



Global Voices Information Sheet

A Feminist Resolve for Mother's Day



A young girl fetching water in Malawi, Africa.

Background Info

- Women's rights are the legal and political freedoms of women as equal to men.
- In some places, women's rights are an accepted part of society and are reflected in laws and customs. In other places, women still struggle with basic human rights, such as lack of access to education.
- In the past, during times of civil war, in Zimbabwe and Libya for example, women have been brutally punished for their beliefs and the beliefs of their families. Soldiers raped women to dehumanize them and instill fear in communities.
- Even in countries where rights have progressed, women were seen as property of their husbands as late as the early 20th century.
- Women could not vote in Canadian federal elections until 1919, because it was widely believed that women could not understand politics. They were thought to be less intelligent than men.
- Feminism is a movement aimed at establishing and defending equal political, social and economic rights for women.
- Feminists, or persons practicing feminism, can be men or women.
- A 2009 report called *Because I am a Girl: Girls in the Global Economy*, found that developing countries could lift themselves out of poverty by educating and employing more women.

Key terms

- **Commercialize**— exploit or spoil for the purpose of gaining a profit.
- **Gender equality**—a social order in which men and women enjoy the same opportunities and full participation in the economy, politics, and domestic life.
- **Developing country**—a general term used to describe a nation with poor material well-being.
- **Human trafficking**— the illegal trade or smuggling of people for the purposes of labour or sexual exploitation.
- **Sustainable development**— development that meets the needs of current generations without hurting the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (i.e. so that the community does not become dependent on foreign aid).
- **Foreign aid**—money, food or resources given or lent to one country by another.

Global Voices Elementary Educator Resources

Note to Educators:

The following activities are designed to stimulate a current events discussion. Generative in nature, these questions can be a launching point for additional assignments or research projects. Teachers are encouraged to adapt these activities to meet the contextual needs of their classroom.

In some cases, reading the article with students may be appropriate, coupled with reviewing the information sheet to further explore the concepts and contexts being discussed. From here, teachers can select from the questions provided below. Activities are structured to introduce students to the issues, then allow them to explore and apply their learnings. Extension and conclusion activities are included to challenge students and finally, encourage them to reflect on the issues at hand.

Since these activities are designed as discussions rather than formal lessons, assessment strategies are not included.

Themes and Course Connections

- Themes: women, rights, women's rights, role models, Mother's Day, and feminism.
- Course Connections: The Arts, Language, Science and Technology, and Social Studies.

Materials

- Chart paper or blackboard
- Global Voices column

Specific Expectations and Learning Goals

Students will:

- Develop and express responses to issues and problems.
- Reassess their responses to issues on the basis of new information.
- Participate in active group work and class discussions.
- Communicate effectively in written and spoken language or other forms of expression.
- Demonstrate the ability to think critically.
- Develop, express, and defend a position on an issue and explain how to put the ideas into action.

Knowledge and Understanding

1. Girls (estimated time: 20 minutes)
 - a. Place a line down the middle of the classroom.
 - b. Explain to students that one side of the classroom is the "Agree" side, while the other is the "Disagree" side.
 - c. Read the statements below and have students go and stand on the side of the room that reflects their opinion. Students are also able to stand in the middle, meaning that they are unsure or they neither agree nor disagree.
 - d. Once students have chosen their side, ask them to explain their opinion. At this time, allow students to change sides if hearing other's thoughts changes their mind.
 - e. Read the following suggested statements to the class:
 - i. Girls and boys are treated differently in society.
 - ii. Girls and boys are equal.

- iii. Girls often fall victim to stereotypes, such as: girls like to shop rather than play sports.
 - iv. Many girls around the world are still not being granted their rights.
 - v. Many girls around the world are not granted equal and fair access to education.
 - vi. Same sex schools are better for learning than co-ed schools.
 - vii. Education can empower girls to challenge stereotypes and succeed in society.
 - viii. Girls education and the promotion of gender equality are vital to development.
- f. Once this activity is complete, ask students to discuss women's rights and the situation of girls around the world.

