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## THE ALIENS HAVE LANDED! EXPLORING OPPRESSION, RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

**Grades:** 8 through 11

**Time:** Edited version: 60-90 minutes. Full version: A week or longer

**Materials:** Alien scenario (see below); grouping cards (see below); lists of tips to help students form their arguments (see below); materials related to oppression and justice (video clips, etc.); black/white board and chalk/markers; pair cards (see below)

**Relevant Subjects:** Social Studies, History, and Language Arts

### As a Multi-day Exploration:

**Preparation:** Set the Stage for the Alien scenario (lights out, spooky music, etc.)

1. Share the Alien scenario. (see below)
2. Give each student a card and a tip sheet (see below), which will assign them a category -- aliens, humans or universal jury — and help them with the following:

The aliens will write down all the arguments for why it is acceptable for them to enslave, eat and use humans however they want.

The humans will write down all the arguments for why it is not acceptable for them to be enslaved, eaten and/or used however the aliens want.

The Universal Jury will develop a list of criteria for determining how they will choose the most compelling argument.

3. Have the aliens and humans each present their cases. Have the jury make a decision, choosing the most compelling argument.
4. Lead the class in a discussion of the outcome.
5. Lead the class in a discussion of human oppression, freedom, rights and power. Share information and film clips, etc., to increase their knowledge and awareness.

6. Have students create a list of examples of oppression (human and animal) on the black/white board.
7. Have students break into pairs. Have each pair choose a real world example of human oppression, establish a viewpoint about that example, and provide at least three examples supporting that viewpoint. Student pairs may work on this activity outside of class time. Examples will be shared on a subsequent day.
8. Lead the class in a discussion of animal oppression, freedom, rights and power. Share information and film clips, etc., to increase their knowledge and awareness. Have students add to their list of examples of oppression on the black/white board.
9. Have students break into pairs. Have each pair choose a real world example of animal oppression, establish a viewpoint about that example, and provide at least three examples supporting that viewpoint. Student pairs may work on this activity outside of class time. Examples will be shared on a subsequent day.
10. Have students share the results of exploring their pair examples for human and animal oppression with the rest of the class. These presentations can take place on the same day, or different days, depending on how you want to structure the activity.
11. Have students create a list of actions that people can take to promote justice and equality for all. Invite students to choose at least one action to take themselves, and to share the results of them taking that action at a later date.

**Extension:** Show the *Twilight Zone* episode “To Serve Man.”

**Alternative:** You may also choose to structure the first part of this activity as a 60-90 minute presentation. For example:

Share Alien scenario: 5 minutes

Divide students into groups: 5 minutes

Groups develop arguments: 10 minutes

Groups present arguments: 5 minutes each (10 minutes total)

Jury deliberates & decides: 5 minutes

Entire group debriefs/discusses: 15 minutes

Create list of positive actions to take: 10 minutes

**ALIEN SCENARIO:**

One dark and stormy night, not too long ago, in a field of grain not too far from here — and in similar fields all over the world -- strange, enormous glowing spaceships landed; and from a thin opening in the ships' sides, even stranger creatures emerged. From observation, we've learned that these creatures have abilities far superior to anything found on Earth. Their brains are almost twice the size of a human's. Their physical strength is astounding. Their skin provides them both the ability to change color for camouflage and to adjust temperature to flourish in any habitat. They have additional appendages on their torsos — including a gripping tail — and gills so that they can breathe in both air and water environments. Their technology far surpasses humans', and they have the ability to communicate telepathically. We know them now as the Tlaxlatl — an alien species from a distant star who have been colonizing planets all over the galaxy — and enslaving their inhabitants. On each planet the Tlaxlatl choose one species to serve them -- as slaves, as entertainment, as test subjects, as food. On Earth the Tlaxlatl have chosen humans. No amount of diplomacy or counterattack has shaken the Tlaxlatl from their single-minded purpose. The Tlaxlatl see all life forms not their own as inferior, and thus subject to use as they see fit. Fortunately, small groups of humans have been able to avoid capture, and one group has found a way to successfully contact the Universal Court and request a hearing to plead humanity's case against this new oppression.

