

Teacher Notes: Freedom House

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Freedom House is a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) that was founded nearly 60 years ago by Eleanor Roosevelt and other Americans concerned about peace and democracy in the world. Since 1972, Freedom House has published an annual assessment of the state of freedom in all countries, now known as *Freedom in the World*. Individual countries are evaluated using a checklist of questions on political rights and civil liberties based on the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Each country is assigned a rating for political rights and a rating for civil liberties based on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing the highest degree of freedom present and seven the lowest level of freedom. The combined average of each country's political rights and civil liberties ratings determines an overall status of Free, Partly Free, or Not Free.

The survey does not rate governments or government performance, but the real-world rights and freedoms enjoyed by citizens as the result of actions by the governments and other leaders. The same standards are applied to all countries and territories, no matter where they are located, no matter what their ethnic or religious composition, and no matter what their level of economic development.

Political rights include the rights of people to participate freely in the political process. This involves the right to vote and compete for public office, and to elect representatives who can have an effect on government decisions and on life in that society.

Civil liberties include the freedom to develop opinions and organizations, express points of view freely, and become independent citizens without interference from the government.

A map showing the most recent ratings of countries of the world by Freedom House is available on their website, as well as a summary report on each country.

