

Lesson 3: Human Dignity

PURPOSE

To understand human dignity as the special value of human persons.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

1. Recognize the characteristics which different beings share and those which they do not share.
2. Distinguish between internal and external human qualities.
3. Understand human dignity as the universal, intrinsic, and inalienable value of human persons.

MATERIALS & RESOURCES

- Differences and Shared Characteristics Worksheet + Answer Key
- My Self Portrait Game
- Dignity Stand Up/ Sit Down Game

VOCABULARY

- Human dignity: the special value of every human person.
- Universal: every person has dignity
- Intrinsic: dignity is within us, we have it just by being human
- Inalienable: dignity cannot be given to us or taken away from us

PROCEDURE

Step 1: Review the previous lesson. Recall the three powers which all living beings share (eat, grow, reproduce), three which only humans and animals share (move, use senses, feel emotions) and two which distinguish humans from all other beings: the power to think and choose. Highlight that the powers to think and choose are distinctly human powers and so we have the responsibility to use these powers in an excellent way.

Step 2: Start the lesson by explaining that non-living beings, plants, animals, or humans, can have some shared characteristics and some unique characteristics. Explain that cars can differ in size, shape, color, speed, or engine power, but that they all share the fact that they are cars, that people can drive in them, they all usually have four wheels, etc.

To practice recognizing things which certain beings share and those which they do not share, divide the students into groups and ask them to work on the [Differences and Shared Characteristics Worksheet](#). After the groups finish working, ask them to share their conclusions with the rest of the class and then lead the class discussion using the Teacher's Answer Key provided with the worksheet as a guide.

Step 3: Introduce the difference between internal and external qualities. Explain that in humans, external qualities are those which can be seen from the outside, and internal qualities are those that reside *within* the person and are not always visible to the eye. Even if we do not see internal qualities directly, we can learn about them by building relationships with others. For instance, we may see that our classmate has brown hair. But by becoming friends with that classmate we may learn that they always listen respectfully to others.

Provide the students with some examples of internal and external qualities:

External: hair color and length, color of the eyes, age, height, etc.

Internal: kindness, generosity, intelligence, being a good friend, humor, courage, etc.

After providing these examples, play the [My Self Portrait Game](#). Ask a volunteer to hand out the My Self Portrait papers to the class. Have the students help each other to tape the paper on their back. Then, stand up and mingle around the room, as each student writes down one positive quality for each of their peers, painting an inner quality self-portrait. Give students the opportunity to share aloud with the class some of their favorite positive qualities that their peers wrote about them.

Step 4: Explain that the most important inside quality every person has is human dignity. Human dignity is the deepest quality a person possesses. It is a special quality which only humans have, and all other living and non-living beings do not. Human dignity is the special value all humans have simply by being human.

No one gives us this dignity (society, school, family, etc.) but we have it simply by being human beings; and no one can take it away from us. Thus, human dignity does not exist in degrees – one cannot say that some people have more or less human dignity than others. Every human being is equal in dignity, because it's intrinsic. Intrinsic means it's an internal quality; we have human dignity just by being human. It is not an external characteristic, based on what clothes we wear, where we live, how many electronics we have, etc.

Write the following definitions on the board:

Human dignity: the special value of every human person

The three characteristics of human dignity:

Universal: every person has dignity

Intrinsic: it is within us, we have it simply by being human

Inalienable: dignity cannot be given or taken away

Step 5: To reinforce the understanding of human dignity, have the students play the [Dignity Stand Up/Sit Down Game](#). Explain that you will read aloud a statement about human dignity. Tell the students to listen carefully, and if they think that the statement is true, to stand up, and if they think it is false, to sit down. Take the opportunity to clarify why each statement is true or false from the standpoint of human dignity and its three characteristics, after you read each sentence.

- Happier people have more dignity than others (False)
- Every person has dignity (True)
- We have human dignity just by being human (True)
- People who have dignity do not suffer too much in life (False)
- Even the hardest circumstances cannot diminish human dignity (True)
- Disability and poverty diminish human dignity (False)
- Dignity is the special value of human persons (True)
- Dignity is with us our entire life (True)
- Some have more dignity than others (False)
- Dignity increases or decreases with the amount of cool stuff you have (False)
- Dignity is equal in everyone (True)
- Dignity cannot be given or taken away (True)
- Dignity means living an enjoyable life (False)
- Dignity is our deepest internal quality (True)

Conclude that we should be attentive and consider ourselves responsible for how we talk and think about human dignity. For example, we cannot say that some people have more human dignity than others, since human dignity cannot be measured in terms of “more” or “less”. Although some people talk about dignity as being about people who possess good health or wealth, all human beings have human dignity, even those who are in a coma, have a disability, or live in difficult circumstances.

When someone insults and hurts another person, that person still retains his or her intrinsic dignity. Every person has a special value, without exception. This also implies that we should always treat others and ourselves with care and respect because we all have dignity.

Step 6: Summarize. Recall that all beings have some things which they share and some which they do not share. Recall also the difference between internal and external qualities. Highlight that the students learned today about the special value that distinguishes humans from all other living and non-living beings: human dignity. It is the deepest internal quality of human beings. Highlight the definition of human dignity and its three characteristics: universal, intrinsic, and inalienable.

DIFFERENCES AND SHARED CHARACTERISTICS WORKSHEET

Name at least **3 differences** and **3 shared** characteristics for each category in the chart below.

