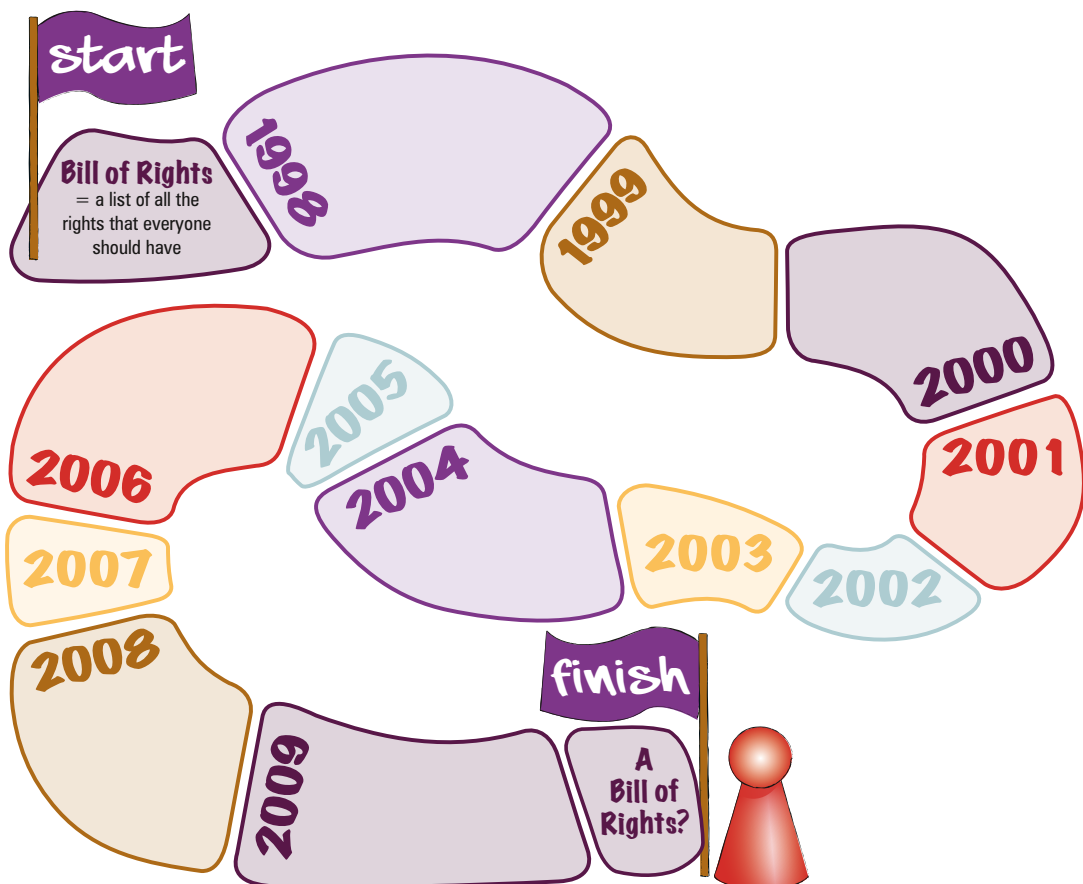




NORTHERN
IRELAND
HUMAN
RIGHTS
COMMISSION

Lesson Plan

A Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland



This Lesson Plan is part of the **Bill of Rights Education Pack for Citizenship Teachers and Youth Leaders** published by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) and is accompanied by:

- Guidance Notes on a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland
- Easy-Read version of NIHRC's advice to government on a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland
- Poster version of NIHRC's advice to government on a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland
- Human Rights Act 1998 poster

The Lesson Plan explores the issue of 'Additional Rights in Northern Ireland'. It has been adapted from the Key Stage 4 resource **Making Human Rights Real: Teaching Citizenship Through Human Rights**, with kind permission of Amnesty International UK.

If you need any further assistance with using this pack or sourcing additional information, please contact:

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Additional rights for Northern Ireland?

About this topic

This topic reminds young people that since the Human Rights Act (HRA) is based on the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), it is limited to mainly civil and political rights. Young people will consider additional human rights protection that might be needed in Northern Ireland because of the legacy of the conflict and the nature of our divided society.

Learning objectives

Students should be able to:

- explain why many people think we need additional human rights protection in Northern Ireland
- give examples of human rights not covered by the HRA which could be included in human rights law in Northern Ireland, and
- evaluate which additional human rights are most relevant for society in Northern Ireland.

Prior learning

A basic understanding of human rights, the role of international human rights treaties and the contents and significance of the HRA and ECHR is anticipated.

