HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS
(21ST CENTURY)
FEATURED IN

Teaching World History Thematically
Essential Questions and Document-Based Lessons to Connect Past and Present

Rosalie Metro
**Event:** Finnish Constitution ratified, 2000

**Document:** Constitution of Finland, 1999

16. Educational rights: Everyone has the right to basic education free of charge. Provisions on the duty to receive education are laid down by an Act. The public authorities shall, as provided in more detail by an Act, guarantee for everyone equal opportunity to receive other educational services in accordance with their ability and special needs, as well as the opportunity to develop themselves without being prevented by economic hardship. The freedom of science, the arts and higher education is guaranteed.

18. The right to work and the freedom to engage in commercial activity: Everyone has the right, as provided by an Act, to earn his or her livelihood by the employment, occupation or commercial activity of his or her choice. The public authorities shall take responsibility for the protection of the labor force. The public authorities shall promote employment and work towards guaranteeing for everyone the right to work. Provisions on the right to receive training that promotes employability are laid down by an Act. No one shall be dismissed from employment without a lawful reason.

19. The right to social security: Those who cannot obtain the means necessary for a life of dignity have the right to receive indispensable subsistence and care. Everyone shall be guaranteed by an Act the right to basic subsistence in the event of unemployment, illness, and disability and during old age as well as at the birth of a child or the loss of a provider. The public authorities shall guarantee for everyone, as provided in more detail by an Act, adequate social, health and medical services and promote the health of the population. Moreover, the public authorities shall support families and others responsible for providing for children so that they have the ability to ensure the wellbeing and personal development of the children. The public authorities shall promote the right of everyone to housing and the opportunity to arrange their own housing.

20. Responsibility for the environment: Nature and its biodiversity, the environment and the national heritage are the responsibility of everyone. The public authorities shall endeavor to guarantee for everyone the right to a healthy environment and for everyone the possibility to influence the decisions that concern their own living environment.

**Event:** Egyptian Revolution, 2011

**Document:** Vlog, Asmaa Mahfouz, 2011

Four Egyptians have set themselves on fire, to protest humiliation and hunger and poverty and degradation they had to live with for 30 years. Four Egyptians set themselves on fire, thinking maybe we can have a revolution like Tunisia. Maybe we can have freedom, justice, honor, and human dignity. [...] I’m making this video to give you one simple message: We want to go down to Tahrir Square on January 25. If we still have honor, and to live in dignity on this land, we have to go down on 25th January. We’ll go down and demand our rights, our fundamental human rights. [...] This entire government is corrupt—a corrupt president and a corrupt security force. These self-immolators were not afraid of death but were afraid of security forces! [...] I’m going down on January 25th, and from now till then, I’m going to distribute fliers in the street everyday. I will not set myself on fire! If the security forces want to set me on fire, let them come and do it!

If you think yourself a man, come with me on January 25th. Whoever says women shouldn’t go to protests because they will get beaten, let him have some honor and manhood and come with me on January 25th. Whoever says it’s not worth it [because] there will only be a handful of people, I want to tell you, you are the reason behind this, and you are a traitor, just like the president and the security cop who beats us in the streets. [...] Sitting at home and just following us on news or Facebook leads to our humiliation, leads to my own humiliation! If you have honor and dignity as a man, come. Come and protect me, and other girls in the protest. If you stay at home, then you deserve all that’s being done to you, and you will be guilty, before your nation and before your people, and you’ll be responsible for what happens to us on the street while you sit at home. Go down to the street, send SMS’s, post it on the ‘net, make people aware. You know your own social circle, your building, your family, your friends, tell them to come with us. Bring 5 people, bring 10 people: if each of us manages to bring 5 or 10 to Tahrir Square and talk to them and tell them, this is enough!

Instead of setting ourselves on fire, let’s do something positive. It will make a difference, a big difference. Never say there’s no hope, hope only disappears when you say there’s no hope. So long as you come down with us, there will be hope. Don’t be afraid of the government, fear none but God! God says that He “will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves” (Qu’ran 13:1). Do not think you can be safe anymore! None of us are! Come down with us, and demand your rights, my rights, your family’s rights. I am going down on January 25th, and I will say “No” to corruption, “No” to this regime.

