

Words That Move – Human Rights Through Quotations

In this short activity, students explore how quotations can express key human rights ideas in a concise and memorable way. They interpret selected quotations, identify the human rights issues they address, and connect them to one or more Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Materials

- Printed or digital overview of the 17 SDGs with symbols and short descriptions
- Quote cards on human rights

Procedure

1. Warm-up (about 3 minutes)

Begin by asking the class:

“What comes to mind when you hear the term ‘human rights’? What do you associate with it?”

Collect a few brief responses on the board or digitally. Then introduce the 17 SDGs as global goals for a better future and explain that they are closely linked to human rights. Tell students that the activity will focus on how language helps make these connections visible.

2. Individual or Pair Work: Interpreting Quotations (about 10 minutes)

Give each student, or each pair of students, one quotation card. Ask them to read the quotation carefully and discuss the following:

- What is the main message of the quotation?
- Which human right or rights are addressed here?
- Which SDG or SDGs fit this quotation best?
- Why does this connection make sense?

Students write down their ideas on note cards or small sheets of paper.

3. Sharing and Reflection (about 5–7 minutes)

Invite a few students or pairs to present their quotation, their interpretation, the human rights they identified, and the SDGs they selected.

Use the following discussion prompts:

- What makes these quotations powerful or memorable?
- Which language features stand out, for example direct statements, appeals, or metaphors?
- Was it easy to connect the quotation to an SDG? Why or why not?
- How can short and effective quotations help make human rights better known and defended in public life?

Activity Cards

Activity Card 1

Quotation:

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.”
(Article 1, Universal Declaration of Human Rights)

Task:

Read the quotation carefully.

1. What is its main message?
2. Which human right or rights are addressed?
3. Which SDG fits best?
4. Explain your choice in one or two sentences.

Activity Card 2

Quotation:

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”
(Nelson Mandela)

Task:

Discuss what this quotation says about education and change.

1. What right is emphasized here?
2. Which SDG is most closely connected?
3. Why is education important for human rights?

Activity Card 3

Quotation:

“Where the right to food exists, hunger must never be used as a weapon.”
(Jean Ziegler)

Task:

Think about the meaning of food as a right.

1. What problem is described in this quotation?
2. Which human right is at the center?
3. Which SDG or SDGs match it best?
4. Give a short explanation.

Activity Card 4

Quotation:

“You cannot teach a person anything; you can only help them discover it within themselves.”

(Galileo Galilei)

Task:

Reflect on learning, personal growth, and education.

1. What idea about education is expressed here?
2. How can this be linked to human rights?
3. Which SDG fits best?
4. Why?

Activity Card 5

Quotation:

“The highest good is harmony.”

(Heraclitus)

Task:

Consider what “harmony” might mean in society.

1. How would you interpret this quotation?
2. What does it suggest about living together peacefully?
3. Which SDG could be connected to it?
4. Explain your answer briefly.

Student Worksheet

Name: _____

Date: _____

Read your quotation carefully and answer the questions below.

1. In your opinion, what is the main message of the quotation?

2. Which human right or rights does it relate to? Which SDG or SDGs fit this quotation best?

3. Why did you choose this SDG / these SDGs?

4. What makes this quotation effective or memorable to you?

5. How can quotations help people think and talk about human rights?
