

Maggie's Civics Corner

Lesson #35 - The United Nations - Our Place in the World



Maggie says ...

In these difficult times, as our nation and the world pull together, it is more important than ever to understand our role as a citizen.

Today's lesson is about THE UNITED NATIONS and our place in the world. The United Nations is about international relations. When I play with other dogs, I try my best to get along with them! I learned this from my mom and dad – they have

always taught me that both people and dogs should be courteous and cooperative with others. This principle of maintaining civility with others also applies when different countries interact with one another. As one of the strongest and most established countries, the United States of America frequently interacts with other countries through things like trade and treaties, which are international agreements. The United States is also a member of the United Nations, which is an intergovernmental organization made up of 195 countries. Some of the goals of the United Nations are to maintain international peace, promote international cooperation, and improve living conditions for people all over the world.

About the United Nations: The United Nations was formed in 1945 following the end of World War II. After experiencing the horrors of this war, many countries around the world wanted to form an international organization devoted to maintaining world peace and solving problems between countries through peaceful means. These countries got together to work out an agreement to establish this new international organization and they decided to call it the **United Nations**.

The United Nations is made up of six (6) principal sections, with each playing a different role in helping to maintain international relations. Five (5) of these are based at the **UN Headquarters in New York City** – the **General Assembly**, which is the main part of the United Nations and functions like an international legislature. There each member country gets one vote on things like peace issues, admitting new members, and setting the organization's budget. **The Security Council** is the section charged with maintaining international peace and addressing international security issues. **The Economic and Social Council** is tasked with promoting the development of cooperation between countries regarding economic and social issues and maintaining it. **The Trusteeship Council** was established to provide international supervision for 11 territories to ensure they were well-prepared for self-government and independence. The Council's work on that project was completed by 1994 so it suspended operation and now meets when the need requires. **The Secretariat**, led by the **Secretary-General**, is the **Executive Branch** of the United Nations and plays an important role in setting the agenda for the organization and its different organs. The final, sixth section, the **International Court of Justice** solves disputes between member countries and is housed at The Hague in the Netherlands.

The creation of the United Nations has promoted international relations and has provided a forum for countries to work together to solve problems and make the world a better place. Besides striving to

keep peace in international relations, one of the United Nations' primary purposes promoting human rights. Member countries of the United Nations pledge to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms for all people without distinction as to race, sex, or religion. The **World Health Organization** ("**WHO**"), which focuses on international health issues and the eradication of diseases, is also part of the United Nations. Additionally, the United Nations helps improve trade between countries and works to eliminate poverty and hunger around the world. As a member of the United Nations, the United States of America plays an important role in the international relations of our world by promoting peace and progress.

Activity: Each year on **October 24th**, we observe **United Nations Day** – a day to celebrate the founding and ideals of the United Nations.

Let's create a United Nations Day decoration! Look at the following photo of the flag of the United Nations. Now take a blank piece of paper and try to draw that flag. Locate the United States on the flag you drew – it might take some time to find it because of the perspective of the world map that is used. When you find the U.S., color it bright yellow so you can always find it quickly. Then color the rest of the flag as it is in the picture. Ask to display your flag in your classroom or at home.

If October 24th has already passed, save your new United Nations Day decoration and remember to proudly display it on October 24th next year!

Extra Activity: You might notice that the world map is surrounded by two olive branches. Ask your parents if you may use Google to search for the symbolic meaning of the olive branch. Why do you think the United Nations flag includes two olive branches?

Civics Resources: Kiddle, a children's website, is a great place for kids to further explore the [United Nations](#).