LIVING IN SOCIETY: An Interdisciplinary Unit on Global Citizenship for Upper Elementary Students

This unit uses the thread “Living in Society” to introduce the idea of global citizenship by asking the following questions:

• What is it like for children living in other parts of the world?
• What is global citizenship? Why should we care about it?
• What can we learn from the life and writings of Henry David Thoreau, a person who thought “outside the box” for his time?
• How can we practice global citizenship on a regular basis in our classroom? One answer is to research and present current events topics that have a global citizenship connection by
  • Evaluating and summarizing current events articles
  • Presenting them to classmates
  • Choosing key vocabulary words to share
  • Leading short discussions on various topics
• How can we integrate what we know about living in society into our math, science, social studies, and writing curricula?

I would suggest gently easing into a practice of current events that focuses on global citizenship because some of the issues are pretty heavy. For upper elementary, I’ve relied heavily on two resources. The first is a book by David J. Smith, This Child, Every Child: A Book About the World’s Children, which doesn’t pull any punches and contains some excellent suggestions and sources at the end.

The second, which has resources appropriate for all grade levels, is the Oxfam Education website (http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/global-citizenship). Both resources use the model of Learn-Think-Act. We are doing a great job if much of the time we’re simply learning and thinking; we don’t have to turn into full-time activists. See if you can make connections to community-minded activities that are already in place at your school.

Why global citizenship? We live in an interconnected and interdependent world

• socially and culturally through the media and telecommunications, and through travel and migration,

• economically through trade,

• environmentally through sharing one planet,

• politically through international relations and systems of regulation. (Oxfam)
Lesson 1: What does global citizenship mean to you?

- Students define “global citizenship” in their own words. There are no right or wrong answers. (See end of these notes for Oxfam’s definition.) Teacher creates a wordle or word cloud to share with students the following day. It is a word graphic in which the words that appear most frequently on the source list appear largest in the wordle/word cloud. There are a wide variety of possible typeface styles, colors, and shapes.

- Teacher reads the foreword and the first two sections of This Child, Every Child (“Meet the Children” and “Children Around the World”). Class discusses.

- Teacher then models a current events presentation and invites students to repeat back the appropriate information to answer the 5 basic questions of Who, What, When, Where, and Why. (Project a copy of the current events worksheet and have students fill in the information. Worksheet and rubric appear at end of this document.)

- Teacher may also make a personal connection to the story that reflects an aspect of global citizenship. (For example, I heard a news story on NPR about Christian schools being bombed in Egypt, teachers losing all their supplies and workspace just days before school was to open. I made a personal connection to this story as both a member of a religious minority and a teacher preparing for a new school year. I am fortunate to live in a country where I feel protected and there is a relatively stable democratic process in which citizens can express their views in peaceful ways for or against the government and its supporters.)

Independent Activity/Homework: Students make a list of 3 news sources for articles that might relate to global citizenship. They should be prepared to defend their choices as reliable news sources.

Lesson 2: What is a good news source? How can we share global citizenship topics?

- Teacher shares wordle/word cloud of words students used in their definitions of “global citizenship.” Discuss. Wordle/word cloud can be posted prominently in the classroom, even made into a t-shirt transfer (remember to reverse the image before printing).

- Teacher reads next excerpt from This Child, Every Child (“Children and Their Families”). Class discusses.

- Teacher again models presentation of a related current event and invites students to repeat back the appropriate information to answer the 5 basic questions of Who, What, When, Where, and
Why. (Project a copy of the current events worksheet, shown above and included at the end of this document, and have students fill in the information.)

- Teacher introduces the remainder of the current events worksheet: source, global citizenship connection (to be discussed in more detail in lesson 3), vocabulary, and the rubric.
- Students share news sources from previous lesson and together the class creates a resource list that will be printed on the back of the current events worksheet. (In this time of frequent allegations of “fake news” it is important to find news sources that are as unbiased as possible. Teacher discretion advised.)

Extension Activities:

- Have students respond to 2 simple questions: (1) What are your ancestors’ countries of origin? and (2) What countries would you like to learn more about? List up to 5. Results can be depicted on a world map with one set of colored strings connecting student names to countries of origin and another set of colored strings connecting student names to places they’d like to learn more about. This activity usually yields a complicated and interconnected visual depicting a broad range of backgrounds and places of interest.
- Data analysis and presentation based on previous bullet:
  - Students choose country data from the exercises above that interest them and organize it in a way that makes sense (e.g. by continent, by most popular country to investigate/visit, etc.).
  - Students create a table for displaying their chosen data.
  - Students create a circle graph to display the data.

