

DESERT DECLARATION

By Tim Beardmore-Gray

Stimulus

Imagine you're travelling in a foreign land many years in the future and you're exploring a huge desert. As well as the cloudless sky, strange animals and towering dunes, you're amazed by many old structures dotted around the desert, crumbling into the shifting sands. When you find one that looks stable enough, you explore these structures, partly to get some shade and partly to look for any interesting pieces of history. One day, after a long walk, you venture into a rusted metal chamber. Searching around, you find many books lying on the ground, covered in sand and falling apart. You pick up a book that seems to be empty of pages. The cover feels very flimsy in your hands. The lettering has almost disappeared, but you can just make out the words The Declaration. You open it up to find a single page still attached to the spine of the book, but ripped in half. The page reads:

Every single human is entitled to all the rights set forth in this Declaration. It does not matter what race, colour, gender or age you are. It does not matter what language you speak, where you were born or where you live. It does not matter what you like or dislike, or what your opinions and beliefs are. It does not matter what religion you follow, which politicians you support or how much money you have. It does not matter what you want to achieve in life. Each and every human is entitled to all the rights set forth in this Declaration.

And that is all that is left in the book. You crawl around on the sandy ground searching for loose pages that might follow on from the start of The Declaration. Whilst you wait for the hottest part of the day to pass, you go through your collection of paper scraps. Thinking about the fading phrases you hold in your hands, you wonder if they are part of the Declaration or not.

Exercise:

Consider each of these phrases. Do you think they could have come from the book called The Declaration? Are these things that every human has a right to?

[In classroom, perhaps give a couple of different phrases to groups of 3-4 pupils]

1. ... an endless supply of money
2. ... freedom to live anywhere in the world
3. ... say their own opinion about whatever they want ...
4. ... a large wardrobe containing all the most fashionable clothes ...
5. ... easy access to food and water ...
6. ... servants to perform any duty that is needed ...
7. ... voting in elections from the age of 10 upwards ...
8. ... life ...
9. ... be treated equally and fairly ...
10. ... use animals for food ...

Task Question 1:

Which phrases could have come from the book?

[Could go round groups to ask if they think their phrases could have been included. Combine TQ1 with TQ2]

Task Question 2:

Which phrases should have been included in the book?

Task Question 3:

If you were one of the writers of The Declaration, what rights would you have included in the book? Are there any rights that every human should have?

Possible Emergent Questions

- ✓ What is a human right?
- ✓ Does every human have the same rights?
- ✓ Can you ever take any human's rights away?
- ✓ Should animals have the same rights as humans?
- ✓ Should we have human rights? Why?
- ✓ Who should decide what rights humans have?
- ✓ Why do we have human rights?
- ✓ When do you start having human rights?
- ✓ Should you be punished if you don't respect someone's human rights?
- ✓ Is there anything we do not have a right to?