1hr Resources required

Resource Sheet 1

Additional rights for Northern Ireland? (enlarge and display or present on PowerPoint)

Resource Sheet 2

Bill of Rights card match (one set per group, copy onto card, cut into separate cards and mix up)

Worksheet 1

Human rights law for Northern Ireland? (one per group, enlarge to A3)

Worksheet 2

Zone of relevance (one per group, enlarge to A3), large sheets of paper



Additional rights for Northern Ireland?

Introduction

Display **Additional rights for Northern Ireland?** (resource sheet 1). Explain that when the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement was signed, the people of Northern Ireland were offered the possibility of their own human rights legislation in the form of a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. Ask young people to look at the images displayed and to suggest why the people of Northern Ireland might need extra human rights protection.

Activities

1. Explain that sometimes problems arise in a country where people's human rights are abused or violated. In this case, some countries create special legislation, making additional promises to protect human rights. This type of legislation is sometimes called a Bill of Rights. The next activity will explain what is meant by this in more detail.
2. Distribute a set of **description cards and country cards** (resource sheet 2, one set per group) and ask young people to match them up. Ask them to explain their decisions. Reveal the correct answers. Draw out the particular circumstances of these countries and explain that, because of them, countries made extra promises to protect particular rights of the people who live there.
3. Distribute the **Bill of Rights card match** (resource sheet 2, one set per group). Explain that these cards contain extracts from each country's Bill of Rights. Ask each group to match the cards to the correct country. Remind young people that the Bill of Rights should reflect the particular circumstances of the country.
4. Discuss the decisions and ask each group why they took them. It is more important that they reveal reasons why they think each country might need the particular rights they have selected than to be correct. Reveal the correct answers (see the uncut cards on resource sheet 2).
5. Ask each group to think about Northern Ireland. If it had been included in the set of cards, what would have been the accompanying description? Distribute **Human rights law for Northern Ireland?** (worksheet 1) and ask each group to complete the 'description' section.
6. Now think about what additional rights might be needed in special human rights legislation for Northern Ireland. Circular brainstorm. Give each group a large sheet of paper and ask: Are there any particular human rights that people in Northern Ireland should have that would help solve some of the problems here? Encourage young people to base their ideas on the human rights they have come across in this topic rather than random 'made up rights'.
7. Ask each group to pass their sheet of paper to the group beside them. They should then ✓ the statements they agree with, ✗ the statements they disagree with and amend others if they wish to.
8. Ask each group to write down answers to this second question on the new page they have in front of them:
 - Are there any human rights that we already have in Northern Ireland that need additional protection (eg because they are often abused)?



Additional rights for Northern Ireland?

9. Again ask each group to pass this sheet of paper to the next group beside them. They should then ✓ the statements they agree with, ✗ the statements they disagree with and amend others if they wish to.
10. The third question to ask is:
 - Are there any human rights that you think may have to be limited (eg freedom of expression)?
11. Once again ask each group to answer it on the sheet of paper they have in front of them and then pass it to the next group beside them. They should then ✓ the statements they agree with, ✗ the statements they disagree with and amend others if they wish.
12. Each sheet should be returned to the original group. Give young people some time to absorb all the other group comments.
13. Distribute **Zone of relevance** (worksheet 2). Ask groups to write each of the human rights written on their sheet of paper onto the Zone of relevance. The human rights thought to be most relevant to people in Northern Ireland should be placed close to the centre; and those that are less relevant further away from the centre. Again, there is no right or wrong answer. The purpose is to encourage young people to evaluate the significance of particular human rights in the light of the circumstances in Northern Ireland.
14. When completed, ask each group to select its five most relevant human rights and to write these on the final section of worksheet 1. Each group should then present their completed worksheet 1 to the rest of the group, justifying the decisions they have made. If possible, reach a consensus on what should be contained in a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland.

Conclusion

Explain that the Bill of Rights is not yet completed for Northern Ireland.¹ They can find out more about what it might contain from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission's website: www.borini.info.

Differentiation

To simplify the Bill of Rights card matching activity, keep the country card and description card together and only ask the students to match up the Bill of Rights card. For the circular brainstorm activity (and as an alternative to looking through all the articles in human rights documents such as the UDHR), suggest a narrow selection of relevant human rights for students to consider. You could also provide a range of relevant images and newspaper headings to prompt ideas.

Extension activities

1. The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission has produced an educational pack **BORIS: Bill of Rights in Schools** which provides a wide number of activities and resources based on the Bill of Rights. It is available for download from www.nihrc.org/education (select Bill of Rights).
2. More able students can compile a final Bill of Rights and then compare this with drafts available from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) at www.nihrc.org/bor. Students could also research the views of political parties on a Bill of Rights and the work of NGOs lobbying for a strong and inclusive Bill of Rights. See the Human Rights Consortium www.billofrightsnri.org.