Thinking

1. Guided Reading: The Global Voices Column (estimated time: 20 minutes)
 - a. Have students sit in a circle and distribute one copy of the Global Voices column to each student.
 - b. Pre-reading steps:
 - i. Make predictions: ask students to read the title of the column and view the pictures. After doing so, ask them to make predictions as to what the column is going to be about.
 - ii. Introduce vocabulary: women's rights, discrimination, feminism, violence-against-women, sexual assault, gender equality.
 - iii. Assess prior knowledge: ask students to discuss what they already know about these topics.
 - c. Reading steps:
 - i. Go around the circle and have each student read a section of the column to the class, so that everyone gets a turn to read.
 - ii. As students are reading, offer guidance and coaching by providing prompts, asking questions, and encouraging attempts at reading strategy application.
 - d. Post reading steps:
 - i. Encourage students to provide a summary of the column in order to ensure they have understood the series of events.
 - ii. Ask questions about the text to judge comprehension.
2. Media Literacy (estimated time:15 minutes)
 - a. On a piece of paper ask each student to write the title of the column at the top of the page. Underneath the heading, have them create a chart with two columns across and five rows down.
 - b. In the first column, have them write the following questions:
 - i. What is the title of this column?
 - ii. Who is the author?
 - iii. What is the purpose of the column?
 - iv. What statistics or facts are listed in the column?
 - v. Are there biases or obvious points of view?
 - c. Have the students revisit the Global Voices column and fill in the chart answering the above questions.
 - d. Discuss the student's charts as a class. Address the reasons why it is important to understand the source and potential bias of a website or print resource offering news information. Explain that just because a source has a bias doesn't mean it has no value. One of the traditional purposes of publications is to express opinions and attempt to convince readers of their validity. Explain that this is why it's important for each of them to form their own opinion while reading publications instead of agreeing with everything.

Communication

1. Women's Right Posters (estimated time: 1 hour)
 - a. Ask students to define the term women's rights. Write suggestions on the board.
 - b. Ask students to share any stories of instances where they have heard of women not being granted their rights, and encourage them to share their story with the class.
 - c. Allow students an opportunity to investigate women's rights using resources found around the classroom (e.g.: books, newspapers, the internet).
 - d. When students have completed their investigations, bring the class back together and ask students to explain what they found.
 - e. When this discussion is complete, explain to students that they must select a women's rights issue they feel passionately about and create a poster on this issue to inform the rest of the school. The poster should address the following questions:
 - i. What is the chosen issue?
 - ii. In which region of the world is it most prevalent? Why?
 - iii. Is anything being done to resolve the issue? If so, what? If not, why not?
 - f. Hang completed posters around the school.

Application

1. The Women in my Life (estimated time: 25 minutes)
 - a. Write the heading "Role Model" on the board.
 - b. Ask students to list all the qualities of a role model. Record these answers underneath the heading.
 - c. Ask students to write down the names of five women who are or have been important in their life.
 - d. Divide the class into pairs and ask them to talk about these women, discussing:
 - i. The strengths of these women.
 - ii. Why they have been important in their life.
 - iii. What they admire about them.
 - iv. What they have learned from them.
 - v. What they would like to thank them for.
 - e. When this discussion is complete ask students to brainstorm ways they can thank these inspirational women in their life. Write suggestions on the board.
 - f. Ask students to select one suggestion on the board and promise to do that for one of the women in their life when they go home that night.

Additional Resources

In addition to the above lesson plans, you may want to share some additional resources with your students. Listed below are some links to useful online resources:

Free The Children – www.freethechildren.com

UNICEF's indispensable report - <http://www.unicef.org/pon96>

The World Bank - <http://www.worldbank.org/gender/>

The World Bank - <http://www.worldbank.org/gender/prr/summary.pdf>

Women Watch - <http://www.un.org/womenwatch>

The UN's Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) -

<http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/women/dpi1796e.htm>

DESA, a quick reference of gender equality globally -

<http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/women/women96.htm>

From the Department of Public Information, a fact sheet on women and violence.

<http://www.un.org/rights/dpi1772e.htm>

United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) -

<http://www.undp.org/unifem/>