

Lesson Overview

Grade Level(s)	11
Subject(s)	English Language Arts
Lesson Summary	Students analyze the power dynamics of global health disparities and explore their relationship to underreported news stories through investigation into the lack of affordable insulin in Latin America.
Standards	North Carolina Standard Course of Study (English Language Arts) • RI.11-12.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain. • RI.11-12.2 Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text. • RI.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem. • W3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences. • W6: Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.
Focus Pulitzer Center news story/stories	“ The Insulin Oligopoly and the Diabetes Epidemic in Latin America Pulitzer Center ” by Fabiola Torres, Alicia Tovar, Jason Martinez, Daniela Guazo Manzo, Sergio Silva Numa, Diego Quiceno Mesa, Pamela Huerta, and Daniel Mitma
Content Advisory	This lesson explores diabetes, insulin use, and the systemic issues that limit access to life-saving medication. These topics may intersect with students’ lived personal experiences with medical trauma, poverty, and loss of family and/or friends.
Notes on Context	Established in 1938, West Charlotte High School is a historically and predominately Black comprehensive high school that is located in Charlotte, North Carolina’s historic West End, a predominately African American

	community that is known for its rich culture. According to statistics from the National Center for Educational Statistics (in 2023-24), ninety-eight percent of the student body is composed of students of color. This lesson is especially relevant to this school population because it challenges both local and global myths about health, poverty, assumptions of self care, insulin access, power, and justice. By researching global statistics, dispelling negative stereotypes about those with diabetes, and critically engaging underreported stories about the lack of insulin in Colombia, Peru, and Mexico, students are invited to move beyond harmful oversimplified narratives that have been internalized and recognize the similar barriers to access that limit marginalized people in communities outside of the United States, particularly in Latin American countries.
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Lesson Plan

Essential Questions

- How does reporting make invisible health inequities visible to the world?
- What do systemic inequities in global healthcare access reveal about justice and human responsibility?

Focus Pulitzer Center News Story/Stories

Pulitzer Center News Stories

- [“The Insulin Oligopoly and the Diabetes Epidemic in Latin America”](#) by Fabiola Torres, Alicia Tovar, Jason Martinez, Daniela Guazo Manzo, Sergio Silva Numa, Diego Quiceno Mesa, Pamela Huerta, and Daniel Mitma
- [“Mexico: A Diabetes Patient Spends Between \\$35 and \\$109 on Insulin if It’s Unavailable Through Social Security”](#) by Daniela Guazo Manzo
- [“Colombia: An Insulin Shortage Alert Exposed the Problems of a Market Controlled by a Few”](#) by Sergio Silva Numa and Diego Quiceno Mesa
- [“How Much Does It Really Cost To Produce Insulin?”](#) by Alicia Tovar, Fabiola Torres, and Pamela Huerta

Additional Sources

- [WHO Diabetes Fact Sheet](#)
- [WHO Global Diabetes Compact](#)
- [List of Low and middle income countries](#)

Introducing the Lesson

Diabetes is a chronic illness that occurs when the pancreas fails to produce enough insulin, or when the body cannot effectively manage the insulin it produces to regulate blood sugar. This results in too much glucose in the blood. According to information published by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2022, 830 million people around the world live with diabetes. Diabetes causes other problems, including blindness, kidney failure, heart attack, and stroke. Proper management is essential and can be accomplished through insulin injections and other medications. Unmanaged diabetes is a life-threatening reality for many. More than half of those with diabetes around the world do not take medication for it. Much of the reason for this is the lack of access to equitable and affordable insulin in many developing nations. This lesson focuses on the lack of access to affordable insulin in Latin America, particularly Peru, Mexico, and Colombia.

As a part of a unit featuring *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, which is written by journalist Rebecca Skloot, this lesson introduces 11th grade English Language Arts students to global health disparities and invites students to analyze the systemic issues that bring them about. This lesson highlights health disparities in Latin

America as they relate to diabetes treatment and the insulin oligopoly, which drives up the cost of insulin and restricts its access.

Warm-up/Opening

Prior Knowledge Check

Students will complete a [KWHL chart](#) individually, outlining first what they know about diabetes types and treatment (K), what they want to know about diabetes types and treatments (W), and how they will find the answers to their questions (H). After completing the K, W, and H columns, students will engage in a turn and talk with a peer to discuss for two minutes what they know and want to know. The whole class will share their response with a student recording the W responses on a flip chart sheet. The list of questions will remain visible throughout the lesson.

Preparing to Engage with the Focus Resource(s)

Prior to beginning the lesson, students should be able to:

- Read, annotate, and identify the central idea, audience, and purpose of an article.
- Define bias, identify credible sources, and understand claims, reasoning, and evidence.
- Read and interpret statistics.
- Identify, define, and explain the meaning of rhetorical language and figurative devices.
- Incorporate statistics and other forms of evidence into their writing.
- Demonstrate a basic understanding of diabetes as a chronic and potentially life threatening illness.
- Communicate clearly and respectfully with peers as a part of a team.

Vocabulary Exercise

Building on the aforementioned knowledge, students will continue to develop their foundational understandings by creating a word bank of new/unfamiliar terms they encounter while reading and researching. They will read and analyze three articles using the unreported stories analysis form to understand the dynamics of power, narration, and diction:

- [“Mexico: A Diabetes Patient Spends Between \\$35 and \\$109 on Insulin if It’s Unavailable Through Social Security”](#) by Daniela Guazo Manzo
- [“Colombia: An Insulin Shortage Alert Exposed the Problems of a Market Controlled by a Few”](#) by Sergio Silva Numa and Diego Quiceno Mesa
- [“How Much Does It Really Cost To Produce Insulin?”](#) by Alicia Tovar, Fabiola Torres, and Pamela Huerta

Exploring the Resource(s)

Day 1

At the beginning of the first class session, students independently complete the first three columns of a [KWHL chart](#) to engage the subject of global health disparities and to determine their knowledge of diabetes and its treatments. After students have completed their independent chart, they engage in a two minute turn and talk with a peer to talk through what they know (K), want to know (W), and how they will learn more (H). A leader(s) is selected by the class at the end of the turn and talk to record the KW and H on behalf of the whole group class discussion. This information shared in this exercise remains posted throughout the duration of our examination of the insulin oligopoly.

