Looking at Aid: A Comparative Study

Lesson Overview: This lesson focuses on two models of providing assistance to communities that suffer from food insecurity. Students will investigate two organizations and the methods they use to provide aid. Finally, students will be asked to consider the pros and cons of the methods used by each organization and offer opinions about how best to provide aid. This lesson is based on information presented at the 2012 University of Chicago Teacher Institute, “Feeding the World: Challenges to Achieving Food Security.”

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Subject(s): Humanities, History, Writing, Technology, World Issues

Suggested Grade Level(s): 6–10

Time Duration: One to two 45–50 minute class periods

Common Core State Standards Addressed:
Common Core Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies

Key Ideas and Details, Standard 2
- Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions (Grades 6–8)
- Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text (Grades 9–10)

Craft and Structure, Standard 4
- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies (Grades 6–8)
- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social studies (Grades 9–10)

Craft and Structure, Standard 6
- Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally) (Grades 6–8)
- Analyze how a text uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis (Grades 9–10)
Objectives:

- Students will learn about different models for providing aid to food-insecure populations.
- Students will think critically about the strengths and shortcomings of each aid model.
- Students will consider and discuss which model works better and whether a combination approach should be used, depending on the circumstances.

Materials:

- “Can Smallholder Farms Feed the World?” -- Stephanie Hanson’s PowerPoint presentation from the University of Chicago Center for International Studies 2012 Institute, “Feeding the World: Challenges to Achieving Food Security.”
- Projector and screen and laptop to project images
- Laptops or computers for groups of three to four students to work in groups on the Internet
- Optional Background for Teachers: Erin Koepke and Stephanie Hanson’s video lectures given at the University of Chicago Center for International Studies 2012 Institute, “Feeding the World: Challenges to Achieving Food Security.”
  http://cis.uchicago.edu/outreach/summerinstitute/2012/resources.shtml

Activities and Procedures:

Introductory Activity:
1. Project the following scenario on the board:
   A healthy, well balanced lunch at Seamus’s school costs $5.00. Seamus needs to eat such a lunch every day so he can concentrate on his work in the afternoon and still have energy for soccer practice after school. He is usually good at remembering his lunch money, but on October 27th, he forgot to bring it. Seamus sees two options: he can call home and ask his mom to bring him money for lunch, or he can borrow $0.50 from ten friends and pay them each back over the course of the month.

2. Divide the class into pairs or groups of three and ask them to consider the scenario and to create a list of pros and cons for each option.

3. Go around the class and have each group share the pros and cons from their lists. Offer additional ideas they might not have brought up (e.g. if he calls home, he will have to wait for his mom to bring the money, if she even has time, and this could mean not having time to eat; friends might want $0.75 back instead of $0.50, etc.).
4. Ask them to weigh out both of these options, and consider which sounds like the better option. Does Seamus have any other options? Is there a middle ground? Point out that Seamus’s situation is more complicated than it at first appeared. Explain to the class that Seamus’s dilemma is a metaphor for a larger, more complex, real-world situation.

**Defining Emergency Food Aid and Micro-finance:**

1. Project the following definitions on the board:
   
   **Emergency Food Aid:** providing food and related assistance to tackle hunger, either in emergency situations, or to help with deeper, longer term hunger alleviation and achieve food security (where people do not have to live in hunger or in fear of starvation).¹

   **Micro-finance:** A type of banking service that is provided to unemployed or low-income individuals or groups who would otherwise have no other means of gaining financial services. Ultimately, the goal of microfinance is to give low income people an opportunity to become self-sufficient by providing a means of saving money, borrowing money and insurance.²

2. Ask students to explain each definition in their own words. Then, ask if they see a connection to the scenario from the introductory exercise:
   
   - Which option is “emergency food aid” and which “micro-financing”?
   - We are going to explore if the pros and cons generated for Seamus’s scenario hold up on a global scale when thinking about the food insecure in the developing world.

**Investigating Organizations: Two Models in Action:**

1. Have students get back into groups and set them up with a computer. Tell them they will be looking at two organizations, one which (primarily) provides food aid and one that uses micro-financing to support subsistence farmers. Project the following websites:
   
   - [http://www.oneacrefund.org/](http://www.oneacrefund.org/)

Instruct each group to spend time reading on both websites and familiarizing themselves with both organizations. Have them find and record answers to the following questions:

- What is the name of the organization?
- What is their mission?
- What programs do they run to achieve their mission? What success stories does each organization mention on their websites?
- How would you categorize their mission and programs (i.e. an emergency food aid or micro-financing organizations)?

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² [http://www.investopedia.com/terms/m/microfinance.asp#axzz22JFm2oDN](http://www.investopedia.com/terms/m/microfinance.asp#axzz22JFm2oDN)
2. Once groups have spent a fair amount of time on each site and seem to have a grasp of each organization and what their mission and programs are, instruct student groups to create a pros and cons list for each organization, weighing in on how effective they think the methods and programs of each organization can be in alleviating food insecurity.

3. Have each group present their pros and cons to the class. Provide space for groups to discuss their opinions. (Note: There is arguably a need for both methods of assistance, but students might not grasp the required nuance of each case: hunger is an issue of poverty and providing poor farmers with a means to support and feed themselves through loans, education, and infrastructure is a crucial step in alleviating food insecurity before it reaches a state of crisis; but the networks required for this small-scale approach take time to build and need to be scaled up over time and crises do occur that call for emergency food aid in a shorter term; critiques of direct aid range from the logistical to the philosophical, but most of all it is a stop-gap measure at best that comes once a crisis has erupted rather than aiming to root out the underlying, initial causes of hunger. Each assistance response has its pros and cons.)

Final Activity:
1. Ask the following statements and have students stand at their seats if they agree:
   - Emergency food aid is the best way to alleviate global hunger?
   - Micro-finance is the best way to alleviate global hunger?
   - Neither emergency food aid nor micro-financing alone can fully alleviate global hunger?

2. Invite a student or two who stood for each statement to explain their points of view.

Optional Assessment:

Go home and try to create your own solution to eradicating food insecurity in a region, other than emergency food aid or micro-finance. Sketch out how this system would work (use pictures, graphs, etc.). Who would be involved? Would the system include support from other countries and/or in-country support? How would governments and/or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) be involved?