

Food Justice: Planting the Seeds of Change
Unit plan by Rosa Clara Salazar

Lesson Plan 1: The Implications of Food Insecurity

Lesson Objectives: Students will be able to...

- Define food security, food insecurity, and food justice.
- Explain how hunger and food insecurity are different.
- Explain how food security and food insecurity are measured.
- Discuss how food justice is relevant to them and their community.

Facilitation Guide

1. Set the context for this lesson by explaining to students the role of food in our lives and its impact. Ask students the following questions:

- What does food mean to you?
- What are your most memorable memories of food?
- What are some ways that not having access to food can impact our lives?
- What do you think **food security** and **food insecurity** mean?
- What is the difference between hunger and food insecurity?
- What do you think **food justice** means?

Students can share their responses on Padlet or a collaborative document, if learning remotely.

2. Show the video [What Is Food Insecurity?](#) (1:46) and have students read [this article defining food \(in\)security](#) from Food Forward. After the video and the reading, ask students the following questions:

- How did your definitions of food security/insecurity compare to what you learned in the video and the reading?
- Were there any similarities? Differences?

As a class, discuss these questions. Students can refer to the padlet or collaborative document on which they wrote their initial responses.

3. Have students go back to [the article from Food Forward](#) and analyze the criteria for how food insecurity is measured in the U.S., paying close attention to the survey questions. Discuss the survey questions as a class:

- How did you feel as you were reading the survey questions? What were some of your thoughts?
- After reading the questions, do you think food justice is a relevant issue? Explain.
- How have the video, article, and discussion contributed to your ideas about what food justice is?

On our collaborative document, students will write a 5-syllable phrase or a 7-syllable phrase describing their thoughts/feelings. For example, “so much sacrifice” or “every month hungry.” Tell students that they will be arranging these phrases on the document to write a collaborative haiku. (Use this activity to introduce students to the final poetry project and have them keep in mind that they are building towards that culminating project.)

Supplemental Resource: Explore the concept of food justice and the historical context of the food justice movement in greater depth with students using [this explainer from FoodPrint](#).

Homework and Evaluation

Divide the class into groups. Tell students that for homework they will go back to [the article from Food Forward](#) and take notes on the four classifications of food security and their descriptors. Students will synthesize their analysis by creating an infographic with the following information:

- The four classifications of food security in the U.S. and their descriptors
- Definition of food insecurity
- Definition of food justice

Once finished, infographics will be shared on the class Instagram. When schools reopen, these infographics will be placed in the school cafeteria and classrooms.

Students will present their infographics to the class. Infographics will be evaluated using [this rubric](#).

Lesson Plan 2: Understanding Global Food Insecurity

Lesson Objectives: Students will be able to...

- Better explain how environmental, social, political, and economic factors affect food insecurity at a national and global scale.

Facilitation Guide

1. Set the context for this lesson by explaining to students how they have learned what food insecurity means and how it is measured in the United States. Remind them how this is related to food justice. Explain to them that today, they will be examining food insecurity at a national and global scale. Ask students the following questions:

- When you hear about global food insecurity, what images come to mind?
- What images come to mind when you hear about food insecurity in the U.S?
- How are they similar? Different?

Students can share their responses on Padlet or a collaborative document.

2. Tell students that they will watch two videos highlighting global food security: [Understanding Global Food Security and Nutrition](#) (4:12) and [What is Food Security?](#) (2:31)

Listening Guide for videos:

- Almost 800,000,000 people are malnourished in the world, yet we produce enough food to feed everyone. Explain two reasons why so many people are going hungry.
- Why do the kinds of food we have access to matter?
- How can food insecurity impact national economies?
- Describe some solutions governments can enact to solve the problem of food insecurity in their countries suggested by the videos.

As a class, discuss these questions. Answers can be written on a collaborative document/slide.

3. Divide the class into groups. Assign each group one of the Pulitzer Center stories to explore in the resources section below. (Note: the comprehension questions are adapted from the Pulitzer Center lessons on [Food Insecurity](#) and [Finding a Common Thread: How People around the World Get Their Food.](#))

4. After students have explored their stories, have each group report their findings to the class. Remind students to highlight the economic, social, political, and/or environmental factors affecting food security when sharing their findings.

The teacher can write main ideas on a collaborative document/slide for students.

5. Ask the students to look for recurring ideas in the collaborative document. Tell students to find one word that stands out. Use that word to write an [acrostic poem](#) as a class.