Lesson 3: How does Oxfam define a global citizen?

- Teacher introduces Oxfam’s 7 characteristics of a global citizen allowing time for discussion of each. (A page-size version of the graphic shown at right, as well as page-size versions of each of the 7 characteristics - suitable for projection or display - are available at the end of this document.)

Extension Activities:

- Students design a global citizenship logo. Students vote on one design to represent the class to appear on one side of a global citizenship ID; the 7 characteristics are printed on the reverse side. (See pages at the end of this document.)
- Students find images to associate with each of the seven global citizenship characteristics. These can be made into individual posters or used to enhance the original slide presentation.
Lesson 4: How can we apply Oxfam’s global citizenship criteria to our current events practice?

- Teacher presents a list of other topics presented in *This Child, Every Child*: children at home, children’s health, children on the move, children at school, are boys and girls treated equally?, children at work, children at play, children and war, children and the future. The class chooses one to read aloud, and then discusses it. Which global citizenship characteristic(s) are embodied in the reading?

- Class discusses other possible current events topics that are related to global citizenship. Some examples might be sustainable living, the origins (and implications) of consumer goods that come from abroad, and anything having to do with awareness of people living in different parts of the world (cultural geography).

- **Think-Pair-Share:** Students brainstorm 2 examples of current events topics that fit at least one of the characteristics of global citizenship and 1 example of a topic that does not. Discuss why or why not it might be beneficial to limit current events presentations to topics that fit the global citizenship criteria.

Lesson 5: Henry David Thoreau: A Global Citizen from the 1800s

Divide students into groups by reading level. Newsela offers two excellent selections that provide upper elementary students with a basic understanding of Henry David Thoreau’s thoughts and actions relating to global citizenship. I recommend reading the selections in the order listed, proceeding from the general to the more specific.

- “Philosophers: Henry David Thoreau” by biography.com Editors and A&E Networks, adapted by Newsela staff on 08/30/2016. Available in text level 12/word count 1078, text level 6/word count 748, and text level 5/word cont 635.


- “Civil Disobedience” by Henry David Thoreau, adapted by Newsela staff on 02/10/2017. Available in text level 12/word count 1503, text level 8/word count 1096, text level 6/word count 805, and text level 4/word count 574.

- Close reading of the third text is advisable since it is a selection from a primary source published in 1849. Students read one subsection at a time silently, then listen attentively as the teacher or a fluent classmate reads the same passage aloud. Next, take turns so that each member of a group shares what they notice about the text (this is strictly noticings, no interpretations!). Everyone tries to find something new to add to the exercise; even something as small as noticing a particular word choice is fine. Students then take turns sharing what they wonder about the text. Lastly, students share their interpretations of specific parts of the text.

- **Writing prompt #1:** Using evidence from one or both texts, describe how Henry David Thoreau was a global
citizen according to Oxfam’s 7 characteristics of a global citizen. (A copy of the rubric shown at right, adapted from a Self-Regulated Strategy Development/SRSD rubric, appears at the end of this document.)

• Writing prompt #2: This is based on one of Corinne Hosfeld Smith’s suggested activities for students which uses the following Thoreau quote for inspiration: “The greatest compliment that was ever paid me was when one asked what I thought, and attended to my answer. I am surprised, as well as delighted, when this happens, it is such a rare use he would make of me.” (From a lecture “What Shall It Profit?” that became the essay, “Life Without Principle.”) Students don’t often have opportunities to give lectures or publish articles, but they can make their opinions heard by writing to a news editor or elected official about issues or situations that affect them. Although I usually introduce argument writing during the second half of the year, it might make sense to begin earlier when teaching about Thoreau.

Ongoing Thoreauvian extension activities:

1. How may times would you be willing to revise a passage?

Strong writers are willing to revise their ideas multiple times. Students trace Thoreau’s “different drummer” passage through seven iterations over a 14-year period as compiled by Jeffrey S. Cramer, Curator of Collections, The Thoreau Institute at Walden Woods. Challenge students to revise a favorite passage from one of their own pieces of writing. (See Jeffrey Cramer’s compilation toward the end of this document.)

