

UNIT FOUR: HIGH SCHOOL

LESSON ONE: Learning about Hunger



The GOALS

of this lesson are to:

- understand the extent of the hunger problem in Massachusetts (SOCIAL STUDIES)
- understand the meaning and use of statistics documenting the hunger problem in the state (MATH)
- learn about the network of nonprofit organizations that respond to the hunger problem (SOCIAL STUDIES)



DISCUSSION

Distribute a written copy of the Hunger IQ Test and have students take the test. (Alternatively, you can have the class take the test as a group.) Assure the class that they will not be graded on whether they get the correct answers to the quiz. Discuss the answers to the quiz, especially where students were surprised by the correct answers. Put particular emphasis on challenging some of the stereotypes about hunger and emphasize that hunger results from circumstances which could happen to any individual or family, including theirs.

Discuss what can be done to respond to the hunger problem documented in the Hunger IQ Test. Talk about the responsibility that each individual in society has to make his/her community a better one, and how undertaking this responsibility not only helps the community, but makes each person who helps the community feel good about him/herself.



ACTIVITY

Choose one or more of the following activities which reinforce the lessons of the Hunger IQ Test.

Have students administer the Hunger IQ Test to others, such as their parents, other kids in school, their neighbors. At the next class, have students report on which questions were answered incorrectly most often. What does that tell the class about common misconceptions about hunger?

Have the students do math exercises that help them to get a feel for the magnitude of the hunger problem, using the numbers provided in the Hunger IQ Test. For example, if there are 40,000,000 emergency meals served every year to the 425,000 hungry people in Massachusetts, how many emergency meals does each person get, on average? (About 23, leaving a lot of meals that the hungry person needs to get from another source.)

Ask the students to come up with other ways to measure the extent of the hunger problem.

NOTES



RESEARCH PROJECT

Divide the class into three or four small groups. Have each small group research a local program feeding the hungry (or a program in a nearby community, if there are not enough local programs available). If possible, each team of students should visit the program to gather first-hand information about it. Have the students prepare to present their findings at the beginning of Lesson Five.



OPTIONAL ASSIGNMENT

You might also want to assign students reading from the bibliography included in Appendix D, with reports due at the beginning of Lesson Five.

LESSON TWO: Identifying the Economic, Social and Political Factors Affecting Hunger



The GOALS

of this lesson are to:

- understand hunger as a complex worldwide phenomenon which results from economic, social and political factors (SOCIAL STUDIES, SCIENCE, GEOGRAPHY, WORLD HISTORY)
- learn to identify and discuss current events which affect the issue of hunger (READING, SOCIAL STUDIES, ECONOMICS)

This lesson has two components: an **ACTIVITY** of collecting newspaper articles which document circumstances which will have an impact on hunger; and a **DISCUSSION** of what students learned from this activity.

ACTIVITY

Divide the class into three or four groups and provide each group with a different newspaper. (You might give the groups different newspapers from the same day, i.e. one group gets *The Boston Globe*, another, *The Boston Herald*, a third, *The New York Times*. You can also give each group the same newspaper from different days.) Have each group identify all of the articles that discuss events or circumstances that will have an impact on hunger (e.g. plant closes, fire destroys home, floods destroy crops, inflation, government programs cut, etc.). Have each group designate one or more representatives to report back to the class about the articles that they selected.

DISCUSSION

Have each group report back to the class about the articles that they selected and why. Discuss the following:

- What are the economic factors which we identified as affecting hunger?
- What are the social factors which we identified as affecting hunger?
- What are the political factors which we identified as affecting hunger?
- Which factors affect many families? Which affect fewer? Which factors can government policy influence? Which factors can be addressed in other ways?
- How is the effect of these factors experienced differently in different parts of the country? The world?

LESSON THREE: Research Project on World Hunger



The GOALS of this lesson are to:

- understand hunger as a complex worldwide phenomenon which results from economic, social and political factors (SOCIAL STUDIES, SCIENCE, GEOGRAPHY)
- build an in-depth understanding of the reasons for hunger in one particular country, and compare this to the reasons for hunger in the United States and other countries

This lesson has two components: a **RESEARCH PROJECT** of gathering information about hunger in representative countries; and a **DISCUSSION** of what each group learned and what the class as a whole learned from the project.



RESEARCH PROJECT

Assignment: Give this assignment a week or two in advance of the lesson. You may want to allow class time to do the research in small groups prior to the class discussion.

Divide the class into small groups and assign each group one of the following countries: Mozambique, Cambodia, El Salvador and China. Have the groups address the following questions:

- What is the extent of hunger in this country? What is this estimate based on, and how reliable is it? How has the extent of hunger changed during the recent history of this country?
- What are the economic, social and political factors contributing to hunger in this country? Which reasons are the most pressing (ex. population size; war; climate, etc.)?
- What is likely to happen in the future with regard to the hungry in this country? How can the problem best be addressed?

Have each group prepare a written report of what they learned. Have them also prepare to present their findings back to the class with different members of the small groups presenting different parts of the research.



DISCUSSION

Have each small group report their findings back to the full class. After all of the reports have been presented, discuss:

- What are the various factors which contribute to world hunger on different continents and in different countries? What issues are the same, regardless of the country? What issues are different?
- How do the causes of hunger in these countries compare with the causes of hunger in the United States? What is similar, and what is different?
- What are the different strategies which could be used to combat hunger in each of these countries? Which ones will be easier to implement? Which will be hardest? Why?