**Source:** Iyad El-Bahgdadi. (2011). Meet Asmaa Mahfouz and the vlog that helped spark the revolution. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eBg7O48vhLY
**Event:** ISIS attacks in Paris, 2015

**Document:** ISIS statement of responsibility for attacks in Paris, 2015

Urgent: Statement about the Blessed Paris Invasion on the French Crusaders In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

The Almighty said: “And they thought that their fortresses would defend them from Allah! But Allah’s (Torment) reached them from a place whereof they expected it not, and He cast terror into their hearts so that they destroyed their own dwellings with their own hands and the hands of the believers. Then take admonition, O you with eyes (to see).” [Al-Hashr: 2]

In a blessed attack for which Allah facilitated the causes for success, a faithful group of the soldiers of the Caliphate, may Allah dignify it and make it victorious, launched out, targeting the capital of prostitution and obscenity, the carrier of the banner of the Cross in Europe, Paris . . . Youths who divorced the world and went to their enemy seeking to be killed in the cause of Allah, in support of His religion and His Prophet, Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him, and his charges, and to put the nose of His enemies in the ground. So they were honest with Allah, we consider them thusly, and Allah conquered through their hands and cast in the hearts of the Crusaders horror in the middle of their land, where eight brothers wrapped in explosive belts and armed with machine rifles, targeted sites that were accurately chosen in the heart of the capital of France, including the Stade de France during the match between the Crusader German and French teams, where the fool of France, Francois Hollande, was present.

[They also targeted] the Bataclan Conference Center, where hundreds of apostates had gathered in a profligate prostitution party, and other areas [in other neighborhoods] and in a coordinated fashion. So Paris shook under their feet, and its streets were tight upon them, and the result of the attacks was the death of no less than 100 Crusaders and the wounding of more than those, and unto Allah is all praise and gratitude.

Allah had granted our brothers their wish and gave them what they loved, for they detonated their belts in the gatherings of the disbelievers after running out of ammunition, we ask Allah to accept them among the martyrs and make us follow them.

Let France and those who walk in its path know that they will remain on the top of the list of targets of the Islamic State, and that the smell of death will never leave their noses as long as they lead the convoy of the Crusader campaign, and dare to curse our Prophet, Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him, and are proud of fighting Islam in France and striking the Muslims in the land of the Caliphate with their planes, which did not help them at all in the streets of Paris and its rotten alleys. This attack is the first of the storm and a warning to those who wish to learn.

**Event:** South Sudan becomes an independent country, 2011

**Document:** Quotations on justice, peace, and equality from ordinary people in South Sudan, 2017

“Justice means treating people equally. What’s needed is for justice to be put in place. To tackle nepotism, and tribalism, at least the high-ranking leaders should bring peace through political dialogue, so the issue of tribe is not there. Everyone should be called South Sudanese.”

“Unless we accept unity in diversity we will stay in crisis [...] If a Madi, Dinka, Bari, etc. cannot stay together we will stay in conflict of diversity. If we don’t accept ourselves and look at ourselves without divisions we will not establish peace. We need to feel safe with other tribes.”

“It is very important for us to say, ‘I am South Sudanese’ without emphasis on where you’re from—together we are all agents of change and we will take the same message to the grassroots.”

“[We should] organize a conference where all the tribes sit together for open space discussion without restriction. . . . This is how constitutions are written in other countries. . . . Here they sit a few people and approve as if the nation approved. People write their interests not the interests of the society. It should be the ideas of the citizens that contribute to constitution not one person.”

“One of the challenges is super power. If someone is arrested immediately he’s taken where I can’t see him . . . maybe he’s a brigadier there is nothing I can do . . . if the arrested has a brother who’s a general he is released.”

“Super power is one thing we face . . . one of our teachers was on the ground with us. Some big general military man sent soldiers to the site and he was taken by force. It was very difficult to follow up because they can arrest you in the same way. He was taken to the barracks in Juba, we followed it up. He was taken to the police. Once he was taken to the police the one who was pushing his arrest disappeared so he was released because there was no case.”