Homework and Evaluation

Students will create a 1-minute PSA about food (in)security in the country they learned about in class to share during the morning announcements. [Here is a step-by-step guide \[PDF handout\].](#)

Resources for this Lesson

[Nigeria \(video\): "Nigeria Families Left Hungry"](#) (8:41)

PBS NewsHour, April 15, 2009, by Fred De Sam Lazaro

Questions:

- What type of food insecurity (lack of food or lack of nutrition) is the most prevalent in Nigeria?
- What factors foster food insecurity in Nigeria?
- What conclusions can you draw about the role of government in ensuring food security from this video?

[India \(video\): "India's Growing Problem, Food Production"](#) (8:27)

PBS NewsHour, September 14, 2009, by Fred De Sam Lazaro

Questions:

- What type of food insecurity (lack of food or lack of nutrition) is the most prevalent in India?
- How big a role does water availability play in food security in India?
- What impact will additional water pumps, dry season cropping, fertilizers, pesticides, and other food insecurity solutions have on the environment?

[Guatemala \(video\): "Guatemala's Children Languish from Malnutrition"](#) (5:08)

World Focus, October 8, 2009, by Samuel Lowenberg

Questions:

- What type of food insecurity (lack of food or lack of nutrition) is the most prevalent in Guatemala?
- How does extreme poverty contribute to the food insecurity problem in Guatemala?
- What is stunting? How else does malnutrition affect children? How serious are the side effects of malnutrition?

[Guatemala \(podcast\): "A Craving for Nutrition Knowledge"](#)

Outrage and Inspire, December 20, 2017, by Roger Thurow

Questions:

- What type of food insecurity (lack of food or lack of nutrition) is the most prevalent in Guatemala?
- What are the main challenges that these mothers are facing when trying to access healthy food for their children?
- What happens when children are unable to access health food in the first 1,000 days of their lives?

[Vietnam \(article\): "Vietnam: Farm School"](#)

Pulitzer Center, August 20, 2008, by Stephanie Guyer-Stevens and Jack Chance

Questions:

- What type of food insecurity (lack of food or lack of nutrition) is the most prevalent in Vietnam?
- What is the main challenge that Tu's family is facing right now in accessing food?
- What are they doing to get better access to food?
- What is Lanh's goal for her students?

United States (video): ["Addressing Food Security in the U.S."](#) (6:21)

The Ohio State University, April 14, 2016

Questions:

- What type of food insecurity (lack of food or lack of nutrition) is the most prevalent in the United States?
- What is a food desert? What is meant by "hung up on cosmetics?"
- According to the video, how do apathy and ignorance contribute to the problem?

Lesson Plan 3: Food Deserts

Lesson Objectives: Students will be able to...

- Describe criteria for defining a food desert.
- Explore local conditions using the USDA's [Food Desert Locator](#).
- Describe potential effects of food deserts.
- Map food sources in their community and identify food deserts.

Facilitation Guide

1. Set the context for this lesson by explaining to students that they have learned that food alone is not enough to tackle the problem of food insecurity nor of food justice. People must also have access to nutritious food. Today, they will learn about food deserts. Ask students the following questions:

- What images does the term food desert bring to mind?
- What are some reasons that might affect people's ability to get healthy food?
- Students can share their responses on a padlet or a collaborative document.

Students can share their responses on a padlet or a collaborative document.

2. Have students read [11 Facts about Food Deserts](#) from dosomething.org. Ask them to choose one of the facts that most interested them and explore the source listed for that fact to learn a little more. Allow students about 10 minutes to explore.

Tell students that for homework they will create a "Did You Know...?" card with information about something they learned. The teacher should present an example. Ask students to decorate their cards because the teacher will take a picture of the class and/or of each student while they hold up their Did you know? cards. The pictures will be posted on the class Instagram.

Did you know...

That about 23.5 million people live in food deserts across the United States?

#foodsecurity #saynotofooddeserts

2. Ask students to open the Food Desert Locator website and click on "Enter the Map." A map of the United States will appear with low-income census tracts highlighted in green. Ask students the following questions:

- The geographic scale of this map is national. What is the scale of analysis?
- Identify two patterns in the data.
- What do you think may explain those patterns?

They will answer the questions on a Google Form that the teacher has created.