NOTES



OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

Have each small group pick one member of the group to role play the leader of the country being considered. Have the leader of each country make a plea before the United Nations seeking support for alleviating hunger in his/her nation. Have the class talk about which pleas were most compelling and why.

LESSON FOUR: The Role of the Individual and Non-Profits in Influencing Social Policy



The GOALS of this lesson are to:

- learn about recent social, political and cultural changes that have created opportunities for individuals to have a greater impact on shaping their community (HISTORY, POLITICAL SCIENCE, SOCIAL STUDIES)
- inspire students to get involved in improving their communities

This lesson has two components: a **READING** assignment to be completed during class; and a **DISCUSSION** of the lessons learned from the reading.



READING

During class, provide students with a copy of an excerpt from the article “The Age of Social Transformation” by Peter Drucker (see Appendix F).



DISCUSSION

To put the article in context, summarize the following key points from the larger article by Peter Drucker.

- The 20th century has been “the age of social transformation,” experiencing rapid and radical change.
- Prior to this century, the two largest groups in the population were farmers and domestic servants. The shift from a society of predominantly farmers and domestic servants to blue-collar industrial workers happened with minimal societal disruption, because it did not require a lot of training to become an industrial worker. Further, these positions were desirable because blue-collar workers generally worked fewer hours and had a better living standard.
- By the beginning of the century, blue-collar workers had emerged as the predominant population group. Rapidly thereafter, blue-collar workers declined in both numbers and political power.
- The new dominant group in society is “knowledge workers,” who hold jobs which require formal education and specialized skills. Drucker estimates, “By the end of this century, knowledge workers will make up a third of the workforce in the U.S.”
- Unlike the shift from farmers to industrial workers, however, industrial workers cannot easily make the shift to becoming “knowledge workers” for two reasons. First, “knowledge worker” positions often require both education and technical skills which are not easily attainable by all. Second, there simply are not as many of these positions available. As a result, this century has been and will continue to be characterized by significant dislocation of blue-collar workers. It is in this context that society’s social sector can best be understood.

NOTES

Once you have discussed these points, use the following questions as a springboard for discussion about the Drucker article:

- Who takes care of social tasks in the knowledge sector? What are the two different answers which have been offered in the past century to this question? How is this question answered differently in the United States? (Drucker notes that in Bismarck's Germany the answer was government, and in Japan, the answer has been the big corporations. In the United States, the third sector, the "nonprofit sector," has taken on increasing responsibility for addressing our society's social needs.)
- What are the recent social, political, and cultural changes discussed by Drucker that have created opportunities for individuals to have a greater impact on shaping their community through volunteering in nonprofit organizations?
- Drucker estimates that almost half of all adults are volunteering three to five hours a week. How many people do you know who are volunteering? What kinds of work are they doing? How is their work making a difference?

LESSON FIVE: Learning through Community Service



The GOALS

of this lesson are to:

- develop an awareness of hunger and of places hungry people can turn for help, such as a soup kitchen (SOCIAL STUDIES)
- build concern about, empathy for and identification with the hungry in our own and other communities (SOCIAL STUDIES)
- emphasize that we all have a role to play in reducing the amount of hunger (SOCIAL STUDIES)
- give students an opportunity to take action against hunger within their own community
- learn how good it feels to make a difference in fighting hunger and building a better community

This lesson has two components: a **DISCUSSION** about what students have learned over the past few classes about hunger and how they might make a difference in addressing the issue; and brainstorming/planning a community service **ACTIVITY** which the class can undertake.

DISCUSSION

Briefly review the many economic, social and political factors which affect hunger (from Lessons Two and Three). Talk about what the class learned from Lesson Four, namely that there are opportunities for individuals to have a significant impact on shaping their communities.

Have the small groups report back on the research project from Lesson One about local programs feeding the hungry.

Discuss the importance of the individual in solving society's problems like hunger. What can each person in the class do? What can the class do as a whole?

ACTIVITY

The following are suggested activities, one or more of which the class can undertake as a community service project.

Have a speaker from a local food pantry or soup kitchen or from Project Bread talk with the class about hunger and about what their organization is doing to combat hunger. The speaker may want to brainstorm with the class about a future project they could undertake together.

Plan a visit to a local food pantry, soup kitchen or feeding program. If possible, arrange a visit which allows enough time for the class to actually pitch in and help – either shelving groceries for a food pantry (perhaps groceries that they have collected) or serving a meal.

Have the class make posters to put up in the school encouraging students to participate in the Walk for Hunger. Encourage the students to include sentiments about why this is important: “We can make a difference,” “We want to help others who don’t have enough to eat.”

Divide the class into small groups and have groups develop a short script to use in asking their friends and neighbors to sponsor them in the Walk for Hunger. Have the groups use what they have learned about hunger from the Hunger IQ Test in developing their talking points.

NOTES

Organize a food drive. Have the class determine an appropriate local program to receive the food that is collected.

Organize an Oxfam-like hunger banquet in which participants draw lots to determine how much food they get to eat. Charge admission to the banquet and donate the money which is raised to a local feeding program.

Launch a campaign to increase student use of school breakfasts/lunches. Meet with school officials to create a strategy for achieving this goal.

Evaluate the extent to which the school, school district or community wastes food. Develop a plan for more efficient use of the food and/or distribution of extra food.

Using the research already done by the class, produce a PSA (Public Service Announcement) for the local cable television channel on resources for hungry people.

Investigate the local farmer's market and volunteer to help build a connection between the farmer's market and efforts to feed the hungry in the community.