

I Can Choose!

FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

AGE: 11 – 16 years



LEARNING POINTS

1. Freedom of thought, conscience or religion is a protected human right.
2. Respect should be shown toward the beliefs of other people by the things we say and the way we act.
3. Religious diversity is part of human societies all over the world.

MATERIALS

- Talking Stick
- Class Rules
- Class Roll
- Copies of the UDHR and CRC for each student (child friendly versions)
- Pencil for each student
- Chalkboard or flipchart
- Chalk
- Story, Religious Diversity for All
- UDHR Article 18
- CRC Article 14
- Set of Religion Cards
- World map (end of the lesson)
- Geography and Religion Table
- Mini posters, including Religion
- Questionnaire (end of lesson)

THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF

Human Rights

FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

Article 18

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his or her religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his or her religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

SIMPLIFIED

We all have the right to our own thoughts or beliefs or religion, and to teach or practice or worship as we wish, or to change our religion or belief if we want to do that.

THE CONVENTION ON THE

Rights of the Child

Article 14

You have the right to think and believe what you want, and to practice your religion, as long as you are not stopping other people from enjoying their rights. Parents should guide their children on these matters.

WELCOME each student by name as they enter and sit down.
Before class, display the mini posters where everyone can see them.

Song: This Little Light of Mine (Music can be found at the back of Lesson 5 if needed.)
Sing with enthusiasm and delight.

REVIEW (5 minutes)

Ask: Who remembers what the basic unit of society is? (The family)

- What do we mean by “evolving capacities”? (Learning as you grow, greater ability to accept responsibilities and take care of yourself and make good decisions as you grow)
- Who would like to share with us what they did this past week to help their family? (Have the students respond.)
- Would someone like to share their family’s reaction to the story about Balkissa, the girl who said no to marriage?
- Let’s read the mini posters on the wall that we’ve learned about so far.

The Right to Life, Freedom and Safety (UDHR #1)
The Right to Protection from Discrimination (UDHR #2)
The Right to Marriage and a Family (UDHR #16)

INTRODUCTION (5 minutes)

Show the mini poster for Freedom of Religion.

Explain: We are adding another right today about religion and belief.

Activity: Story, “Religious Diversity for All”

Say: I have another story that I think you’ll enjoy and that will give us something to think about and to discuss.

Read or tell the story “Religious Diversity for All” at the back of the lesson.

After reading the story, say: When I was reading that story, I expected some kind of different ending. How about you – did the end of the story surprise anyone?

Discussion (10 minutes)

Have a student hand out pencils and copies of the UDHR and CRC.

Explain: Freedom of thought, conscience and religion is a protected human right. Religious freedom for all human beings is protected by Article 18 of the UDHR, no matter what you believe.

Ask: Just because the woman on the airplane didn’t like the man’s religion, do you think she had the right to make him move? (No.)

Say: As we read this article of the Universal Declaration, I want you to think about how you would have handled this case. Listen for three phrases that explain what this is about.

Write the word, RELIGION, on the chalkboard or a big piece of paper.

Ask a student to read Article 18 (found at the back of the lesson). Use whichever version is most appropriate for your students. **Stop after each phrase** is read and have students **underline them**, as indicated below.

Article 18

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion;

this right includes freedom to change his or her religion or belief,

and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his or her religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

SIMPLIFIED

(1) *We all have the right to **have** our own thoughts or beliefs or religion;*

(2) *or to **change** our religion or belief if we want to do that,*

(3) *and to **teach** or practice or worship as we wish.*

Student reads: Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion;

Ask: What does that mean? (If no one answers, explain that it's the freedom to think and believe whatever you want.) Everybody please underline that phrase.

Write the number 1, and the word "Have" on the chalkboard.

Student reads: This right includes freedom to change his or her religion or belief

Ask: What is this telling us? (You can change your mind and believe something else or join another group.) Please underline the phrase.

Write number 2 on the board, and the word "Change."

Student reads: and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his or her religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

RELIGION

1. Have
2. Change
3. Show or Teach

Ask: What is this phrase saying? (You are free to worship by yourself or with other people, and to practice and teach about your belief or religion.) Please underline the phrase.

Write number 3 on the chalkboard, and the words "Show or Teach."

Explain: Freedom of religion includes three things – the right to HAVE a religion or belief, the right to CHANGE your religion, and the right to SHOW OR TALK about your religion.

EXPAND

Say: So that's the right that ADULTS have for religion. Now let's see what the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* says about religion.

Have one of the students read Article 14 of the CRC.

You have the right to think and believe what you want, and to practice your religion, as long as you are not stopping other people from enjoying their rights. Parents should guide their children on these matters.

