Historical Background

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The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was adopted by the United Nations' General Assembly in 1948. It was the first attempt to create a global standard of human rights – to define what human rights are and what they encompass. As such, the UDHR is highly relevant to each and every global citizen.

The harrowing experience of WWII influenced the decision to create the UDHR. World leaders felt the need to devise a road map guaranteeing the rights of all individuals everywhere.

The document which they drafted was taken up at the first session of the General Assembly in 1946 and became the UDHR.



This teaching guide is designed to help students understand the UDHR and how it applies to their daily lives and to the world around them. Given that it is written using legal terminology, it can be challenging for students to grasp its meaning. The teaching guide seeks to take abstract human rights concepts and to use examples to describe them, so that students can conceptualize these issues.

The teaching guide takes inspiration from Eleanor Roosevelt:

so close and so small

that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm, or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman and child seek equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerned citizen action to uphold them dose to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the

- Eleanor Roosevelt