

Role Play: Characters Fighting for Their Rights – A Literary Case

Procedure

1. Introduction (about 3 minutes)

Begin by connecting the activity to the previous lesson. Students have already examined how quotations and language can communicate human rights ideas. Now the focus shifts to literary characters who themselves experience injustice or have to fight for their rights.

Introduce the topic with a short question such as:

“What happens when a literary figure is denied freedom, justice, education, or self-determination? How could we support that person?”

Briefly discuss how many literary conflicts are rooted in inequality, abuse of power, censorship, or restrictions on freedom.

2. Group Work: Literary Role Play (about 10–12 minutes)

Divide the class into small groups of three or four. Each group receives a literary case based on a known text and connected to one or two SDGs.

Roles within the group:

- **Character:** a literary figure whose rights are threatened or violated
- **Opponent / representative of society:** a person who ignores, questions, or restricts those rights
- **Advocate / supporter:** someone who defends the figure and argues for their rights
- **Optional:** observer or judge who listens and comments on the dialogue

Ask students to act out the situation. The character should express their perspective and respond to the injustice. The opponent should present their position and reasoning. The advocate should support the character, use persuasive arguments, and try to move the exchange toward a fairer solution in line with human rights and the relevant SDG.

Encourage students to pay attention to language, tone, and argumentation. Each group should have around 7–8 minutes to prepare and perform.

3. Plenary and Reflection (about 3–5 minutes)

Invite groups to briefly present their case and explain how the conflict unfolded.

Possible reflection questions:

- What was it like to speak from the perspective of the literary character?
- Which arguments or persuasive strategies were most effective?
- What similarities do you see between these literary conflicts and present-day human rights issues?
- How can literature help us notice injustice and think more deeply about rights?

Role Cards

You can make your own cards based on the books you read with your students.

Role Card 1

Case: *Emilia Galotti* – self-determination and freedom

SDG connection: SDG 5 – Gender Equality; SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Emilia wants to defend her right to freedom and self-determination instead of becoming a victim of manipulation and social power structures.

Roles:

- Emilia
- Prince Hettore
- Countess Orsina as advocate / supporter

Task:

Act out the scene as a conflict about freedom, power, and personal autonomy.

Questions to consider:

- Which of Emilia's rights are at risk?
- How does power shape the situation?
- What arguments can be used to defend her?
- What would a just outcome look like?

Role Card 2

Case: Social inequality and workers' rights

SDG connection: SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities; SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth

A factory worker in a realist setting fights for fair wages and safer working conditions. The factory owner wants to protect profit and authority.

Roles:

- Worker
- Factory owner
- Union representative / social reformer

Task:

Act out a conflict about dignity, labor rights, and social inequality.

Questions to consider:

- Which rights are involved in this case?
- What arguments might each side use?
- How can the worker's situation be defended from a human rights perspective?
- What kind of reform or compromise might be possible?

Role Card 3

Case: Education, censorship, and resistance

SDG connection: SDG 4 – Quality Education; SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

A student, intellectual, or writer wants access to education or freedom of expression, but their learning or writing is being restricted by a censor or a repressive regime.

Roles:

- Student / intellectual / writer
- Censor / representative of the regime
- Secret helper / resistance figure

Task:

Act out a scene about censorship, restricted education, and the struggle for intellectual freedom.

Questions to consider:

- Which rights are denied here?
- Why might the regime fear education or free expression?
- How can the supporter defend the character?
- What parallels can you draw to modern situations?

Worksheet: Characters Fighting for Their Rights – A Literary Case

Name: _____

Date: _____

1. Which literary case did your group work on?

2. What was the main conflict in your scene? Which right or rights were threatened or denied?

3. Which SDG or SDGs connect to this case?

4. What arguments did your role use? What arguments did the other side use?

5. Did your group find a fair solution or possible compromise? If yes, what was it?

6. In your opinion, what does this literary conflict show about society, injustice, or human rights?

7. Do you see any parallels between this literary case and present-day human rights issues?