Ask: Who had a right to her or his own religion or belief on the airplane – the unpleasant woman or the black man sitting next to her? (They both did.)

- Does that mean that one of them had the right to tell the other one what to do?

Explain: People can be rude and obnoxious, and this woman was definitely rude and very obnoxious. But what does Article 14 say we CANNOT do? (We cannot stop other people from enjoying their rights.)

Say: In other words, we don't have the right to treat people poorly because of their beliefs.

Ask: Did you like the way the attendant handled the situation? How would you have handled this case? (Allow time for some responses.)

Explain: *The Convention on the Rights of the Child* is much longer than *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* because young people need greater protection than adults.

- There's more about Freedom of Religion in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* because adults have the responsibility for guiding their children, and they usually want to make sure that their children share their same religion or belief.

Activity: Different but Equal (10 minutes)

Explain: We will discover differences and similarities between the people in our class as we go through this exercise. Do you think it will be okay to be different?

How to Play: Give each student a pencil and a copy of the questionnaire at the back of the lesson. Ask everyone to think about the questions and quickly write their answers.

FACILITATOR TIP: If you have youth in your class who cannot read or write, have one of the other students help read the question and write the answer.

- Before you start, explain that this is a fact-finding game where we look for people with the same answers. It's possible that someone might not share the same answers with anyone else, and that is okay. That is a fact and it's part of the game.
- Explain that when you tell them to start, each one will circulate and try to find other youth who have the same 5 answers to the questions. When they find someone with the same answers, they form a team and continue looking for others with the same 5 answers (in 5 minutes).
- If they cannot find anyone with the same 5 answers, they try to find someone with 4 similar answers to join their team. If they still cannot find anyone, they look for someone with 3 similar answers and then 2.

Say: You have 10 minutes to find the facts, to find out who else has answers like yours.

- 1 – 2 – 3 – GO!

Help any of the youth who may need assistance or encouragement.

When the time is finished, ask: Did we all answer the same way?

- Did anyone find someone with five same answers? With four? With three? With two?
- Was there anyone who was unique and had no answers in common with anyone else?

Explain: You have discovered new things about your friends that you didn't know before. We all have different feelings. We may have different thoughts or like different things.

- Even though we are all different, how can we work and play together?
- How can we make sure that we treat one another fairly and equally? (Accept all answers.)

(Source: *Play It Fair Toolkit*, Activity 18. Equitas – International Centre for Human Rights, 2008.)

DEVELOP (15 minutes)

Explain: Respect should be shown toward the beliefs of other people by the things we say and the way we act.

Activity: What Do You Think?

Use the Religion Cards at the end of the lesson.

How to Play: Hold up a card with the name of a religious group written on it.

Explain: I don't want you to say anything out loud. I will read the word and I want you to think about the first thing that comes to your mind. If you don't know what the word means, don't worry about it.

Show all six cards. Remind the participants not to say anything out loud.

Ask: Did you have any negative thoughts about any religion that was not yours?

- What were your thoughts? Should we "discriminate" against people of different religions?
- What about people who don't want to have any religion at all?

Accept all answers without agreeing or disagreeing.

Explain: Maybe your religion or belief wasn't even on this list because there are many smaller or minority religions all over the world. They all need to be protected, too.

Ask: Why do you think there are so many religions all over the world? (Accept all answers.)

Display the world map (at the end of the lesson).

Explain: This map shows religions in different parts of the world. It shows 5 major civilizations or different groups of people: Western, Eastern, Middle Eastern, Asian, and African.

Ask a student to come up and help you as you identify the general areas for each civilization.

Have her hold up the Geography and Religion Table, while another student reads the first major religion (such as Christian or Catholic and Protestant) and points out the general world area. Continue until all the areas and religions have been pointed out.

Ask: The map shows the main religions of the world. Judging from this map, do geographical location and religion seem to be related?

Explain: A person's religion is often the result of one's family and one's place of birth.

Have a student point to the particular area on the map while you explain:

A person born in Saudi Arabia or Pakistan is likely to be Muslim.

A person born in Burma or Tibet is likely to be Buddhist.

A person born in most parts of India is likely to be Hindu.

A person born in Europe or the United States is likely to be Christian.

A person born in North Korea is likely to be an atheist (someone who does not believe in God).

Explain: This doesn't mean that there aren't Muslims or Christians or Atheists in other parts of the world. There are Hindus in Europe and Buddhists in America and Atheists in India. It just means that some parts of the world have more members of a particular religion than others.

