



What Kind of World?

Classroom Resources from
the United Nations Association in Canada

At the heart of *What Kind of World...?* are four lesson plans, available in English and French, designed to teach students the basics of the UN system and a number of critical global issues from a Canadian perspective. Each one-hour session draws links between local and global issues, and highlights the role of Canada in the UN and the UN in daily life. The sessions are geared towards interactive learning and allowing youth to develop their own ideas and opinions about global issues. Although the lessons are intended to be taught sequentially, they may also be given individually with the assistance of the background information provided.

The lesson plans are accompanied by a variety of resources to facilitate their implementation.

These include

- an outline of how the sessions meet the required objectives of provincial social studies curricula;
- resource materials to be distributed to students during the sessions;

- background information on the UN and Canada's involvement in it for use by facilitators; and
- a list of further print and Internet resources on the UN and global issues.

The objectives of the package are

- to increase awareness among youth of international problems and possible solutions;
- to increase understanding among youth of the UN and to foster an appreciation for its work;
- to increase understanding among youth of Canada's role on the international stage;
- to increase enthusiasm among youth for learning about global issues; and
- to foster a sense of empowerment from finding solutions to global problems.

The United Nations

The United Nations is an international organization of independent countries.

These countries have joined together to work for world peace and against poverty and injustice. The UN was established as a result of a conference in San Francisco in June 1945 of 51 countries committed to preserving peace through international co-operation and collective security. Today, nearly every nation in the world belongs to the UN – 188 countries in all. UN headquarters are located in New York City.

The UN has four main purposes, as stated in its Charter

- to keep peace throughout the world;
- to develop friendly relations among nations;
- to help improve living conditions of poor people and encourage respect for each other's rights and freedoms; and
- to be a centre for helping nations achieve these goals.

What follows is one of the four available lesson plans.

Canada and the United Nations: An Overview

Grades 5 - 8 Introduction

Ask: How many have heard of the United Nations?

What's one thing the UN does? (Solicit several answers.) Explain that the main purpose of the UN is to stop countries from fighting wars.

Ask: Why is war something that should be stopped?

What are some countries that are fighting or have fought wars? Divide the students into "country" groups of eight–ten students, using their answers. Have the groups sit quietly in circles, and ask each group to choose "ambassadors" to go to each of the other groups.

Activity: The Human Knot

Goal

To untangle a knot made by intertwining the arms of students.

Purpose

- to teach the importance of communication.
- to draw analogies between untangling the knot and solving global crisis.
- to start thinking about the ways the UN works.

Set Up

- have the groups stand in circles, shoulder to shoulder, facing inwards.
- tell each student to extend their right hand and clasp someone else's hand.
- tell each student to do the same with their left hand.
- make sure each student is holding the hands of two different people.

Go!

- tell the students that they must untangle the knots to form circles.
- remind them that they cannot let go of either hand they are holding.
- watch the groups to ensure safety, but offer help only if really necessary.
- if one group finishes early, ask them to offer help to the other groups.
- stop the activity after minutes, whether the groups are untangled or not.

Debrief

- have the students sit in a circle so that everyone can see each other. Introduce the unit and talk about the purpose of the program, to teach about the UN and global issues.



Ask: How were you able to untangle the knot? What worked and what did not? What were some of the things that needed to be done to reach the solution? Direct the discussion so that it focuses on the importance of other people's ideas and choices, listening to people's opinions, reaching consensus, co-operating, being organized, and helping each other.

Ask: What would you do differently if you had to do the activity again?

Teaching: Explain that all the countries in the world are like the students in the human knot. They are each independent, but at the same time they are each connected. After the Second World War, a group of countries decided that the only way to untangle all the knots in the world was to get together and use the same skills that the students needed to untangle themselves:

communication, co-operation, and organization.

The UN Charter is a set of rules that all members of the UN sign to ensure that countries co-operate and communicate well. The Charter helps countries avoid fighting and work together. It was signed by 51 countries in San Francisco, on June 4, 1945. It came into force on October 24, 1945 – what is now observed every year as UN Day.

Ask: How many countries

are now members of the UN? The answer is 188 – almost every country in the world, including the three which joined in 1999: Tonga, Nauru and Kiribati.

Application: Distribute a copy of the Class Charter sheet to each student (see “Our Class Charter” in Resource Section – www.unac.org).

Ask: What kinds of things cause arguments and fights at school? How can that fighting be prevented?

Teaching: Explain that they are going to make a Charter for their class – a set of five rules that will help them work together. Solicit ideas for different rules, then get the students to vote for their favourite one (only one vote each). Compile a list of the top five. Get everyone to write these rules on their own Charters. Tell them they can take it home and decorate it any way they like.