“Peace is not something we are waiting for someone to bring; it is the responsibility of everyone. If we contribute, that peace will be there. This peace, there are some laws that if implemented it will contribute to a good environment; there will be respect to the dignity of human beings and human rights.”

“Women should be involved or represented as much as men are to prevent and resolve conflicts [and create] peace.”

“Women can spread peace very fast, even if the implementation will take long. My sister can take what we talk about to other women, and they can understand. Now there are some women that do not understand themselves—there are women with different thoughts. We have to make them understand that they are one, and to teach our children that we are one—they need to know themselves that they are South Sudanese. If you talk about negative things with your children daily, after the conference, you might change the way that you talk to them.”

*Source:* Justice Africa. (n.d.) Voices of South Sudan. 
**Event:** World Health Organization states that being transgender is not a mental disorder, 2019

**Document:** Interview with Paravee Argasnoum, Thanita Wongprasert, 2018

Paravee Argasnoum (Evan), 19, is a young trans and gender-nonconforming activist in Thailand. He represents the new generation in LGBTI activism. As a trans queer youth, it is his genuine passion and personal experience that drives him to advocate for the rights he wishes to see in his country. [. . .]

**Interviewer:** You’ve just entered university as a freshman, what inspires you to be an LGBTI activist on the side? How does it make you feel?

**Evan:** The inspiration comes from my very own personal interest since high school. It was the time I came to the realization that my gender does not conform to the mainstream. I used social media as a platform to enter the field. Although I had a limited amount of experience, I became an active member of the Non-Binary community group. When opportunities knock at my door, I answer them. [. . .]

**Interviewer:** There are several aspects to LGBTI rights and issues, which of them do you prioritize and why?

**Evan:** I would start with something fundamental which is the general acceptance of LGBTI people. I want the perception of them to be positive, for them to be taken seriously and treated as ordinary humans. Members of society need to be aware that LGBTI people are not for comedy value and deserve respect. [. . .] Another issue that I have been particularly involved in is gender-neutral toilets. It is important because we use toilets every day and should feel safe and not discriminated against. [. . .]

**Interviewer:** What have you achieved that contributes to significant changes in this field?

**Evan:** I write a lot online. The feedback I have received is mostly positive. I hope for my stories to inspire and empower LGBTI people. Body positivity, for example, is the kind of awareness I am raising. I want everyone, especially transgender people, to feel comfortable and positive about their own skin. [. . .]

**Interviewer:** You’ve previously said that being an LGBTI person in Thailand has an impact on your mental health, can you please elaborate on that?

**Evan:** This goes back to when I was in secondary school. Asking myself who I was, it was pure confusion. I still remember the feeling of alienation and isolation very well. Depression grows out of the environment you are in. For me, at school, I was surrounded by people who were insensitive and showed no respect and effort to understand me. Bullying and harassment became my phobia, to the point where if my friends called me by my given name, my mood would fall off the cliff for days.

Parental rejection was another source of my unbearable anxiety. I knew that not everyone in my family would come to terms with my gender identity and sexual orientation. [. . .]

Fortunately, I am now getting the counselling that I need. [. . .] I am not only supported by the LGBTI community, but also my friends and family members are making efforts. Of course, it takes time but one day it will all pay off.

**Event:** Murder of Jamal Khashoggi, 2018

**Document:** PEN America calls for independent investigation into Jamal Khashoggi’s disappearance and apparent murder, 2018

As writers, journalists, artists, and Members of PEN America and the Authors Guild, we write to express our grave concern about the apparent horrific murder of Jamal Khashoggi, the Saudi journalist, *Washington Post* contributor, and U.S. resident who disappeared in Istanbul on October 2 after entering the Saudi Arabian consulate. If true, the murder of a journalist inside a diplomatic facility would constitute nothing less than an act of state terror intended to intimidate journalists, dissidents, and exiled critics the world over. The United Nations has rightly recognized the importance of ensuring the safety of journalists and fighting impunity for those who attack them with the publication of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity endorsed in 2012. In the spirit of that initiative, we respectfully call on you to immediately authorize an independent, international investigation into Jamal Khashoggi’s disappearance and apparent murder.