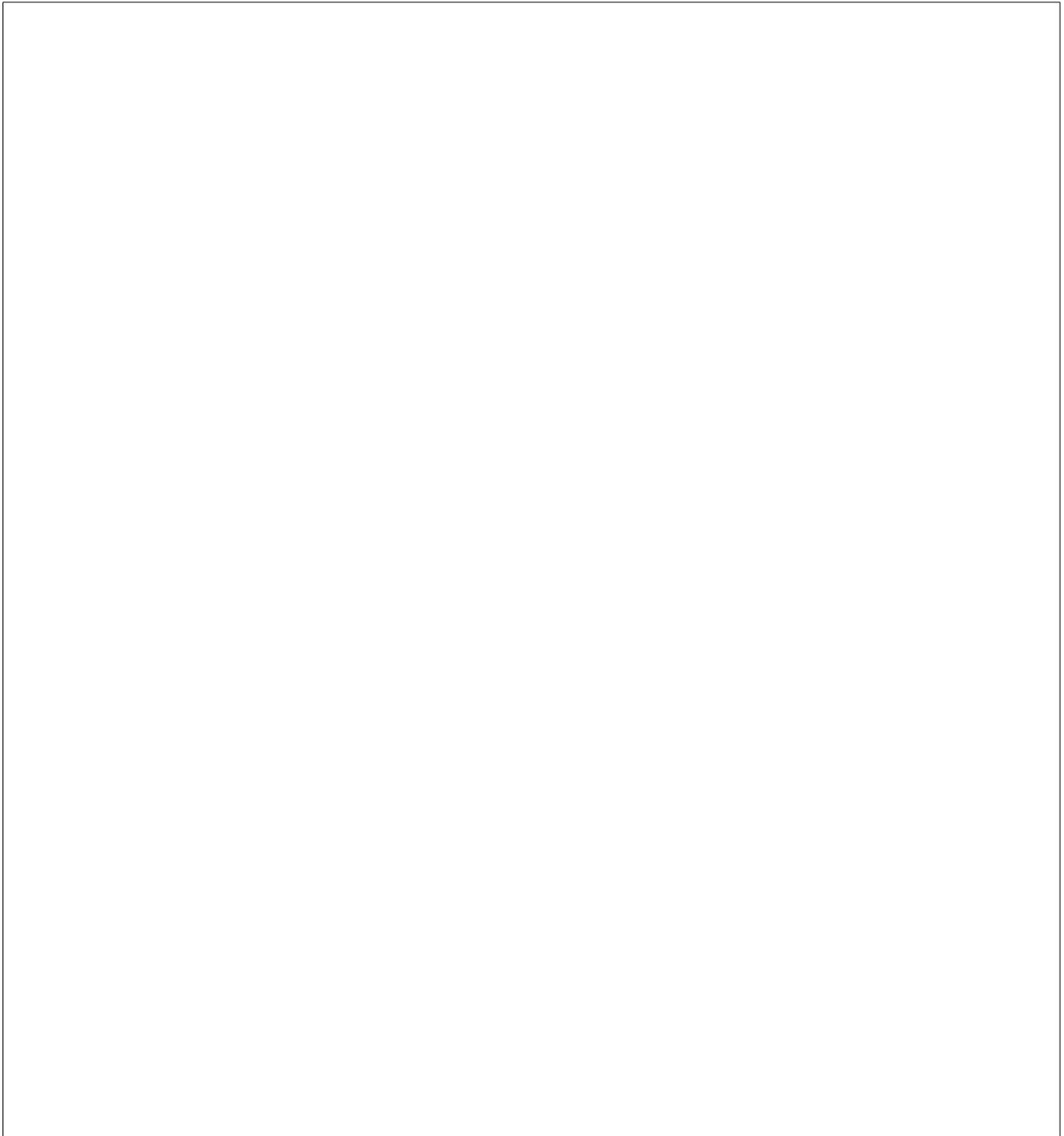
| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Computers can be different in the following characteristics:</p> | <p>Computers all share the following characteristics:</p> |
| | |
| <p>Vegetables can be different in the following characteristics:</p> | <p>Vegetables all share the following characteristics:</p> |
| | |
| <p>Dogs can be different in the following characteristics:</p> | <p>Dogs all share the following characteristics:</p> |
| | |
| <p>Humans can be different in the following characteristics:</p> | <p>Humans all share the following characteristics:</p> |
| | |

Differences and Shared Characteristics Worksheet – Answer Key

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|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Computers can be different in the following characteristics: | Computers all share the following characteristics: |
| Size Color Processing speed Disk storage Design, etc. | They are computers They are machines They have processors and hard drives, etc. |
| Vegetables can be different in the following characteristics: | Vegetables all share the following characteristics: |
| Size Shape Color Type Taste, etc. | They are vegetables They are good for your health They have vitamins and minerals that your body needs |
| Dogs can be different in the following characteristics: | Dogs all share the following characteristics: |
| Size Breed Age Fur/hair color Need for physical exercise, etc. | They are all dogs They are all animals They have the powers to move, use senses and feel emotions, etc. |
| Humans can be different in the following characteristics: | Humans all share the following characteristics: |
| Height Talents Age Body shape Hair color Skin color Clothes, etc. | They are all humans They all have human dignity They are equal in human rights |

MY SELF PORTRAIT GAME

Name:

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a student to draw a self-portrait. The box occupies most of the page below the 'Name:' label.