Explain that all member countries come to the UN and meet in the General Assembly to discuss and decide on any issue of international concern. Explain that according to one of the rules in the UN Charter all countries are equal, so each gets one vote, and decisions are made by a majority – just like the way they discussed and decided on their Class Charter. Show them the similarities between their Charter and the UN Charter, and tell them they have to work to follow their Charter for the rest of the year.

Explain that the General Assembly meets in New York, where the UN headquarters are located. It works in six official languages.

Ask: What are they? (English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, Russian.)

Explain that the General Assembly is just one part of the UN – it is like its heart, because it is central and it keeps everything beating and circulating. But just like the human body, the UN has other important organs (see Background Information – www.unac.org).

Ask: What are some of the organs in the body? Distribute the “Organs of the United Nations” Chart (see Resource Section – www.unac.org).

Ask: What does the brain do? Elicit responses. The Security Council is like the brain because it is in charge of maintaining international peace and security and is able to call the UN into action against an aggressive country. The Security Council has 15 members, five of which are permanent (US, UK, Russia, France and China). For the Security Council to pass a resolution, there must be a majority vote, but if any one of the five permanent members votes against it, the resolution is not passed. This is called “a veto.”

Ask: What does the liver do? The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is like the liver because it removes wastes and poisons from circulation by solving arguments that countries bring to it. It has 15 judges, from 15 different countries, and sits in The Hague, in the Netherlands. It works on disputes between countries only, not between people.

Ask: What does the stomach do?

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is like the stomach because it takes in the world's problems (problems of population, drugs, crime, environment, trade, etc) and digests them, figuring out ways to deal with them. It has 54 members and many specialized agencies and programs to help it deal with all its work (see Background Information. www.unac.org).

Ask: What does the appendix do?

The Trusteeship Council is like the appendix because it no longer has a function – it used to take care of countries that hadn't received their independence.

Ask: What does the skin do? The Secretariat is like the skin because it covers the whole organization. It is the external part of the UN, carrying out the day-to-day operations, protecting the organs, and representing the organization. It is made of a staff of almost 10,000 from 170 different countries. These are called International Civil Servants. The Secretariat, and the UN in general, is led by the Secretary-General. Currently, this is Kofi Annan, from Ghana.

Explain that Canada is in the blood of the UN. It plays a role in nearly every organ. Right now, it is member of the Security Council and a part of almost every specialized agency and program. Also, a Canadian, Louise Fréchet, is the Deputy Secretary-General.

Historically, Canada has also played a very important role in the UN.



A former Prime Minister, Lester B. Pearson, won the Nobel Peace Prize for his work in establishing the first ever UN Peace-keeping force in Egypt in the 1950s. Canadians also played important roles in drafting the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (see Background Information, www.unac.org)

Have the students get back into their “country” groups. Tell them to list all the problems they think exist in the world, and then to choose the top three. Get each group to write their top three on the board. Choose the top three for the whole class by holding another vote, like in the General Assembly. Explain that the next lessons will focus on how the UN and Canada try to solve these problems, and what they can do to help.

Have the students draw and decorate their Class Charters so that they can be displayed around the room as a reminder of the rules they have agreed to follow. Send their Charter to be posted on UNA-Canada’s website.

Connections to the Ontario Curriculum

In Grades 5 and 6, What Kind of World ...? Can be integrated into the “Canada and World Connections” Social Studies curriculum.

In Grades 7 and 8, the lessons can be integrated into the “History and Geography” curriculum.

Grade 5 Social Studies

- identifying the characteristics of different systems of government;
- demonstrating an understanding of the rights of Canadians, and that for every right there is a responsibility;
- communicating information on world governments using innovative sources; and
- comparing Canada’s system of government with other systems, including the UN system.

Grade 6 Social Studies

- demonstrating an understanding of the connections Canada shares with other countries;
- describing Canada’s involvement in international organizations, including the UN;
- identifying outstanding contributions of Canadians to the global community;

- describing how international interactions influence Canadians and how Canada influences other countries;
- identifying countries to which Canada gives assistance;
- demonstrating an understanding of the possible reasons for the presence of Canadian peacekeepers in other countries; and
- identifying other contributions Canada makes to the global community.

Grade 7 History and Geography

- demonstrating an understanding of the nature of conflict and change;
- examining and communicating methods of conflict resolution;
- comparing strategies of conflict resolution used locally to those used globally;
- demonstrating an understanding of environmental issues; and
- developing a view on the use of global resources.

Grade 8 History and Geography

- identifying the achievements of Canadians who have contributed to the development of Canada and the world;
- demonstrating an understanding of Canada’s participation in the World Wars and the establishment of the UN;
- demonstrating an understanding of factors affecting population distribution;
- identifying the characteristics of places with high and low population densities; and
- comparing the characteristics of developed and developing countries.

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The United Nations Association in Canada is a national non-profit organization with a 55-year history of educating and informing Canadians about the UN and critical international issues. UNA-Canada offers individual Canadians a window into the work of the UN, and a channel through which to become actively involved.