

Famine Unit Plan

Unit Overview

Unit Title

Famine: Modern Solutions for an Ancient Enemy

Unit Summary

Students strive to understand famine's causes and recommend changes for the future by engaging in a project-based learning activity. They work with the International Famine Centre to identify ways to address current relief needs and to propose recommendations for reducing famine in the world. Students begin in their role-specific groups and identify what their role can contribute to an understanding of famine. They do this by creating a brochure of their role and possible contributions to understanding and solving the problem of famine. Each team presentation includes a list of ways to address current relief needs and recommendations for reducing famine in the world. The recommendations are compiled by the teacher, and the information in the brochures and presentations are combined into a class Web page as a culminating experience.

Subject Area

Economics, Life and Earth Science

Grade Level

9–12

Higher-Order Thinking Skills

Synthesis, Cause and Effect, Systems Thinking

Approximate Time Needed

6 weeks (completion time depends on research pace and students' ability to work together)

Unit Foundation

Targeted Content Standards and Benchmarks

New Mexico Secondary Social Studies Standards and Benchmarks

Strand: Geography

Content Standard II:

Students understand how physical, natural, and cultural processes influence where people live, the ways in which people live, and how societies interact with one another and their environments.

9–12 Benchmark II-E:

Analyze and evaluate how economic, political, cultural, and social processes interact to shape patterns of human populations, and their interdependence, cooperation, and conflict.

9–12 Benchmark II-F:

Analyze and evaluate the effects of human and natural interactions in terms of changes in the meaning, use, distribution, and importance of resources, in order to predict our global capacity to support human activity.

Student Objectives/Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Identify political, environmental, economic, and social forces, patterns, and trends that may impact famine occurrence, prevention, and relief
- Develop an understanding of the contribution of different roles to the meaning, use, and distribution of resources related to famine prevention and relief
- Develop recommendations for reducing global famine that incorporate understanding of the complexity of the issues involved

Curriculum-Framing Questions

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Essential Question | Am I my brother's keeper, and who is my brother? |
| Unit Questions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can famine be prevented? • What should be the U.S. role in the prevention and relief of famine? • How do different professional perspectives influence prevention and relief recommendations? |
| Content Questions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is famine? • What causes famine? • What is currently being done by the United States and other countries to eliminate famine? • How does famine in one country affect food resources in another country? |

Student Assessment Plan

Assessment Summary

Use informal assessments throughout the unit, such as anecdotal notes, questioning, and conferences to assess content understanding and task completion. The self-direction rubric helps students plan and monitor their projects, as well as look back on their learning to set new goals. Use the brochure assessment and presentation assessment to provide feedback and assess final products. Students use the same assessments to self-assess their learning and provide peer feedback. Students also create a wiki rubric and use it as a guide while working on their wikis. A final reflective essay answering the Essential Question, *Am I my brother's keeper, and who is my brother?* provides information about students' abilities to synthesize their learning.

| Assessment Timeline | | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|--|--|
| Before project work begins | | Students work on projects and complete tasks | | After project work is completed | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anecdotal Notes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-direction Rubric • Brochure Assessment • Conferences • Wiki Rubric | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation Assessment • Peer Feedback | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wiki Rubric • Self-direction Rubric | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective Essay |

Unit Details

Prerequisite Skills

- Understanding of historical scope and significance of famine, including basic geographic knowledge of regions affected by drought
- Familiarity with Internet search and retrieval methods
- Experience with basic word processing and publishing software

Instructional Procedures

Prior to Unit

At the beginning of the year, distribute the [Social Studies Class Newsletter](#) to parents and interested community members to explain the role that projects will play throughout the year.

Introduction to Unit

Ask students to read the article "[What Is Famine?](#)"* Ask them to think about the following questions while they are reading and to take some notes to prepare for a discussion:

- What is famine?
- What causes famine?
- Can famine be prevented?
- What is currently being done by the United States and other countries to eliminate famine?
- What should be the U.S. role in the prevention and relief of famine?
- How does famine in one country affect food resources in another country?
- What does famine have to do with me?

Discuss briefly how some famines are created by weather patterns and other famines are caused by war, economic collapse, governmental incompetence, or maliciousness. Famine is not selective. In the 20th century alone, famines raged through India, China, and various parts of Africa, Russia, and North Korea. That does not mean that the famine problem is insurmountable. Despite hunger, the world already produces enough food to feed everyone, according to the United Nations' statistics. One area that offers hope is the use of powerful computer-based technologies. Throughout the discussion, let students know that they will study and learn how to connect with the world, create feedback, and affect real change through their efforts.

After students have read the article and held a short discussion, pose the Essential Question, *Am I my brother's keeper, and who is my brother?*, for a [Socratic discussion](#)*.

Put students in small groups and ask them to come up with five questions that need to be answered

before an individual, organization, or nation commits resources to helping people in need (for example, *How great is the need? How do our skills and resources meet the need?*). Post lists of questions around the room. Ask students to read the other groups' questions, and then return to their groups and discuss. Circulate through the room as groups discuss, taking anecdotal notes. Refer to the notes to help students needing further clarification and additional instruction, and to assess growth over the course of the project.

Introduce the unit with a presentation that includes introductory information about the International Famine Centre and famine. Place students in groups of four or five, distribute the [United Nations Memo](#), and describe the following situation:

Your team has been asked to work with the International Famine Centre to identify ways to address current relief needs and propose recommendations for reducing famine in the world.