¹ The Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland was not completed at the time this resource was produced (summer 2009). Please see the Bill of Rights website for updates and inform your students accordingly.



RESOURCE SHEET 1

Additional rights for Northern Ireland?



Remembering the dead



Flags and bonfires



Gay Pride



Murals and mutual respect



Travellers – granny and grandchild

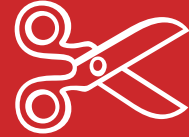


Language

Photographs © John Baucher

RESOURCE SHEET 2

Bill of Rights card match



South Africa

Description card 1

In the 1930s this country used to be run by a white minority, even though the majority of people living in the country were black. At the time, black and white people were segregated. Black people lived in poorer areas, with access to fewer educational and work opportunities. The white authorities continued to impose racist policies, despite protests, and many suffered under their treatment. When the first democratic elections were held, the mainly black political party was voted into power. They wanted to ensure such racism would never happen again.

Bill of Rights card C

- Everyone will be free from slavery
- Everyone has the right to own property
- Everyone has the right to health care, food, water
- Everyone has the right to free basic education, including adult education
- All communities can enjoy their own culture, practice their own religion
- Everyone has the right to any information held by the state about them



Germany

Description card 2

In the 1930s this country was taken over by a new political party whose leader imposed drastic changes on society and pursued a foreign policy that led them into World War II. His forces committed many atrocities, including the killing of many people because of their race or their political opinions. After the war, in 1949, the new government made these special promises in their law to their citizens.

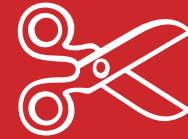
Bill of Rights card E

- No one is worthless – the dignity of every individual is untouchable
- Every mother will be protected and cared for by the community
- Anyone persecuted because of their political opinion can come and live in this country in safety
- Everyone is free to express their opinion but anyone who abuses the right to freedom of expression by trying to promote racism will lose this right



RESOURCE SHEET 2

Bill of Rights card match



USA

Description card 3

This country made these special promises to its citizens between 1791 and 1885. Before this, the country had been under British rule, but it fought the revolutionary war and defeated the British to gain independence. Tensions about slavery mounted and it became a major issue during the Civil War. At the time slavery was widespread and legal with most slaves black and held by whites. They were seen as property, without rights and their treatment was often harsh and inhumane.

Bill of Rights card B

- Citizens have the right to carry weapons
- Everyone has the right to a speedy and public trial
- Cruel and unusual punishments for crimes are not allowed
- No one can have their life, liberty or property taken from them without proper use of the law
- Slavery is abolished



India

Description card 4

When this country formed a new government in the late 1940s, it wrote down these special promises to its citizens. The main aim was to ensure that everyone would be treated equally due to the amount of poverty and inequality its citizens had previously suffered. Protecting religious rights was important too due to the tremendous diversity of religious groups living in the country. They believed that the state had a very important role to play in the lives of ordinary people.

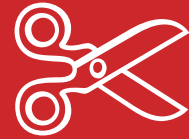
Bill of Rights card A

- No one will have to pay taxes to support any particular religion
- The State will try to make sure that everyone has a fair wage and a decent standard of life
- The State will try to raise the health standards of its citizens
- The State will make alcohol illegal
- The State will try to promote peace and security and respect for international laws



RESOURCE SHEET 2

Bill of Rights card match



Ireland

Description card 5

For hundreds of years, this country was ruled by Great Britain. In 1922 most of the island became independent, although six counties in the north remained part of the UK. This led to a civil war between those who supported and those who opposed the 'partition'. In 1937 the government wrote its constitution which established a list of fundamental rights for all its citizens. The country was a majority religious Catholic country at the time and this influenced a number of the new rights.

Bill of Rights card D

- All citizens are equal
- There will be no titles of nobility, eg Lord, Duke
- People have the right to protest (without weapons)
- There will be respect and honour for religion
- Everyone has the right to practice their religion
- Marriage will be protected
- The Constitution recognises the 'special place' of the Catholic Church in society



WORKSHEET 1

Human rights law for Northern Ireland?

How would you describe the situation in Northern Ireland?

What rights should be included in human rights law in Northern Ireland to help address this situation?

WORKSHEET 2

Zone of relevance

Write down the human rights that you think are most relevant to Northern Ireland close to the centre and those that are less relevant further away from the centre.



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This document can be made available in other languages and formats on request. It is also available on the Commission's website at **www.nihrc.org**