Next, students complete an initial reading of “[The Insulin Oligopoly and the Diabetes Epidemic in Latin America](#)” by Fabiola Torres, Alicia Tovar, Jason Martinez, Daniela Guazo Manzo, Sergio Silva Numa, Diego Quiceno Mesa, Pamela Huerta, and Daniel Mitma, taking notes and recording at least two unfamiliar words into the word bank, which also directs them to insert their definition. At the conclusion of the class, students record two things they learned in the L column of the KWHL chart. However, the chart will not be complete until the end of the second class period, at which point students insert three or more additional things they learned.

Classroom Think-Aloud**Guiding Questions**

- How do colonialism, power imbalances, discriminatory policies, and unequal resource distribution create, sustain, and worsen global health disparities?
- How does the limited competition among key insulin manufacturers influence drug pricing and global access to affordable diabetes medications and what practices could most effectively change this imbalance?
- How can reporting, in its effort to promote justice, amplify the voices of marginalized communities?

To explore answers to these questions, students will conduct a close read of “[The Insulin Oligopoly and the Diabetes Epidemic in Latin](#).” I, using a think-aloud activity, will model how students will develop additional questions. Students will also reference the following questions as a guide:

- After reading this text, what bothers you about insulin cost or inaccessibility in Latin America?
- What information is missing or incomplete?
- Whose perspective is not included in the decision making and why?

Day 2

Class period two builds students’ knowledge of diabetes as a global health concern that causes great harm. Students independently explore the World Health Organization (WHO) diabetes site, the list of low and middle income countries, and other statistical data to understand the pervasiveness of diabetes around the world. They also review the WHO compact to determine where the disparities are in access to affordable insulin. As students explore the aforementioned sites, they complete the [Research Sheet](#). Time is allotted at the end of the

class session for students to talk through their answers with a peer and to construct three additional questions to be answered in the next class when they conduct a deeper dive into related articles. The questions students devise are based on gaps in information. They are prompted to ask the following questions:

- After reading this text, what bothers you about insulin cost or inaccessibility in Latin America?
- What information is missing or incomplete?
- Whose perspective is not included in the decision making and why?

Class two concludes with students adding the final bullets to the L column of their individual and class KWHL chart.

Day 3

In the third and final class period, students divide into groups of two-three to read and discuss the English summaries of three related articles:

- [“Mexico: A Diabetes Patient Spends Between \\$35 and \\$109 on Insulin if It’s Unavailable Through Social Security”](#) by Daniela Guazo Manzo
- [“Colombia: An Insulin Shortage Alert Exposed the Problems of a Market Controlled by a Few”](#) by Sergio Silva Numa and Diego Quiceno Mesa
- [“How Much Does It Really Cost To Produce Insulin?”](#) by Alicia Tovar, Fabiola Torres, and Pamela Huerta

After reading each article aloud in their groups, each student selects one of the three articles and completes the [Underreported Stories Analysis Form](#).

The lesson concludes with a written [reflection exercise](#) through which students demonstrate their understanding of the interplay between the insulin oligopoly, global health disparities, power, and how reporting helps to bring about justice for those affected.

Student reflections become the starting point (opening statement) for students participating in an end of unit forum about global health disparities. This forum builds community and shares knowledge with the rising class of juniors about global health disparities. Sample questions addressed in the forum include the following:

1. What role does journalism play in reporting stories of injustice?
2. What is unjust about the insulin market in Latin America?
3. What surprising things did you learn about the treatment of diabetes outside of the U.S.?
4. How can we as students help to change issues of injustice like the Henrietta Lacks story and the insulin oligopoly?

Students are encouraged to develop their own questions for the forum and to ask questions of those participating on the panel as well as the sophomores in the audience.

Performance Task

Written Reflection

Students will be read about the insulin oligopoly in Latin America and analyze how underreported stories can bring to light systemic inequities in healthcare to foster accountability and change. As a result of this analysis, students will complete a reflective writing assignment that will be accessed by a self-made rubric. The main goal is for students to conclude this lesson plan with a broadened perspective of what injustice is and how it operates in healthcare both locally and globally. I aim to foster increased empathy and a commitment to amplify the voices of those most affected by inequity and injustice.

Students will write a three-paragraph (6-8 sentences each) reflection responding to the following questions:

- 1) Option 1
 - a) What did you learn about the insulin oligopoly in Latin America?
 - b) Who is most affected and why?
 - c) What new and interesting stories did you encounter while researching this issue?
- 2) Option 2
 - a) How do power dynamics affect what stories get reported?
 - b) What role does reporting play in bringing light to stories that are underreported?
 - c) How do the reporter's word choices, structure, and sources shape the way the story is received by the public?
- 3) Option 3
 - a) How does this story change your understanding of the relationship between reporting/journalism and justice?
 - b) What challenges did you face when researching health care disparities? What did you learn from them?
 - c) How will you apply this information to disparities in your own community?

Assessment

- Student learning is evaluated using the completed [Underreported Stories Analysis Form](#).
- The culminating activity is a reflective writing assignment that will be accessed by a [rubric](#) I constructed for this task. This reflection is used as an opening statement for students participating in a student forum about global health inequities in December and January.