



The Right to Food

Lesson Plan:
Barriers to
the Right to Food
in the U.S.

Grade Level: 9-12



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Lesson Plan: Barriers to the Right to Food in the U.S.

Goal: Help students develop an understanding of the barriers that prevent people from realizing the right to food.

Objectives:

- Students will understand that food is a human right
- Students will think empathetically about the relationship between other human rights and hunger

Essential Question: Is the right to food being addressed adequately in the United States?

Resources:

- Computers with internet access
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights - accessible online at: www.udhr.org/UDHR/default.htm
- General Comment 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights—accessible online at http://www.fao.org/righttofood/common/ecg/51635_en_General_Comment_No.12.pdf
- Handout 1: The Camry Family Dilemma
- Handout 2: Feeding the Family Activity Sheet
- Handout 3: The Camry Family Budget
- Discover Human Rights Fact Sheet: “The Right to Food in the United States” - download at http://discoverhumanrights.org/Right_to_Food.html

Time Frame: 1- 2 class periods

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Minnesota High School Social Studies Standards:

- World History, I, #1: Students will examine human rights principles and how they have been supported and violated in the late 20th century.
- Government and Citizenship, A, # 1: Students will analyze the meaning and importance of rights in the U.S. Constitution, the Bill of Rights and subsequent amendments, and the Minnesota Constitution.
- Government and Citizenship, B, # 1: Students will define and provide examples of fundamental principles and core values of American political and civic life.
- Government and Citizenship, B, # 2: Students will examine the tension between the government’s dual role of protecting individual rights and promoting the general welfare, the tension between majority rule and minority rights, and analyze the conflict between diversity and unity which is captured in the concept “E Pluribus Unum.”
- Government and Citizenship, B, # 3: Students will evaluate how well the federal and state governments protect individual rights and promote the general welfare.
- Government and Citizenship, D, # 5: Students will explain and evaluate international organizations and international law and how participation in these organizations and international law is voluntary.



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Procedure:

- 1. Explain.** Explain to the students that the right to food is guaranteed under numerous United Nations Documents including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The right to food is the human right of every person to have continuous access to resources that enable them to produce, earn, or purchase enough nutritionally adequate and culturally acceptable food for an active, healthy life. Ensuring the right to food, does not mean that a government must feed its people; rather, the government must respect and protect the rights of individuals to feed themselves.
- 2. Discuss.** Have students discuss how the right to food is protected in international documents by handing out a copy of the UDHR as well as a copy of General Comment 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In small groups have students go over the relevant language in the documents using the following questions to guide their discussion:
 - What does “adequate food” mean?
 - Define food security/insecurity
 - What does cultural acceptability mean?
 - What is food sovereignty?
- 3. Role Play.** Guide students through the following role play, which will help students understand the difficulties that many low-income families in the United States face in feeding themselves and their families. Students will be in small family units and be given a rough salary as well as a list of expenditures. The activity will require the use of computers.

Role Play Procedure:

Step 1: Break students up into groups of four. Each group will become a family unit, and each student should decide what role they want to play, (father, mother, daughter, son, etc.).

Step 2: Students will have to decide how they will feed their family based on the information found in their handouts. Give each student **Handout 1: The Camry Family Dilemma** and ask them to read silently to themselves for a few minutes.

Step 3: Once students are done reading they should spend 5-10 minutes consulting as a family unit on how they will resolve their dilemma. Give each family unit **Handout 2: Feeding the Family Activity Sheet** and **Handout 3: The Camry Family Budget**. *Note: students may need more than one budget sheet.* These handouts provide a list of resources on food costs and federal food programs, a breakdown of the Camry family’s monthly expenses, and a budgeting spreadsheet that will help students determine how they will feed their family this month. Students should turn in this handout at the end of class.

Step 4: Each group should have access to one computer so they are able to conduct their research.

Step 5: After half an hour in the computer lab doing their research, students will come together to share what their families have decided and turn in the activity sheet at the end of the class period.



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4. Discuss. Once everyone is done sharing their decisions, discuss the following questions:

- What were the major difficulties in making your decisions?
- What kinds of sacrifices did you have to make?
- Did the Camry family have enough money to cover their monthly expenses? If not, how did that feel?
- Do you think the Camry family experience is a common experience for other people in the country?
- What segments of the American population do you think are deprived of their right to food?
- Why do you think they are deprived of their right to food?
- Based on this activity and your own personal opinion, is the U.S. government fulfilling its obligation to uphold the right to food for all its citizens? Why?

5. Read and Discuss. Give each student a copy of *The Right to Food Fact Sheet* and ask them to silently read it for a few minutes. When they are done, continue the discussion based on the following questions.

- Now that you have read the fact sheet, what do you think about the Camry family dilemma?
- How is the US government doing in fulfilling its obligation to uphold the right to food for all of its citizens?
- What actions could the U.S. take to improve access to adequate food for all?
- What actions could you take to better ensure the right to food for all?

