

Minority Rights

Lesson Plan

Most democracies use some form of majority rule when making decisions. However, democracies take great pains to make sure that it is not way to oppress minorities. Democracies guarantee that no self-appointed group has the right to oppress others and majorities may not take away the basic rights and freedoms of a minority group or individual.

Minorities can be defined in terms of ethnicity, religious, sex, income level or simply losers in elections. Regardless minorities who are citizens of a democracy must be able to trust the government to protect their basic human rights. Once this is accomplished, such groups can participate in, and contribute to their country's democratic institutions. Among the basic human rights that any democratic government must protect are equality, pursuit of happiness, freedom of speech and assembly, freedom of religion, due process, and equal protection under the law. Democracies understand that protecting the rights of minorities is one of their primary tasks.

- Pursuit of Happiness -- people are allowed to do what they want unless their actions hurt others or violate laws
- Equal Protection -- laws must be applied equally to all members of society
- Voting Rights -- all citizens have the right to vote
- Free Speech & Assembly -- all members of the group have the right to express their ideas in public or private
- Personal property -- individual property cannot be taken, except for an extraordinary and compelling public need, without just compensation
- Equal Protection & Due Process -- legal processes are used to resolve disputes concerning these rights

Key Concept for Elementary Students: What is a “minority? (A minority can simply be a student who requires a ramp because he or she is on crutches, or students with green eyes, with red hair, teachers within the school, or students who don’t like to play ball.) How can the rights of the minority be protected when Majority Rules?

Materials: One printout of the Minority coloring sheet for each student, and crayons or markers.

Procedure:

1. Write each vocabulary word on the board. Ask students to help define each word and write a simple definition after each word. Ask students to copy each NEW word onto their master vocabulary list and then copy the definitions.

Vocabulary

Benefit - something that is good or helpful

Citizen - someone who is a legal member of a group or country

Minority - less than the majority

Public - something provided the people’s through tax dollars, or a place that is open to everyone in

Right - freedom or privilege to do something

School Board - people who are elected by voters to help make decisions and solve problems for a school

Sacrifice - to give up something of value

2. Project the animated cartoon called Minority Rights. Discuss each frame after it has played. Discuss what a Minority is. Ask students to react to the cartoon when completed. Why was the giraffe a minority? Why couldn’t the giraffe attend school like everyone else? Why did the principal want the help of the school board? How did the principal solve the problem?

3. Pass out the Minority Rights coloring sheet and ask students to draw a picture that shows how minorities are treated with equality in their school.



Assessment:

A review of each student's drawing will help you assess whether each student has grasped the concept of Minority. Consider reviewing the animation with students who did not depict an appropriate image on their coloring sheet. Practice how we can balance majority rules with protecting the rights of minorities in your classroom by voting on issues periodically.

