

A Spark in Canada to Illuminate the World

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The following text is part of a full page advertisement for the Canadian Museum of Human Rights slated to be built in the Forks area, the join of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers in Winnipeg, within the next three years. The website www.canadianmuseumforhumanrights.com explains the project and has wonderful quotations. Below is the text of the National Post advertisement with some teaching materials appropriate for both elementary and secondary schools.

Before the Reading

1. There is a saying that, 'no man is an island'. If no one is an island, what is each person a part of?
2. What basic human rights does each person have no matter where that person is born?
3. When a human life hangs in the balance, before execution or murder, what questions should always be asked?
4. In history has one person made a difference?

If the rights of a single human are dimmed, does all humanity fall under a shadow? Can a gesture by one nation stir change oceans away? Will we ever be able to promise all human rights for all, once and for all? When it comes to the simple matter of human kind's basic rights, there are no simple questions, no wrong ones, and never enough. And soon, we will have a place to ask them. The Canadian Museum for Human Rights. It will be the largest human rights centre in the world. An international forum for learning and reflection, dialogue and debate. An unprecedented showcase of our social triumphs and human tragedies. A call to action for a new generation of human rights leaders. A national landmark, a global meeting place, a spark of hope. From Canada. For the world. Help this light shine. Visit www.canadianmuseumforhumanrights.com

After the Reading

1. If you were in charge of creating the displays for a Human Rights Museum, describe three human rights features that you would include.
2. What are some of the social triumphs of human rights and what are some of the human tragedies of human rights?
3. What dialogues and debates, learning and reflection need to take place in the area of Human Rights?
4. World War II veterans fought against the tyranny of Hitler without full knowledge of his violation of Human Rights. The post-war picture of what happened in Hitler's death camps was even more horrific than anyone could imagine. As the 'new generation of human rights leaders' what does this lesson of the half-revealed atrocities of Hitler tell you? Apply this example to Iraq, Bosnia, Sudan and other countries where Human Rights are being violated.

Writing for Reading (November 10th)

1. The advertisement asks you to, "Help this light shine." Make a list with five points that show how Human Rights might shine. For example, "When I refuse to be bullied, I let human rights shine; when I report a crime, I let human rights shine; when I speak up for myself ..."
2. As future human rights leaders, make up a list of five questions about human rights. For example: How does a country decide which cause to support when there are so many global infringements of human rights?
3. A student's Code of Human Rights. Create your own Student Code of those matters worthy of defence. For example: All young people should have the right to be students. All young people should have the right to be students in an environment that allows inquiry.
4. The language of the advertisement. Look at the emotional appeal and poetry of the National Post advertisement. For example, "If one of our fellow students is bullied, are we all under that shadow? Can the things that we do at our school change Canadian society?" Change the whole advertisement to reflect your school