3. Now ask them to click on "Find Address" on the Food Desert Locator and enter their home address in the designated space. Allow time to have everyone view the map and locate landmarks such as where they live or go to school (use the zoom in/out navigation bar on the left side of the map). Once everyone has viewed the map, solicit responses:

- Are there food desert areas near your homes?
- Are you surprised by how many or how few there are?
- What can you and your classmates do to help combat food insecurity in our community?

3. Have students mention specific fruits and vegetables that are unavailable in food deserts. Choose one and collaboratively write an [ode](#) to it. The teacher may want to read "[Ode to a Tomato](#)" by Pablo Neruda as an example.

Homework and Evaluation

Students will read "[America's Worst 9 Urban Food Deserts](#)" from *NewsOne* and [fill out this graphic organizer](#) for homework.

Extension (Additional 45 minute class period)

Introduce students to [OpenStreetMap \(OSM\)](#). Tell them that they will be noting all food sources (ex., grocery stores, convenience stores, restaurants, farmers' markets, community gardens). Students will measure distances between them and where people live and identify food deserts in the community. The information will be shared with a local nonprofit (in this case, Laredo Center for Urban Agriculture and Sustainability) whose mission is urban agriculture and sustainability.

Lesson Plan 4: Challenging Our Eating Habits

Lesson Objectives: Students will be able to...

- Describe proper nutrition and compare their own eating habits with what is recommended.
- Explain the health behavior gap.

Facilitation Guide

1. Set the context for this lesson by explaining to students that they have learned the detrimental health consequences of living in food deserts. Ask them if they believe having access and availability to healthy food is enough to solve the effects of living in a food desert. Ask students the following questions:

- How does culture or where a person lives influence the food a person likes to eat?
- What are some of the foods we eat in our community? Would you consider them healthy foods?
- What are some reasons you see your friends choose certain foods? How about your family?
- Why do you choose certain foods? Who else is involved in your decision?
- Are there any other reasons you see people in your community choose certain foods?
- If we don't only make our decisions based on health, what are other factors that play into food choice?

The teacher can document answers on a collaborative document/slide creating some possible categories for answers: taste, convenience, availability, marketing, cultural influences, price.

2. Go over the [Nutrition Information](#) cheat sheet offered by learningtogive.org

3. Explain to students that although many organizations are tackling the food insecurity and hunger issue and many more are offering educational interventions about healthy eating habits, they often result in something called the **health behavior gap**. This gap is the difference between having the knowledge that a health behavior (eating a balanced diet is good for your health) is good for you and taking the action to implement that health behavior in daily life.

Teachers can also show students the health statistics for their community. Here is an example.

4. Continue asking students the following questions:

- Which of these categories do you think has the greatest influence on our daily food choices?
- Why do you think it is so difficult to make healthy food choices?
- If you wanted to change people's daily food choices, what would be some good interventions?
- Which categories do these fall into? (Can be more than one)

5. Discuss some of the interventions suggested by students. What are some pros and cons? Could we make the intervention into a SMART goal?

6. Ask students to name some unhealthy eating habits. Choose one and write a 4-line elegy for that habit collaboratively as a class. Here are some [examples](#).

Supplemental Resource: For more information on the health behavior gap, refer to Pulitzer Center lesson [Food Insecurity Project: From Education to Action](#) by Julie Eller.

Homework and Evaluation

Ask students to research tips for healthy eating and create a Top Ten List of Healthy Eating Habits. They will create a Flipgrid presentation with their top ten. Challenge each student to adhere to one tip each month and have them challenge their family members to do the same. They can use the One Second EveryDay app to document their progress. Give students the choice to share with the class.

As an extra credit opportunity, have students write or record a self-reflection. Some questions to think about:

- What did you learn about yourself/family/community through this challenge?
- How did your relationship with change/improve by doing this challenge as a class/family/community?

Lesson Plan 5: Community Gardens

Lesson Objectives: Students will be able to...

- Create a visual poem to engage, educate, and empower the community to make healthy changes in eating habits and take action against food insecurity and food justice.
- Bring awareness about the local community gardens and increase volunteerism there.

Facilitation Guide

1. Set the context for this lesson by explaining to students that they have learned not only about food insecurity, both at the national and the global scale, but also have analyzed food insecurity in their community. They have learned about healthy eating habits as well as the not so healthy nutritional habits and their effects on the local community. They have seen the ramifications of food injustice, and they are not good. Today, they will explore the connection between community gardens and food justice. Ask students the following question:

- How can we eliminate food deserts and improve access to nutritious food?
- How can you promote food justice in your community?

