Rights Under Pressure

How two postwar efforts sought to limit human rights abuses

MWH.C.6.6.E "Describe efforts to avoid the abuse of human rights by examining the intent of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the expansion of the Geneva Conventions."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two phrases showing what the Universal Declaration of Human Rights seeks to prevent and two showing what the Geneva Conventions protect, then circle the people each effort covers.

Protecting People After World War II

1 When World War II ended in 1945, the world faced evidence of mass murder, forced labor, and attacks on civilians. Survivors and displaced families needed more than a promise that the fighting had stopped. Leaders faced two connected problems: governments could violate people's rights even in peacetime, and armies could abuse people during war. In response, countries worked through the United Nations to state rights that belong to every person. They also strengthened older rules for what armed forces must do when fighting begins. These efforts had different legal forms, but both aimed to make human dignity harder to ignore.

2 In 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Its writers intended to set a common standard for all people, not just citizens of a particular country. The declaration rejects torture and affirms rights such as fair trials, education, and freedom of belief. It applies in peace as well as war. The UDHR itself is a declaration, not a treaty that directly binds states. Still, its shared principles have helped people press governments to change laws and have shaped later human rights treaties. Naming rights gave advocates a way to identify abuses rather than accept them as normal.

3 In 1949, countries adopted four Geneva Conventions, expanding earlier agreements about wartime care. The first two cover wounded and sick members of armed forces on land and at sea; the third protects prisoners of war. The fourth adds detailed protections for civilians, including people living under military occupation. A shared provision, Common Article 3, requires humane treatment of people not taking part in fighting during conflicts within a country. Unlike the UDHR, the conventions are treaties that bind countries that join them. Their rules do not end wars or prevent every crime, but they set duties that can be used to judge wartime conduct.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How was the UDHR intended to help prevent abuses in both peace and war?

2. Choose two rights named in the passage. How could naming them help someone challenge an abuse?

3. How did the 1949 Geneva Conventions expand wartime protections for civilians and people in conflicts within a country?

4. Why might both the UDHR and the Geneva Conventions matter when people challenge abuse, despite their different legal forms?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A fictional country is in a civil war. Soldiers detain unarmed residents, and the government jails a peaceful critic without a fair trial. In 4 to 5 sentences, explain how both efforts could be used to challenge these actions and identify one limit on what the documents can guarantee.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · MWH.C.6.6.E

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two phrases showing what the Universal Declaration of Human Rights seeks to prevent and two showing what the Geneva Conventions protect, then circle the people each effort covers. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How was the UDHR intended to help prevent abuses in both peace and war?	**It set a common standard of rights for all people, giving people a way to identify abuses and press governments to change.**
2	Choose two rights named in the passage. How could naming them help someone challenge an abuse?	**For example, fair trials and freedom of belief give advocates clear standards for challenging unfair imprisonment or punishment for beliefs.**
3	How did the 1949 Geneva Conventions expand wartime protections for civilians and people in conflicts within a country?	**The fourth convention added detailed protections for civilians. Common Article 3 required humane treatment of people not taking part in fighting during conflicts within a country.**
4	Why might both the UDHR and the Geneva Conventions matter when people challenge abuse, despite their different legal forms?	**The UDHR provides a common standard for identifying rights abuses. The Geneva Conventions create binding wartime duties for countries that join them.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The UDHR names fair trials as a right, so jailing the peaceful critic without one violates its shared standard. Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions requires humane treatment of people not taking part in fighting during a conflict within a country. That rule applies to the detained, unarmed residents, while the UDHR offers a standard for challenging both abuses. Neither document guarantees that officials will follow its standards or rules.

Accept different rights named in the passage when the student explains how naming them helps identify an abuse. For Your Turn, look for an accurate use of the UDHR, an accurate use of Common Article 3, and a realistic limit.