Ask the groups to assign each person to one of the following roles:

- Agricultural engineer
- Agricultural scientist
- Economist and community planner
- Politician
- Public health professional
- Social anthropologist

Brochure

Put students into groups based on the roles they will play in the project, so all students with the same role are in a group together. Give students the [self-direction rubric](#) to help them plan, monitor, and learn from this project experience.

Inform students that the brochure needs to answer the question, *How do different professional perspectives influence prevention and relief recommendations?*

Share the [Anthropologist Sample Brochure](#) and review the [brochure assessment](#).

Provide two to three days for completion of this portion of the project, scheduling team conferences to provide frequent feedback on progress. Share with the students the [Webliography: Am I My Brother's Keeper?](#) to help them get started with the research process.

As students conduct their research, provide instruction in the kinds of thinking, collaboration, and research skills that will help them produce high-quality products. Some students may need templates and other resources to support them as they complete the project.

After the brochures are complete, have students return to their original groups and share their publications. Review the brochures using the brochure assessment and provide feedback before the next activity.

Presentation

Ask students to return to their original groups (in which each student has a different role). Explain that teams will select a country or area currently experiencing famine and will research a problem and pose solutions to the problem. Solutions will be presented at a "National Conference."

Show the [Famine in Somalia Sample Presentation](#) and review the presentation assessment, clarifying and modifying it as needed. Ask students to review their roles and discuss the following questions:

- *What responsibilities will all the roles share?*
- *What unique responsibilities will each role have?*

After students refine their presentations, ask the teams to provide peer feedback on the draft presentations using the [presentation assessment](#) as a guide.

When the final presentations are complete, as a form of affirmation, invite parents, school personnel, and other community members to participate in a "National Conference." For best results, hold the conference in a computer lab where several students can show their presentations at once. As guests

walk around to view the slideshows, students can answer questions and receive recognition for their work.

Concluding Activity/Wiki

To synthesize learning, divide students into four new groups with each group member coming from a different presentation group. Assign each group the task of creating one or more Web pages addressing one of the following topics:

- Introduction that describes the class and the project, including general information and definitions related to famine and a rationale for providing relief to countries experiencing famine
- Main facts about each of the countries investigated in the presentations with prioritized recommendations for involvement
- Survey that collects information from visitors about their feelings regarding famine, the United States' responsibility, and the effectiveness of the Web site, minimally answering the Unit Question, *What should be the U.S. role in the prevention and relief of famine?*
- Annotated collection of Web and print resources about famine and a list of recommended organizations involved in famine relief with directions for getting involved
- Discussion of the Unit Question, *What should be the U.S. role in the prevention and relief of famine?*

Show the sample [wiki](#) and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each page and the site as a whole. Help students to create a rubric outlining four levels of proficiency. Traits to consider when building the rubric include:

- Content
- Writing
- Survey
- Graphic Design
- Layout
- Links
- Navigation
- Sources

Ask students to use the [wiki rubric](#) as a guide when designing their wikis.

As a final activity, ask students to write an in-class essay incorporating specific information from their own presentations and those of their classmates to answer the Essential Question, *Am I my brother's keeper, and who is my brother?*

Accommodations for Differentiated Instruction

Special Needs Student

- Repeat instructions verbally and in writing
- Check for understanding
- Allow extra time for assignment completion
- Allow for assisted technologies according to Individualized Educational Plan (IEP)

Nonnative Speaker

- Allow the use of some resources in the student's first language
- Provide suggested resources that are at an appropriate reading level
- Allow the student to work with other bilingual students

**Gifted/Talented
Student**

- Provide open-ended assignments
- Emphasize group learning skills and development
- Focus on problem solving skills and creative aspects
- Focus on inductive and deductive reasoning

| Materials and Resources Required For Unit | |
|---|---|
| Technology – Hardware (Click boxes of all equipment needed) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Camera <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Computer(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Digital Camera <input type="checkbox"/> DVD Player <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Internet Connection | <input type="checkbox"/> Laser Disk <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Printer <input type="checkbox"/> Projection System <input type="checkbox"/> Scanner <input type="checkbox"/> Television |
| <input type="checkbox"/> VCR <input type="checkbox"/> Video Camera <input type="checkbox"/> Video Conferencing Equip. <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |
| Technology – Software (Click boxes of all software needed.) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Database/Spreadsheet <input type="checkbox"/> Desktop Publishing <input type="checkbox"/> E-mail Software <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Encyclopedia on CD-ROM | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Image Processing <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Internet Web Browser <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Multimedia |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Web Page Development <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word Processing <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |
| Printed Materials | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kempf, S. (1987). <i>Finding solutions to hunger: Kids can make a difference</i>. World Hunger Year. Retrieved from www.kidscanmakeadifference.org/teac.htm* • World history and social studies texts |
| Supplies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Folders and storage for student electronic and printed work • One classroom storage bin that includes paper, pens, and markers for Socratic discussions |
| Internet Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United Nations World Food Programme www.wfp.org* Frontline United Nations Agency whose mission is to provide food for life, growth, and work • China: The People Bomb www.msnbc.com/news/307034.asp* Information about China’s growing population, along with additional information about population increases and ways to deal with them • International Famine Center www.ucc.ie/famine* International Web page with links to other famine and famine relief organizations worldwide • El Niño Update www.pmel.noaa.gov/toga-tao/el-nino/nino-home.html* Complete information about El Niño and how it works, and information about the weather phenomenon La Niña, including information about how these two weather phenomena affect rain patterns and drought • Doctors Without Borders www.dwb.org* Nobel Prize winning group of emergency-based doctors who respond to refugee and famine crises across the world with links to other organizations and fact-based sites |
| Other Resources | |

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