have just seen, and to try to identify the key ideas that the performance attempted to portray.
9. Then give the group itself a chance to explain briefly any points that did not emerge during the feedback. Repeat this for each of the performances.

THEMES



GEN. HUMAN RIGHTS



CHILDREN



CITIZENSHIP

COMPLEXITY



LEVEL 2

GROUP SIZE



9 OR MORE

TIME



90 MINUTES

Debriefing and evaluation

Now review the activity itself.

- How did people feel about this activity? Was it more or less difficult than they had first imagined? What were the most difficult aspects, or the most difficult things to represent?
- Did people learn anything new about human rights?
- Where were the similarities or differences among the groups? Were there any fundamental disagreements over the idea of human rights? Why?

Tips for facilitators

Unless people are entirely ignorant about the concept of human rights, it is more interesting to carry out this activity with a minimum of initial guidance from a facilitator. The main purpose is to draw out the impressions and knowledge about human rights that young people have already picked up in the course of their lives. It is worth emphasising this point to the group before they begin work, so that they do not feel constrained by not “knowing” exactly what human rights are.

Make it clear to them that their task is to portray “human rights in general”, rather than to illustrate one or more specific human rights. They may decide to take one specific right to bring out general points, but they should remember that they are attempting to show what is common to the different human rights. At the end of the session spectators should be able to (or begin to!) answer the question, “what are human rights?”

Do not let those who feel they are weak at acting fail to play an active part! Explain that there are plenty of roles for all, and that this must be something that the whole group feels happy about presenting. A few unusual props may bring the performances to life and help spark creative ideas – anything from saucepans, toy cars, hats, pillows, stones, a dustbin lid...

Variations

You may want to carry this activity out as a drawing exercise: get the groups to present a poster – again without using words – to express the main ideas about human rights.

The activity could also be carried out less as an introductory one, and more in order to organise and clarify thoughts once people have already worked through some of the other activities in the manual, or carried out their own research.

Suggestions for follow-up

Look at plays or other pieces of literature with a human rights theme, and organise a dramatic performance for members of your local community.

If the group would like to move on and look at some specific human rights, why not look at the Convention of the Rights of the Child through the activity “Children’s Rights”, on page 103.

Ideas for action

You could develop your mimes or make a whole group production and perform it to other people outside the group. If you do the poster-making variation, make an exhibition of your posters. Both ideas could be used to celebrate Human Rights Day.

Key date

10 December

Human Rights Day