2. As a class, read the article [“From Hoop Dreams to Hoop Houses”](#) by Roger Thurow for the Pulitzer Center. Ask the students the following questions:

- What do you know about community gardens?
- Have you ever grown food before?
- Do you know whether we have a community garden in our city?

Tell students that community gardens support urban farming and bring together neighbors and a community who work together for a change.

3. As a class, brainstorm some questions to ask at the local community garden. Possible questions include:

- What do you grow?
- Do you sell your produce to the community?
- What are your hours?
- How can one volunteer? Do you need to have gardening experience?
- What are some obstacles you experience?
- What do you want our community to know about you?

4. Ask for a couple of student volunteers. Ask them to contact the local community garden and find the answers to the questions your class brainstormed. They will report their findings to the class.

5. Reiterate to students that this unit’s underlying premise is food justice. Food justice is not only access to food but also the right to healthy food. This right is further reiterated in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights under Article 25:

(1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

6. Have students examine the following quote from justfood.org about food justice.

“Food justice is communities exercising their right to grow, sell, and eat healthy food. Healthy food is fresh, nutritious, affordable, culturally appropriate, and grown locally with care for the well-being of the land, workers, and animals. People practicing food justice leads to a strong local food system, self-reliant communities, and a healthy environment.”

Tell students to choose 1-2 words that really stand out for them from the excerpt. Use polleverywhere.com or mentimeter.com to create a food justice word cloud for the class.

7. Food justice focuses on food but it connects to issues of education, class and racial inequalities, economic development, and certainly, environmental sustainability. Today, students will embark on a campaign to tackle the issue of food justice in their community. Now ask students to brainstorm ideas that have resonated with them throughout this unit. Gather their haikus, acrostics, odes, and elegy. Reread some of the collaborative documents/padlets. Encourage students to write personal connections and connections to food justice. Explain to them that they are going to write a visual poem related to food justice. The teacher can group students in pairs and make this a collaborative experience.

8. Explore examples of visual poems online or use the Pulitzer Center story [“Disappearing Daughters”](#) for more examples. The teacher can also share two more poetry examples from student winners of the Pulitzer Center’s Fighting Words Poetry Contest:

- [“When It’s Gone”](#) by Isabel Brosseau Gray
- [“Ayúdame”](#) by Miranda Rodriguez

9. Use the J.Paul Getty Museum’s video [How to Make a Visual Poem](#) to prepare students for their performance task. Then, share the performance task instructions with students (below). Ask students to decide what type of visual poem they will create.

10. If time permits, allow students to work together in class.

11. Tell students that their visual poems will be shared. Ways to share visual poems include:

- Working with the local urban agriculture nonprofit to publish the poems
- Reaching out to the Pulitzer Center via education@pulitzercenter.org to publish the poems
- Posting poems to the school website, social media page(s), and/or hosting a student reading

Performance Task: Visual Poetry

Social justice movements have consisted of people working together on an area of injustice that they want to change. They use organizing, activism, and other forms of protest to make their case and put forth their vision and demands. Art has also contributed to social justice movements because it gives people a voice. It becomes a medium for awareness and a platform for change. Today, you will join the growing number of food justice advocates and activists through your poetry and contribute to bringing awareness to this issue in your community.

You are going to take your previous poetry writing experiences and thoughts to create a visual poem about food justice. Your poem should explore any of the topics we discussed throughout this unit. Most importantly, however, it should also discuss ways to work towards food justice in your community. Your poem should lead those who see it to reflect, to ask questions, to move them to action.

Because it is a visual poem, you must include images. Your poem will be narrated and must include the text. Your images must be original so carefully consider your choices.

I have provided you with several examples of poems to help you get started.

- [“The Great Tablecloth”](#) by Pablo Neruda
- [“When It’s Gone”](#) by Isabel Brosseau Gray, from the Pulitzer Center’s Fighting Words Poetry Contest
- [“Ayúdame”](#) by Miranda Rodriguez, from the Pulitzer Center’s Fighting Words Poetry Contest
- [“Disappearing Daughters”](#) by Corinne Chin, Erika Schultz, and Claudia Castro Luna
- [“An Ode to Rain”](#) by Awaneesh Baibhav

Here is [a quick tutorial](#).