Ask and Discuss: Can a person change religions when he or she grows up even though it might be difficult because of family feelings or society or cultural traditions? Can that be done?

- Do you think society **should** allow for a change of belief?

Explain: Three-quarters of the world's human population live under governments with strong limits and serious hostilities toward religion. In some countries, if you try to change your religion, or if you say you have no religion, you can be thrown into jail. Unfortunately, this number is growing.

CONCLUSION (5 minutes)

Point out the mini poster, The Right to Freedom of Religion or Belief. Have the students read it out loud together.

Ask: Does it matter what we say or how we say it when we are talking about religious beliefs?

- What did we learn from the story of the woman on the airplane? (It teaches us that we need to accept and respect people around us no matter what religion or group or caste they belong to. We are all equals.)
- What are some of the values we all share in common no matter what our religion or beliefs?

List the answers on the chalkboard, such as treating other people kindly, loving our family and friends, honesty, community service, not killing or robbing.

CHALLENGE

Say: This week, find someone with a different belief or religion than yours. Ask her or him to explain it to you. Listen carefully and respectfully. Tell them thank you for sharing.

FACILITATOR TIP: Provide a culturally sensitive classroom by maintaining your neutrality. Demonstrate that religious tolerance can be successfully taught in a group setting. Stay within the human rights framework and boundaries of your country.

REMINDER: Don't forget to collect the copies of the UDHR and the CRC. Keep them in a safe place along with the mini posters on human rights.

FACILITATOR NOTES AND REFLECTIONS

How do I feel about what happened with today's lesson?

What would or should I do differently next time?

(Adapted from Keating-Chetwynd, Sarah, ed., *How All Teachers Can Support Citizenship and Human Rights Education: A Framework for the Development of Competences*. Council of Europe, 2008, p. 61.)