Since his disappearance, Turkish authorities have claimed to have evidence suggesting that Jamal Khashoggi was brutally murdered and dismembered inside the consulate, and that the operation was likely carried out by a team including individuals very close to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, making it look extremely likely that the Crown Prince was behind Khashoggi’s assassination. After weeks of denying any involvement in his disappearance, on October 19 Saudi Arabia admitted that Khashoggi was killed inside the consulate, claiming his death was the result of a “fight” during attempts to detain him. Global leaders have responded to the details of this admission with significant skepticism. More recently, Saudi authorities have said the murder was “premeditated,” though the details and culpability remain unclear.

The violent murder of a prominent journalist and commentator on foreign soil is a grave violation of human rights and a disturbing escalation of the crackdown on dissent in Saudi Arabia, whose government in recent years has jailed numerous writers, journalists, human rights advocates, and lawyers in a sweeping assault on free expression and association. It is also yet another data point in a global trend that has seen an increasing number of journalists imprisoned and murdered for their work. As writers and journalists ourselves, we fear the potential chilling effect of this trend, at a moment when the work of all those who would speak and expose the truth has never been more important. [..]

We therefore respectfully call on you to immediately authorize an independent, international investigation into the murder of Jamal Khashoggi that would lay the groundwork for identifying and holding accountable the perpetrators of this grievous crime.

**Event:** Nunavut territory created, 1999

**Document:** Turaaqtavut, 2018

Nunavut will turn 20 years old during the Fifth Assembly’s mandate. […] As we look ahead to the next 20 years, we envision Nunavummiut living with a sense of personal well-being, and in harmony with one another and our land. We respect one another and express pride in the accomplishments of our people. We respect our Elders and call upon them to help us remember the past and use it to shape our future. Twenty years from now, we envision that families, communities, government, and other organizations work in partnership to provide care and support to Nunavummiut as they age. Our youth are positive-minded and take advantage of opportunities for education, travel, and employment. There are more Inuit professionals in our communities and our public service. We function as an inclusive and balanced society in which people and communities contribute to a positive future for all. Government supports communities to build on their strengths, and enables their self-reliance.

As with other governments before us, we will be guided by eight Inuit societal values:

- **Inuuqtigiitisiarniq:** Respecting others, relationships and caring for people.
- **Tunnganarniq:** Fostering good spirits by being open, welcoming and inclusive.
- **Pijitsirniq:** Serving and providing for family and/or community.
- **Aajiiqatigiinniq:** Decision making through discussion and consensus.
- **Pilimmaksarniq/Pijariuqsarniq:** Development of skills through observation, mentoring, practice, and effort.
- **Piliriqatigiinniq/Ikajuqtigiinniq:** Working together for a common cause.
- **Qanuqtuurniq:** Being innovative and resourceful.
- **Avatittinnik Kamatsiarniq:** Respect and care for the land, animals and the environment.

We will also make government more effective and relevant through Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and Inuit Societal Values within legislation and policy.

Nunavut is a vast territory, comprising 20 per cent of Canada’s land mass. Our population is approximately 38,000, and continues to grow rapidly. More than 30 per cent of our population is under age 15 and the number of seniors has doubled since 2004. Our people and communities are widely dispersed across our land, which presents great challenges in the delivery of health and social programs and services. Food and housing are costly, and our housing stock is insufficient to meet the needs of our population. Self-reliance is the foundation of our way of life, enabled by traditional knowledge and contemporary knowledge and tools. Individuals, families, communities, and government share a responsibility to encourage and support self-reliance. We will work towards the well-being and self-reliance of our people and our communities.

Our priorities are: Valuing our Elders by listening to them, paying attention to their traditional knowledge, and meeting their needs for care in the territory; Responding to the needs of Nunavummiut for safe and affordable housing and food security; Enhancing the health care services that are available in the territory; Increasing support for community-based justice and healing programs to address family violence and sexual abuse; and Improving the outcomes of mental health, addictions, and family counselling through existing and traditional counselling systems.

**Event:** Civil war in Yemen begins, 2015

**Document:** Eleven facts about the Yemen crisis, UN Humanitarian, 2019

1. The humanitarian situation in Yemen is still the worst in the world. Now in its fourth year of conflict, more than 22 million people—or three-quarters of the population—need humanitarian aid and protection, making Yemen the world’s worst humanitarian crisis.

