

## Lesson 1 of 3

### Understanding Universe of Obligation

Students are introduced to the concept of "universe of obligation" and prompted to illustrate a circle of individuals who they feel a responsibility to care for and protect.

This lesson uses resources from [Chapter 2 of Holocaust and Human Behavior](#) to prompt students to explore the ways that individuals, groups, communities, and nations define who belongs and who does not. The activities that follow examine what it means to belong by introducing the idea of a "universe of obligation," the term sociologist Helen Fein coined to describe the circle of individuals and groups within a society "toward whom obligations are owed, to whom rules apply, and whose injuries call for amends."

**Lesson Link:** [tinyurl.com/FHuniverseofobligation](https://tinyurl.com/FHuniverseofobligation)

#### **Essential Questions:**

- How do groups, communities, and nations define who belongs and who does not?
- How do individuals define the continuum of people for whom they feel responsible?
- What factors influence the extent to which we feel an obligation to help others? How does the way we view others influence our feelings of responsibility toward them?

#### **Learning Objectives:**

- Students will recognize that a society's universe of obligation includes those people who that society believes are deserving of respect and whose rights it believes are worthy of protection.
- Students will understand that a society's universe of obligation often changes, expanding or shrinking depending on circumstances such as peace and prosperity or war and economic depression.

#### **What's Included:**

This lesson is designed to fit into one 50-minute class period and includes:

- 3 activities
- 1 reading, available in English and Spanish
- 1 handout

#### **Materials:**

- [Universe of Obligation Handout](#)

#### **California Common Core State Standards:**

*Speaking and Listening:* Comprehension and Collaboration

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6-8.1** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6-8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

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*This curriculum is a project of the California Teachers Collaborative for Holocaust and Genocide Education, established by the JFCS Holocaust Center, with support from the California Department of Education, the Marin County Office of Education, and the State of California.*

# Centering Humanity when Teaching Challenging History and Current Events

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

## Lesson 2 of 3

### Universe of Obligation and Human Rights

Students learn about the universe of obligation, how individuals and nations define their responsibilities toward other people.

In preparation to learn about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is important to engage students in a conversation about how individuals and nations define their responsibilities toward other people. In this lesson, students will learn about the universe of obligation, a term that sociologist Helen Fein coined to describe the circle of individuals and groups within a society “toward whom obligations are owed, to whom rules apply, and whose injuries call for amends.”

The activities invite students to think about the people for whom they feel responsible and help them analyze the ways that their society designates who is worthy of respect and caring and who is not.

**Lesson Link:** [tinyurl.com/FHhumanrights](https://tinyurl.com/FHhumanrights)

#### **Essential Questions:**

- What is a right?
- What rights should belong to every human being on earth?

#### **Learning Objectives:**

- What factors influence the extent to which we feel an obligation to help others?
- How does the way we view others influence our feelings of responsibility toward them?

#### **What's Included:**

This lesson is designed to fit into one 50-minute class period and includes:

- 4 activities
- 1 handout
- 1 reading, available in English and Spanish
- 1 extension activity

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**Material:**

- [Universe of Obligation Graphic Organizer](#)
- [Universe of Obligation Reading](#)

**California Common Core State Standards:**

*Speaking and Listening:* Comprehension and Collaboration

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- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

## Lesson 3 of 3

### [Hardship and Hope: Teaching Amanda Gorman's New Days Lyric](#)

This mini-lesson invites students to analyze Amanda Gorman's poem "New Day's Lyric" and create a class poem about hope and collective action during challenging times.

Amanda Gorman captured the nation's attention with her inaugural poem, "The Hill We Climb," and since then has published a children's book, penned a poem for the Super Bowl, and published an anthology of her poetry, *Call Us What We Carry*. To usher in the new year, she shared a new poem, "New Day's Lyric," which invites us to reflect on both the hardships and the hopes we are experiencing at the beginning of 2022. She begins the poem by writing:

*May this be the day  
We come together.  
Mourning, we come to mend,  
Withered, we come to weather,  
Torn, we come to tend,  
Battered, we come to better.*

This mini-lesson uses "New Day's Lyric" to invite students to reflect on the challenges they and their communities have faced recently and how we can respond collectively to these challenges and create positive change.

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# Centering Humanity when Teaching Challenging History and Current Events

**Lesson Link:** [tinyurl.com/FHamandagorman](https://tinyurl.com/FHamandagorman)

**What's Included:**

This mini-lesson is designed to be adaptable. You can use the activities in sequence or choose a selection best suited to your classroom. It includes:

- 3 activities
- Student-facing slides
- Recommended articles and videos for exploring this topic

**Material:**

- [Slide Deck](#)

**California Common Core State Standards:**

*Speaking and Listening:* Comprehension and Collaboration

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6-8.1** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6-8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
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