



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 Secondary 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: Canadian and World Studies, English, Social Sciences and Humanities, Technological Education.

Materials

- Chart paper or blackboard
- Computers and internet
- 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. Getting Personal: Women's Rights (estimated time: 20 minutes)
 - a. Write the title "Women's Rights" on the board. Ask students to work together to define this term.
 - b. Divide the class into small groups.
 - c. Write the following story types on the board:
 - i. A time you experienced prejudice or discrimination.
 - ii. A time you discriminated against somebody else.
 - iii. A time you witnessed a woman not being granted her rights.
 - iv. A time you felt discriminated against as a woman.
 - v. A time you witnessed discrimination against a woman and did nothing about it.

- vi. A time you witnessed discrimination against a woman and did something about it.
- d. Explain to students that in their small groups, they have created a circle of trust. No story is to leave the circle during or after class unless you are given permission by the individual.
- e. Allow students personal time to reflect on the six stories. Encourage students to go deep. They may come across something that is upsetting to them but encourage them to let it out.
- f. Now instruct the groups to sit in a circle. Proceeding one story at a time, allow each student to have their turn.
- g. Explain that after all group members have shared their experience with one question they can have an active discussion before moving onto the next story.
- h. When the small groups are finished, gather the class back together to share observations and stories (that they are comfortable with) in the large group.
- i. To conclude the discussion, address students' prior knowledge and talk about the state of women's rights around the world.

Thinking

1. Reading Comprehension: Global Voices Column (estimated time: 15 minutes)
 - a. Pre reading steps:
 - i. Introduce the topic and encourage students to discuss what they already know about the topic, making predictions around what the column is about.
 - b. Reading steps:
 - i. Read: students must read the text independently, highlighting important points throughout the column.
 - ii. Ask: students must ask themselves what the story is about, recording five questions they are unsure of after reading the column.
 - iii. Paraphrase: encourage students to write point form notes in their own words around what the column is about.
 - c. Post reading discussion:
 - i. What are the main points of the column?
 - ii. What emotions did this column evoke in you?
 - iii. What problem is identified in the column?
 - iv. What questions do you have about the column?
2. Media Literacy
 - a. Ask students to answer the following five key questions for media literacy:
 - i. Who created this message?
 - ii. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
 - iii. How might people understand this message differently?
 - iv. What values, lifestyles and point of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
 - v. Why is this message being sent?

Communication

1. Mother's Day Debate (estimated time: 30 minutes)
 - a. Divide the class into groups of four.
 - b. In their groups, students must divide into two teams.
 - c. Groups will argue the following statement: Mother's Day has become a commercial indulgence.
 - d. One team must argue for this statement while the other team argues against.
 - e. Let the debates begin!
 - f. After a period of time, allow teams to switch to argue the other side.

- g. When debates are complete, bring the class back together and discuss the results as a class. Ask students what they can do to ensure they overcome the commercial side of Mother's Day in their own house.

Application

1. Women's Rights Issues Around the World (estimated time: continuous project)
 - a. Provide each student in the class with a copy of the Global Voices column.
 - b. Explain to students that throughout the column a variety of women's rights violations occurring around the world have been identified. Ask students to identify some of these issues from the column and write their answers on the board (e.g.: bride burnings, veiling, genital mutilation, the killing of infants and little girls, reproductive rights, rape, date rape, etc.)
 - c. Ask each student to select one of these Women's Rights issues and perform some additional research on the topic.
 - d. Once students have selected their topic, ask them to identify the following in their research:
 - i. What is the issue?
 - ii. Why does this issue occur?
 - iii. Where does it occur?
 - iv. How is this a violation of women's rights?
 - v. Is anything being done to put any end to this issue?
 - e. When students have completed their research, ask them to discuss their findings in small groups before sharing with the class.

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/>