2. Some 8.4 million people in Yemen don’t know where they’ll get their next meal. Last year, humanitarians scaled up dramatically to provide emergency food assistance to more than 7 million people per month. But this year we need to do even more. Ensuring families have the food they need to survive is the top priority for humanitarians.

3. Every ten minutes, a child under five in Yemen dies of preventable causes. Nearly 3 million children under 5 and pregnant or lactating women are acutely malnourished. This includes 400,000 children who are severely malnourished and nine times likelier to die than their healthier peers.

4. Civilians are bearing the brunt of the violence. Civilians face indiscriminate attacks, bombing, snipers, unexploded ordinance, cross-fire, kidnapping, rape and arbitrary detention, and other dangers. In February alone, at least 53 children were killed and 92 maimed in 12 governorates. All parties must respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law at all times.

5. Women and children are subject to widespread protection violations. Children are being forcibly recruited by the parties to the conflict; are being married off early and forced to work, to help their families survive. About one quarter of school-aged children are out of school, and 2,500 schools have been damaged or are not able to run.

6. Some 3 million people have been displaced. Internally displaced people are more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. [. . .]

7. Ending the conflict is the only way to resolve the humanitarian crisis. All warring parties and their backers must work towards a negotiated political settlement.

8. Half of all health facilities are damaged or unable to function. Those that remain face severe shortages of staff and equipment.

9. Millions of Yemenis do not have access to safe drinking water and cholera could resurge. In the last year, more than 1 million people suffered from cholera or watery diarrhea. Water and sanitation systems struggle to keep pace. As the rainy season approaches, there is high risk of another cholera epidemic breaking out.

10. Humanitarian response faces a nearly $2 billion funding gap. To alleviate suffering on a massive scale, the Yemen humanitarian response plan calls for $2.69 billion to assist 13 million people. Donors, particularly Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, have already been generous, but a nearly $2 billion funding gap remains.

11. Keeping the ports and other access channels open is crucial to deliver aid. Ports, which were blockaded through part of 2017, are now open to humanitarian and commercial shipments. All ports must remain open both to humanitarian cargo and commercial cargo to ensure local markets have food and other essential goods. [. . .]

**Event:** UN Climate Action Summit, 2019

**Document:** Speech to the UN Climate Action Network, Greta Thunberg, 2019

This is all wrong. I shouldn’t be standing here. I should be back in school on the other side of the ocean. Yet you all come to me for hope? How dare you! You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words. And yet I’m one of the lucky ones. People are suffering. People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing. We are in the beginning of a mass extinction. And all you can talk about is money and fairytales of eternal economic growth. How dare you!

For more than thirty years the science has been crystal clear. How dare you continue to look away and come here saying that you are doing enough, when the politics and solutions needed are still nowhere in sight. With today’s emissions levels, our remaining CO2 budget will be gone in less than 8.5 years. You say you ‘hear’ us and that you understand the urgency. But no matter how sad and angry I am, I don’t want to believe that. Because if you fully understood the situation and still kept on failing to act, then you would be evil. And I refuse to believe that. The popular idea of cutting our emissions in half in ten years only gives us a fifty per cent chance of staying below 1.5 degrees, and the risk of setting off irreversible chain reactions beyond human control. Maybe 50 percent is acceptable to you. But those numbers don’t include tipping points, most feedback loops, additional warming hidden by toxic air pollution or the aspects of justice and equity. To have a 67 percent chance of staying below a 1.5 global temperature rise—the best odds given by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change—the world had 420 gigatons of carbon dioxide left to emit back on January 1, 2018. Today that figure is already down to less than 350 gigatons. How dare you pretend that this can be solved with business-as-usual and some technical solutions. With today’s emissions levels, that remaining CO2 budget will be entirely gone in less than eight and a half years. There will not be any solutions or plans presented in line with these figures today. Because these numbers are too uncomfortable. And you are still not mature enough to tell it like it is. You are failing us. But the young people are starting to understand your betrayal. The eyes of all future generations are upon you. And if you choose to fail us I say we will never forgive you. We will not let you get away with this. Right here, right now is where we draw the line. The world is waking up. And change is coming, whether you like it or not.