MATERIALS

QUESTIONNAIRE

I WAS BORN IN (Name the country) _____

I AM AFRAID OF _____

MY FAVORITE MUSIC IS _____

MY FAVORITE GAME IS _____

MY FAVORITE COLOR IS _____

QUESTIONNAIRE

I WAS BORN IN (Name the country) _____

I AM AFRAID OF _____

MY FAVORITE MUSIC IS _____

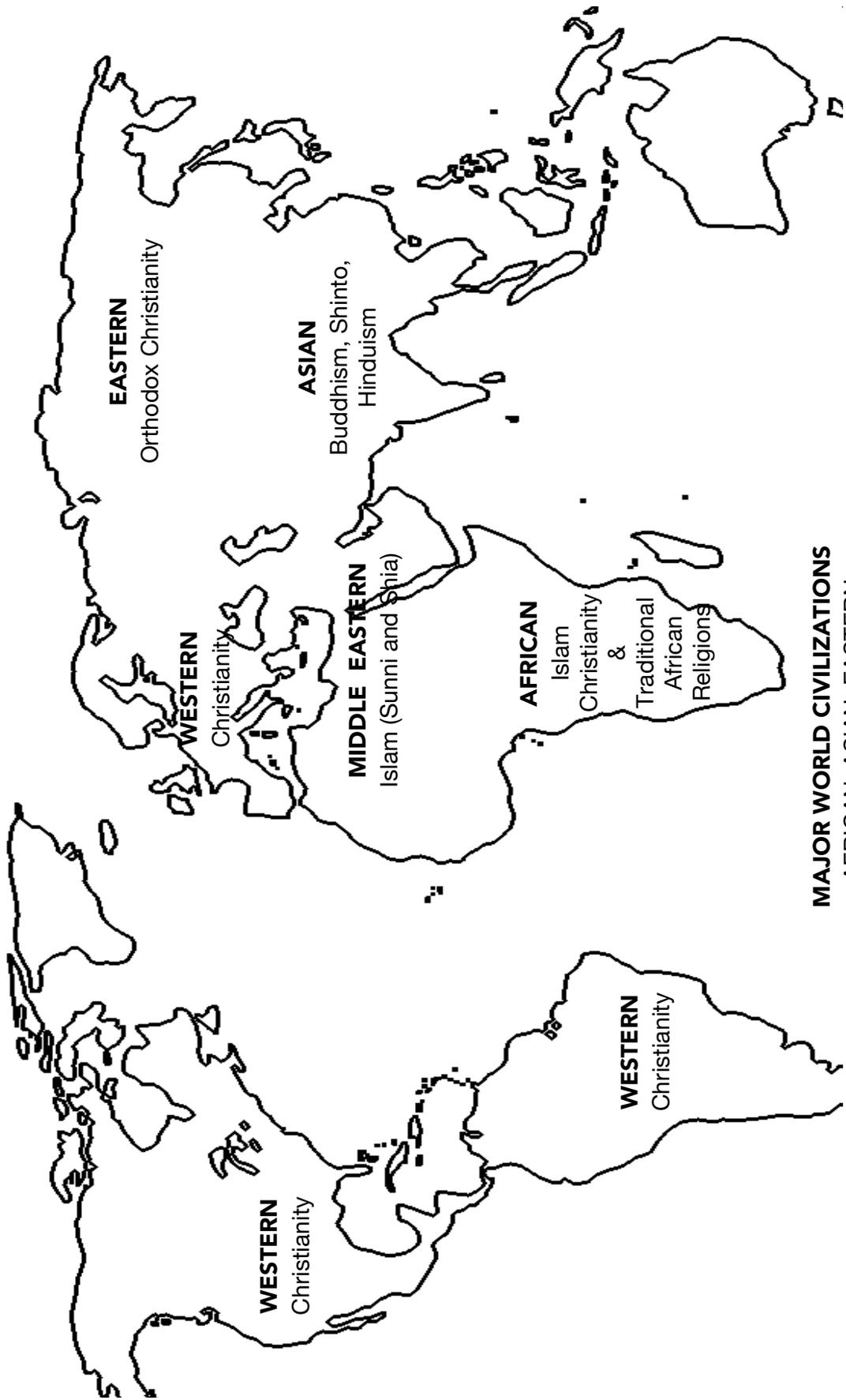
MY FAVORITE GAME IS _____

MY FAVORITE COLOR IS _____

RELIGION CARDS

| | |
|-------------------|---------------|
| PROTESTANT | JEWISH |
| BUDDHIST | HINDU |
| CATHOLIC | MUSLIM |

Cut along the solid lines.



MAJOR WORLD CIVILIZATIONS
AFRICAN, ASIAN, EASTERN,
MIDDLE EASTERN, WESTERN

GEOGRAPHY AND RELIGION TABLE

| CIVILIZATIONS | NATIONS | MAJOR RELIGIONS |
|----------------------|--|--|
| Western | Europe and North and South America | Christian (Catholic and Protestant) |
| Eastern | Russia, Ukraine, Ethiopia, Portugal | Orthodox Christian |
| Asian | China, Japan, Korea, Indonesia | Buddhism, Confucianism, Shinto |
| Middle Eastern | Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iran, Morocco, Iraq | Islam Sunni and Shia |
| African | Most African countries and South Africa | Islam, Traditional African Religions, Christianity |

Religious Diversity for All

On a British Airways flight from Johannesburg, a middle-aged, well-off white South African lady found herself sitting next to a Muslim black man. She called the cabin crew attendant over to complain about her seating.

“What seems to be the problem, Madam?” asked the attendant.

“Can’t you see?” she said “ You’ve sat me next to a Muslim *kaffir*. I can’t possibly sit next to this disgusting human being. Find me another seat!”

“Please calm down, madam.” the stewardess replied. “The flight is very full today, but I’ll tell you what I’ll do: I’ll go and check to see if we have any seats available in first class.” The lady cocked a snooty look at the outraged man beside her (not to mention many of the surrounding passengers).

A few minutes later the flight attendant returned with the good news which she delivered to the woman, who could not help but look at the people around her with a smug and self-satisfied grin. “Madam, unfortunately, as I suspected, economy is full. However, we do have one seat in first class.”

Before the lady had a chance to answer, the attendant continued. “It is most extraordinary to make this kind of upgrade, however, and I have had to get special permission from the captain. But given the *circumstances*, the captain felt that it was outrageous that someone be forced to sit next to such an obnoxious person.”

With that, she turned to the black man sitting next to the woman, and said: “So if you’d like to get your things, sir, I have your seat ready for you.”

Apparently many of the surrounding passengers stood and gave a standing ovation while the Muslim man walked up to the front of the plane and took his first class seat.

(Adapted from <http://www.pravsworld.com/respect-diversity/>)

* *Kaffir* is a derogatory word used in the past by South Africans to describe black people or foreigners.



THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

ARTICLE 18

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought,
conscience and religion;
this right includes freedom to change
his or her religion or belief;
and freedom, either alone or in community with others
and in public or private, to manifest his or her religion or
belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

SIMPLIFIED

1. We all have the right to **have**
our own thoughts or beliefs or religion;
2. We can **change** our religion or belief if we want to;
3. We can **teach** or **practice** or **worship** as we wish.

THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

ARTICLE 14

You have the right to think and believe
what you want, and to practice your religion,
as long as you are not stopping other people
from enjoying their rights.

Parents should guide their children on these matters.