2. Living in Nature

• Nature journaling - Create journals from scratch or dedicate sturdy composition notebooks for the task of recording observations in nature. Go to the same area at least monthly over the course of an academic year to observe changes. Students could conduct a plant inventory of a specific piece of land that they can encircle with a length of string (e.g. 100 inches). If possible, make a pilgrimage to Walden Pond to retrace some of Henry David Thoreau’s movements. Use Robert M. Thorson’s The Guide to Walden Pond to match actual places around the pond with Thoreau’s descriptions of the habitat and wildlife. Can you find any of the same things? Use fandex or regular-bound field guides for identifying vegetation and wildlife. Check out Cornell University’s Lab of Ornithology for ways to identify birdsong.

• Climate Change activity - Compare Thoreau’s observations of temperatures and ice formation and melting on the pond (found in the chapter entitled “Spring” in Walden) with current data. (“In 1845 Walden was first completely open on the 1st day of April; in '46, the 25th of March; in ’47, the 8th of April . . .”)

3. Being Awake, Aware, and Alive

• Mindfulness activities - Practice mindfulness to reduce anxiety and become more present. Two excellent resources for mindfulness activities for upper elementary students are Eline Snel’s Sitting Still Like a Frog (which includes a CD with guided exercises), and Mindful Games, by Susan Kaiser Greenland, which includes 60 activities that may be suitable for morning meetings or for transitions.

• Daily journaling - Thoreau was an avid journaler. Some students will jump at the idea of having a journal in which they can record their thoughts as well as sensory information.
Beyond Lesson 5 Global Citizenship Activities:

- **Weekly:** Teacher continues to model appropriate current events topics and correct presentation format as needed. The class is divided into weekly groups that will present global citizenship current events summaries to the class by the end of that week. Presenters should be prepared to lead the class in a short discussion following their presentations. Rubric is located at upper right corner of current events worksheet; teacher can fill out a separate rubric with comments during the presentation and staple it to each student’s worksheet immediately afterward.

- **Daily:** Challenge students to identify examples of people displaying the characteristics of global citizenship throughout the curriculum and in their everyday lives. This could be very engaging if it is incentivized in a way that is appealing to students.

- **At the end of the year:** Create another wordle/word cloud at the end of the year to see how students’ ideas may have evolved.

- Students can explore their town’s history and then create a brochure or tour of important sites.

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**Learn --** Exploring the issue, considering it from different viewpoints and trying to understand causes and consequences.

**Think --** Considering critically what can be done about the issue, and relating this to values and worldviews and trying to understand the nature of power and action.

**Act --** Thinking about and taking action on the issue as an active global citizen, both individually and collectively.

**Oxfam sees a global citizen as someone who:**

- is aware of the wider world and has a sense of their own role as a world citizen
- respects and values diversity
- has an understanding of how the world works economically, politically, socially, culturally, technologically and environmentally
- is outraged by social injustice
- participates in and contributes to the community at a range of levels from local to global
- is willing to act to make the world a more sustainable place
- takes responsibility for their actions

**Oxfam identifies the following three areas of growth for students:**

1. **Knowledge and understanding**
   - Social justice and equity
   - Diversity
   - Globalization and interdependence
   - Sustainable development
   - Peace and conflict
(2) Critical thinking skills
   • Ability to argue effectively
   • Ability to challenge injustice and inequalities
   • Respect for people and things
   • Co-operation and conflict resolution

(3) Values and attitudes
   • Sense of identity and self esteem
   • Empathy
   • Commitment to social justice and equity
   • Value and respect for diversity
   • Concern for the environment and commitment to sustainable development
   • Belief that people can make a difference
Current Events

Choose a topic that ignites your passion!

Title of news story: ____________________________________________

Source: _______________________________________________________

Publication name/author/page #/date or URL/date/time or TV/Radio station/show/speaker/date/time

Please answer the following questions in your news summary:

- Who is the story about?
- When did the story take place?
- Where did the story occur?
- Why is this story important news?
- What is the story about?
  (What are the main ideas?)

Why I am passionate about this topic: _____________________________

Global Citizenship Connection: what it is & why it’s important _______________________

Vocabulary: ____________________________

Definition (in your own words): _______________________________________

Discussion: Be prepared to lead the class in a brief, but interesting discussion of your news story.
Teacher rubric, to be duplicated and filled out as students present their current events summaries and appended to the student worksheet for instant feedback. A few comments of positive feedback are always welcome, too.
Design a full-color Global Citizenship logo in the space provided below.

We will vote on a design and make it into an I.D. card with the design on one side and the Global Citizenship qualities on the other.

A Global Citizen . . .

