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About This Lesson

Syria: No Lost Generation

Time
45–60 minutes

Grade Level
Grades 6-8

- Vocabulary**
- Advocate
 - Chemical weapons
 - Child-friendly spaces
 - Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
 - Displaced
 - Global citizen
 - Humanitarian
 - Human rights
 - Maimed
 - Refugee
 - Scarce
 - Shelling
 - Stalemate
 - Trauma
 - UNICEF

OVERVIEW

Students will examine the concept of *generation* and discover that, without international intervention, there may be a lost generation of Syrian children with dire consequences for them, their neighbors, and the world. Through activities and discussion involving the Convention on the Rights of the Child, students will learn that UNICEF and its partners provide essential humanitarian assistance as well as help restore the rights to which Syrian children are entitled. The lesson will conclude with how students can be active global citizens and take action to support the children of Syria.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Examine the basic outlines of the conflict in Syria and its impact on children and their rights.
- Research the work of UNICEF and its partners to protect the rights and restore the promise of this generation of Syrian children.
- Explore why our global citizenship motivates us to act on behalf of the children of Syria, and how such action can occur.

ADVANCE SETUP

This lesson assumes that, at a minimum, the following articles from the TeachUNICEF Global Citizenship Brief, “Syria: No Lost Generation” (grades 6–8 edition), at teachunicef.org/global-citizenship-brief-syria, will be assigned for homework prior to this class:

- “News in Brief: Three Years of Conflict in Syria” on page 2
- “Feature Story: No Lost Generation” on page 4 (“Inside Syria: An Eyewitness Account” on page 5 complements this well, if you choose to assign it)
- “The Convention on the Rights of the Child” on page 6
- “Helping the Children of Syria” on page 7

If some articles are not assigned in advance, adjust your instruction and timing accordingly.



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DIRECTIONS

1. Help students tune in to the concept of a lost generation.
 - a. Ask students, “What is a generation?” Discuss and refer to well-known generations in recent times and what they are known for. For example, the “greatest generation” grew up in the Great Depression and fought World War II, and the “Baby Boomers” established youth as a new force in politics, economics, and culture.
 - b. Ask students to brainstorm the characteristics that define their generation of young people born in the 21st century (e.g., they love their mobile devices, have been affected by the economic downturn, etc.).
 - c. Establish that like all generations, they look forward to making their mark, individually and collectively. Ask what factors will help them to achieve their legacy (e.g., a good education, job opportunities, safe communities, etc.).
 - d. Turn the class’s attention to the homework reading on the Syrian conflict. Use the “Feature Story: No Lost Generation” on page 4 (and “Inside Syria: What I Saw” on page 5, if you assigned it) as a basis to discuss whether the children of Syria are experiencing the conditions necessary to make their future impact on society. Prompt students for the effects of the war on children, and how they might have a lasting consequence on an entire generation.

2. Review with students the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) activity on page 6 of the [TeachUNICEF Global Citizenship Brief](#) (grades 6–8 edition). With students in pairs or as a class, ask them to identify details in the “Feature Story: No Lost Generation” that relate to each of the rights in the activity; have students note those details next to the appropriate item in the activity. Discuss if each represents a deprivation of that right, or a way to protect that right. Note that both the government’s and the rebels’ actions are causing these deprivations. Then ask whether the students would say these are rights that still belong to children who are Syrian citizens. Discuss. Explain that regardless of what the government and rebels think or do about those rights, the rights are established as permanent global rights in the CRC. It makes Syrian children global citizens, just as children in the United States and everywhere else are, with the same basic rights.
3. Review “Helping the Children of Syria” on page 7 of the [TeachUNICEF Global Citizenship Brief](#) (grades 6–8 edition). Ask students to identify and record rights from the CRC that are being protected through each instance of humanitarian response. Discuss using some of the following questions:
- Which right seems to you to be the most important to restore? Why?
 - Which one of UNICEF’s responses seems to be the most essential? Does it work toward restoring the right you deemed the most important?
 - Do you think the work being done can prevent “a lost generation” of Syrian children? Why, or why not?
 - What additional work do you think UNICEF and the international community should be doing to help the children of Syria?
4. Ask students to imagine what their lives might be like if war broke out in their own country, if they became a generation at risk of being “lost.” Ask if they would expect the world to care, and what kinds of responses they would hope for from other countries and from individuals abroad. Emphasize that being a good global citizen means showing concern for the plight of others, even when they’re in a distant place. Brainstorm ways that individuals in the United States can show support for the children of Syria and make a meaningful impact on their lives. Choose at least one idea to consider as a class. (See “Helping the Children of Syria” on page 7 of the [TeachUNICEF Global Citizenship Brief](#) (grades 6–8 edition) for examples of how students might take action.)

According to the U.S. Fund for UNICEF, a **global citizen** is someone who understands interconnectedness, respects and values diversity, has the ability to challenge injustice, and takes action in personally meaningful ways.

To expand the discussion of child rights, consider using the version of the CRC in child-friendly language at unicef.org/rightsite/files/uncrcchildfriendlylanguage.pdf.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Have students take steps needed to follow through with their idea for taking action. You may wish to use the “Think-Plan-Do” graphic organizer on page 7 of the grades 3–5 edition of the [TeachUNICEF Global Citizenship Brief](#).
- Have students complete the activity “Taking Action for Syria’s Children” on the [TeachUNICEF Global Citizenship Briefs webpage](#), which guides them in organizing a fundraiser to benefit the children of Syria.
- Assign students to read all or part of the latest Syria crisis bi-weekly humanitarian situation report, available at childrenofsyria.info/category/sitrep/. Have them write a letter to the editor of their community newspaper in which they (1) identify a critical right that the children of Syria are being denied, (2) refer knowledgeably to a statistic demonstrating the deprivation of that right, (3) inform about the latest action UNICEF is taking to restore that right, and (4) call on their community to advocate for the children of Syria in the way of their choice.



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