## **GROUPING CARDS:**

### **TLAXLATL ALIEN**

You are a member of the alien species Tlaxlatl. You are humanoid in form, but with a brain almost twice the size of a human's, additional appendages on your torso — including a gripping tail -- gills so that you can breathe either air or water, and the ability to communicate telepathically with others of your species. Your physical strength is astounding. Your skin provides you both the ability to change color for camouflage and to adjust temperature to flourish in any habitat. You and your comrades have been colonizing other planets and have recently landed on Earth. After careful examination of Earth's flora & fauna, you have determined that humans will make the best slaves, test subjects, food source, etc. You have conquered most of humanity, but a wily few have managed to contact the Universal Court and request a hearing to plead their case. Your job is to work with your fellow Tlaxlatls to argue all the reasons that you as a superior species have the right to use humans however you wish. Develop as many arguments as you can to support your case. Use the tip sheet to assist you.

### **EARTH HUMAN**

You are a human earthling. The alien species Tlaxlatl has conquered your planet and is systematically enslaving humans to use as laborers, test subjects, food, etc. You and a small group of humans have managed to successfully contact the Universal Court to request a hearing in order to plead your case. Your job is to work with your fellow humans to argue all the reasons that the Tlaxlatls do not have the right to enslave you and use you however they wish. Develop as many arguments as you can to support your case. Use the tip sheet to assist you.

### **UNIVERSAL COURT JURY MEMBER**

You are a jury member for the Universal Court. A group of humans from Earth has managed to successfully contact the UC to request a hearing to plead their case. Earth has been invaded by a species called the Tlaxlatl. The Tlaxlatls have been systematically enslaving humans and using them for test subjects, food, work, entertainment, etc. The Tlaxlatls will be arguing their right to use humans as they wish. Humans will be arguing their right not to be enslaved and used by Tlaxlatls. It is your job to listen to both arguments and determine which side has the most compelling argument and best supporting evidence. You and your fellow jury members will determine the winning side based on criteria that you will develop together. Create a list of criteria you will use to choose a winner. Use the tip sheet to assist you. You may want to assign sets of points to each criterion you develop (such as making criterion 1 worth 10 points, criterion 2 worth 15 points, criterion 3 worth 5 points, etc.).

**TIP SHEET FOR ALIENS:**

Consider the following when developing your arguments for your claim:

- ☞ Make a clear claim – what exactly you’re arguing for/against.
- ☞ Provide specific and convincing evidence to support your claim. Give examples.
- ☞ Make sure your argument is well-organized, logical and compelling.
- ☞ Think about what the opposition may argue and disprove it, or prove why it is irrelevant.
- ☞ Do not confuse facts with truths. A “truth” is an idea believed by many people, but it cannot be proven.

**TIP SHEET FOR HUMANS:**

Consider the following when developing your arguments for your claim:

- ☞ Make a clear claim – what exactly you’re arguing for/against.
- ☞ Provide specific and convincing evidence to support your claim. Give examples.
- ☞ Make sure your argument is well-organized, logical and compelling.
- ☞ Think about what the opposition may argue and disprove it, or prove why it is irrelevant.
- ☞ Do not confuse facts with truths. A “truth” is an idea believed by many people, but it cannot be proven.

**TIP SHEET FOR UNIVERSAL JURY:**

Consider the following when developing your criteria for how you will logically and objectively determine the outcome between the two arguing parties:

- ☞ Does the arguing group make a clear claim? (Do you know what they’re arguing for/against?)
- ☞ Does the group provide specific and convincing evidence in support of their claim?
- ☞ Is the group’s argument well-organized, logical and compelling?
- ☞ Does the arguing group disprove the opposing group’s argument?

PAIR CARDS:

***“No one is free when others are oppressed.” – Anonymous***

You and your partner will choose a real world example of oppression. (It can be either a modern or historical example.) Do a bit of research on your chosen example, and establish a viewpoint on your example. Provide at least 3 points of evidence supporting your viewpoint. Include a list of sources consulted. You will present your viewpoint & supporting evidence to the class.

Oppression Example:

Viewpoint:

Supporting Evidence 1:

Supporting Evidence 2:

Supporting Evidence 3:

Additional Comments:

Sources Consulted:

**Activity by Marsha Rakestraw (HECP Graduate)**