

A Child's Place in Time: Rights, Responsibilities, and Respect Through History

Materials Needed:

- Computer or tablet with internet access
- Notebook or journal and a pen/pencil
- Printer for graphic organizer (optional)
- Art supplies for the final project (paper, markers, colored pencils, or digital art tools)
- **Online Resources (Teacher to preview):**
 - Video: "Horrible Histories: Victorian Work Song" (A fun, musical look at child labor)
 - Article: Ducksters - "Daily Life of a Child in the Middle Ages"
 - Article: UNICEF - "What is Child Labour?"
 - Resource: The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Child-Friendly Version)

Lesson Overview

This lesson is an inquiry into the concept of childhood throughout history. The student will investigate how children's rights, responsibilities, and the respect they were given have changed over time, from the Middle Ages to the present day. By comparing the past with the present, the student will develop a deeper appreciation for their own rights and a sense of empathy for children whose rights are not protected today. The lesson culminates in a creative project where the student applies their learning to advocate for children's rights.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, the student will be able to:

- Compare and contrast the life of a child in the Middle Ages with their own life today.
- Explain at least two key historical factors that led to changes in children's rights (e.g., new laws, the Industrial Revolution).
- Identify modern-day challenges to children's rights, such as child labor.
- Create a project that communicates their understanding of and empathy for the historical and modern struggles for children's rights.

IB Learner Profile Focus

- **Inquirer:** Asking questions about the past and present to build understanding.
- **Caring:** Developing empathy for the experiences of children in different eras and circumstances.
- **Principled:** Exploring concepts of fairness, justice, and human rights.
- **Thinker:** Analyzing information and making connections between historical context and modern issues.
- **Communicator:** Expressing understanding and ideas through discussion and a creative project.

Lesson Procedure (60 Minutes)

Part 1: The Spark - A Journey in a Time Machine (10 minutes)

1. **Opening Discussion:** Start with a "What if..." scenario. Ask the student: *"Imagine you woke up tomorrow and your life was completely different. You had to go to work in a factory instead of doing school. You were expected to help earn money for the family all day. What would you think? How would you feel?"*
2. **Introduce the Topic:** Explain that for much of history, this was the reality for most children. The idea of "childhood" as a time for school and play is actually quite new. Today, we will be historians and time travelers, investigating what life was like for children in the past.
3. **Create a "Know / Wonder" Chart:** In their notebook, have the student create two columns. In the "Know" column, they write what they think they know about children in the past. In the "Wonder" column, they list questions they have. (e.g., "Did they have toys?" "What happened if they got in trouble?"). This activity activates prior knowledge and sparks curiosity (**Inquirer**).

Part 2: The Investigation - Clues from the Past (20 minutes)

1. **Guided Research:** Using the pre-selected resources (like the Ducksters article), guide the student to find answers to these key questions. Encourage them to take notes.
 - How were children treated in the Middle Ages? Were they seen as small adults?
 - At what age did poorer children start working? What jobs did they do?
 - What happened if a child committed a crime like stealing? (Explain the concept of being tried as an adult).
 - At what age could children get married? (Handle this sensitively, explaining it was often an arrangement between families for land or power, not about love).
2. **"Then vs. Now" Comparison:** Use a T-chart or a Venn Diagram. On one side, list facts about a child's life in the Middle Ages (Work, School, Rights, Marriage). On the other side, list facts about their own life today. This helps the student visually organize the information and think critically about the differences (**Thinker**).

Part 3: The Turning Point - From Past to Present (15 minutes)

1. **Discussing Change:** Ask: *"So, what changed? Why don't you have to work in a field all day?"* Guide the discussion towards key turning points:
 - **The Industrial Revolution:** Explain how many children went to work in dangerous factories. Show the "Horrible Histories" song for an engaging (and memorable!) look at this period.
 - **Reformers and New Laws:** Talk about how brave people started to argue that children deserved protection and education. This led to new laws banning child labor and making school mandatory.
2. **Modern Connections:** Transition to the present day. Use the UNICEF article to explore the question: *"Is this problem solved?"* Discuss that in some parts of the world, children still work instead of going to school. Look at a child-friendly version of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Discuss rights like "the right to an education" and "the right to be protected from harmful work." This fosters a sense of global awareness and empathy (**Caring, Principled**).

Part 4: Taking Action - Be a Voice for Change (15 minutes + extended time)

1. **Introduce the Creative Project:** Tell the student, "Now that you're an expert historian, your job is to share what you've learned. You can choose one of the following ways to tell the story of children's rights." Provide a choice of projects to foster student agency:
 - **A "Day in the Life" Journal:** Write two short journal entries. One from the perspective of a child in the Middle Ages or Victorian Era, and one from your own perspective today. Compare the hopes, fears, and daily tasks.

- **A Comic Strip:** Create a short comic that shows the journey of children's rights, from being treated like a "mini-adult" in the past to having protected rights today.
 - **A "Rights Advocate" Poster:** Design a poster that highlights one important children's right (like the right to education). The poster should explain why it's important and show what the world would be like without it.
2. **Work Session & Sharing:** Allow the student to begin brainstorming or sketching their project. The full creation can be completed after the one-hour session. When they are finished, have them present their work and explain their creative choices (**Communicator**).
 3. **Closing Reflection:** End with a brief discussion. Ask: *"What was the most surprising thing you learned today? What right are you most grateful for? How has this lesson changed how you think about your own responsibilities?"* This helps solidify the learning (**Reflective**).
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Differentiation & Extension

- **For Added Support:** Work together to fill out the "Then vs. Now" chart. Provide sentence starters for the journal entry or a template for the comic strip.
- **For an Advanced Challenge:** Have the student research a specific historical figure who advocated for children's rights (e.g., Lord Shaftesbury, Eglantyne Jebb). Or, they could research a specific country today and prepare a short report on the state of children's rights there.

Assessment

- **Formative:** Assess understanding through the quality of discussion, the questions asked in the "Wonder" column, and the details included in the "Then vs. Now" chart.
- **Summative:** The final creative project will be the main assessment. Evaluate it based on:
 - **Historical Accuracy:** Does it reflect the information learned?
 - **Empathy and Perspective:** Does it show an understanding of the challenges faced by children?
 - **Clarity of Message:** Does it effectively communicate a key idea about children's rights?
 - **Creativity:** Does it show thoughtful and original effort?