Optional Extension Activity:

Take Action. Have students take action against food insecurity in your community. For ideas and a list of national organizations working on the right to food, check out the take action section of the Right to Food Toolkit that is accessible online at: http://discoverhumanrights.org/Right_to_Food.html.

Step 1: Provide a list of food banks in the area.

Step 2: Discuss organizations that are working to fight world/national hunger.

Step 3: Brainstorm a list of take action ideas.

Step 4: Donate your snacks! Set up a table for a week or a day and collect the money that you would have spent on a treat and donate the money to a local food bank.

Step 5: Contact your legislators. Encourage your local legislators to support legislation that protects everyone's right to food. To find your legislator's contact information visit: www.congress.org/.

Step 6: Organize. Have your own World Food Day! October 16th, 2007 has been declared the official World Food Day! This is an opportune moment for students to get involved with local food banks or to run their own food drive at school. For information on how to organize a food drive, check out the following website: www.associatedcontent.com/article/38623/how_to_organize_a_food_drive.html.



The Camry Family Dilemma

You will need to decide how you will feed your family this month based on the following information:

Background: The father, Randy, works as a security guard for a chemical plant in your town. He makes \$10/hour and about \$1600 a month (after taxes). Camilla, the mother suffers from poor health; she has arthritis and suffers from type two diabetes. When she is fit and able to, she works with a cleaning service and brings in extra income of \$6/hour, but because of her health problems, this does not happen very often. On average she adds \$400 a month (after taxes) to the family income. The eldest, Rebecca is 15 years old, and the youngest Blaise is 10. They attend a local public school in their neighborhood. Blaise and Rebecca are involved in their school activities, including sports and clubs. Rebecca has hopes of becoming a journalist and Blaise wants to be a pilot.

Monthly Expenses:

- **Health:** This month, Camilla was unable to work more than four days a month, and only brought in \$100. In addition to that, she had a serious case of hypoglycemia and needed to be rushed to the emergency room, incurring a hefty medical bill. The family needs to pay off about \$1000. Camilla does not have health insurance.
- **Transportation:** Randy takes the bus to work and has an unlimited monthly bus pass that he has already paid. But when he has to work the night shift, he has to drive to work and home again. He worked a total of 10 night shifts this month. He needs to pay \$60 dollars this month to cover the cost of gas.

Blaise and Rebecca stay at school for their extracurricular activities, and have to take public transportation home. They each spend \$25 on transport a month.

- **Utilities:** It is the winter months and the family barely turns on the heat, however, because Camilla is sick for most of the month, they want to turn on the heat as much as they can. This month the heating bill could come to \$250. Added to other utilities, including phone bills, water and electricity, they will need \$400 to pay off their monthly utility bills.
- **Rent:** Their normal monthly rent is \$800 a month for their three bedroom apartment.
- **Education:** Blaise hopes to join the basketball team but he needs a uniform that costs \$40. Rebecca wants to go on a school camping trip that costs \$50 dollars.
- **Food:** Your task is to decide how you will feed your family this month. You will have to come up with a list of needs, costs and how you will finance those food costs. (Be sure to think of receiving food from food banks, churches and other charitable organizations). Students may go back to their monthly expenses and decide to forego any of the other expenses in order to feed the family.



Feeding the Family Activity Sheet

Resources:

Average Food Costs in the United States

- This site gives a rough estimate of the costs of some basic food items.
<http://data.bls.gov/PDQ/outside.jsp?survey=ap>
- On this site individuals from across the United States share their local grocery prices.
http://landmark-project.com/ggl/view_prices.html
- Check out this site to see what things cost in the United States compared to other countries.
<http://schools.bcsd.com/fremont/cmphowm.htm>
- Use the family budget calculator to determine the hourly wage needed to meet your family's expenses.
<http://www.jobsnowcoalition.org/>

Federal Food Programs

- Go to this site for information on various federal food programs.
http://www.frac.org/html/federal_food_programs/federal_index.html
- This Pre-Screening Tool allows individuals to see if they are eligible for Food Stamp benefits and provides a rough estimate of the amount of assistance you would receive.
<http://65.216.150.143/fns/>
- This site provides general information on all of the U.S. nutrition assistance programs
http://fnic.nal.usda.gov/nal_display/index.php?info_center=4&tax_level=1&tax_subject=276

Using the resources above, answer the following questions and fill out **Handout 3: The Camry Family Budget** to determine how you will feed your family this month.

- What programs are there?
- What program/programs would the Camry family be eligible for?
- What would they have to do to receive the benefits of the program/programs?

Monthly Expenses:

Total income-----\$1700

Health expenses-----\$1000

Transportation expenses-----\$110

Rent and Utilities expenses--\$1200

Education expenses-----\$90



The Camry Family Budget

NEEDS	COSTS	FINANCING
Example: 3 loaves of bread	2.19	Local food bank offers expired bread for free
Totally Monthly Cost:		