• Is aware of the wider world & has a sense of their own role as a world citizen.

• Respects & values diversity.

• Has an understanding of how the world works.

• Is passionately committed to social justice.

• Participates in the community at a range of levels, from the local to the global.

• Works with others to make the world a more equitable and sustainable place.

• Takes responsibility for their actions.

Source: Oxfam International

Final double-sided ID card measures 2” x 3.5”
A Global Citizen . . .

• Is aware of the wider world & has a sense of their own role as a world citizen.
• Respects & values diversity.
• Has an understanding of how the world works.
• Is passionately committed to social justice.
• Participates in the community at a range of levels, from the local to the global.
• Is willing to act to make the world a more equitable and sustainable place.
• Takes responsibility for their actions.

Source: Oxfam International
Current Events Idea: Print out the following 7 pages on different colored papers, cut them out, laminate them, and display them next to a large map of the world. Start the school year with a small vertical strip of bulletin board entitled: “A Global Citizen . . .” and then add each of the seven characteristics as it is introduced. Students can refer back to this large classroom visual throughout the year or the one-page small version that appears after the 7th large hexagon.

This content is drawn exclusively from Oxfam International. The hexagonal figures were created by C. Christensen, 2019.
... is aware of the wider world & has a sense of their own role as a world citizen.
. . . respects & values diversity.
3

... has an understanding of how the world works.
... is passionately committed to social justice.
participates in the community at a range of levels, from the local to the global.
works with others to make the world a more equitable & sustainable place.
takes responsibility for their actions.
A global citizen is someone who:

1. . . is aware of the wider world & has a sense of their own role as a world citizen.

2. . . respects and values diversity.

3. . . has an understanding of how the world works.

4. . . is passionately committed to social justice.

5. . . participates in the community at a range of levels, from the local to the global.

6. . . works with others to make the world a more equitable and sustainable place.

7. . . takes responsibility for their actions.

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### Expository Writing Goal Setting Menu

**Author:**
**Date:**
**Topic:**
**Used Graphic Organizer:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Topic Introduction</strong></th>
<th>Not Yet</th>
<th>Starting To</th>
<th>Got It!</th>
<th># pts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduce topic context clearly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focused thesis statement</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State topic + central idea(s) about topic</td>
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**Important evidence (knowledge - from the text)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Detailed examination (understanding - from your head)</strong></th>
<th>Not Yet</th>
<th>Starting To</th>
<th>Got It!</th>
<th># pts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information: Evidence #1</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Detailed examination/analysis: develops topic, examines importance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information: Evidence #2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Detailed examination/analysis: develops topic, examines importance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information: Evidence #3</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Detailed examination/analysis: develops topic, examines importance</td>
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</table>

**Ending:** Concluding section follows from central information or examination, related and extends ideas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Links:</strong> Appropriate transitions clarify relationships among ideas and concepts</th>
<th>Not Yet</th>
<th>Starting To</th>
<th>Got It!</th>
<th># pts</th>
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**Language:**
- Uses formal style, precise language, domain specific vocabulary
- Varies sentences for reader interest, style, and meaning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Conventions:</strong> grammar, punctuation for effect, spelling</th>
<th>Not Yet</th>
<th>Starting To</th>
<th>Got It!</th>
<th># pts</th>
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**Done Well:**

**Goals:**
Tracing the "different drummer" passage
— compiled by Jeffrey S. Cramer,
Curator of Collections
The Thoreau Institute at Walden Woods

30 June 1840: A man's life should be a stately march to a sweet but unheard
music, and when to his fellows it shall seem irregular and inharmonious, he will
only be stepping to a livelier measure, or his nicer ear hurry him into a thousand
symphonies and concordant variations.¹

A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers (1849): Marching is when the pulse of
the hero beats in unison with the pulse of Nature, and he steps to the measure of
the universe; then there is true courage and invincible strength.²

14 July 1851: For years I marched as to a music in comparison with which the
military music of the streets is noise and discord.³

19 July 1851: Let a man step to the music which he hears, however measured.⁴

25 July 1851: I am bothered to walk with those who wish to keep step with me. It is
not necessary to keep step with your companion, as some endeavor to do.⁵

Walden Draft Version 6: Let a man step to the music which he hears, however
measured and however far away.⁶

Walden (1854): If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is
because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears,
however measured or far away.⁷

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2. A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers (Houghton Mifflin, 1906) p. 183
   Draft version 6, Conclusion, paragraph 10