

INTERDISCIPLINARY MIDDLE GRADES (4-8) PACKAGE

AIM 7.9: Why was there famine in Somalia in the 1990s?

ASSESSMENT:

- Students will demonstrate their understanding of multiple perspectives on historical events.
- Students will demonstrate their ability to use local events to explain broader historical developments.
- Students will demonstrate their ability to evaluate historical events based on the use of evidence.
- Students will compare events in past and present and from different societies.

DO NOW ACTIVITY: Read ACTIVITY SHEET A, “Malnutrition and Famine.”

MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY: Write “Famine Today” on the board. Ask the students to call out all the images which come to mind when they see these words. Write their words on the blackboard. Then get the class to discuss the difference between Hunger, Malnutrition and Famine.

TRANSITIONAL ACTIVITY: Somalia is a country plagued by war and famine in recent decades. Locate Somalia on a map of Africa. What can we learn about Somalia from the map?

ACTIVITY: Read ACTIVITY SHEET A, “Hodan’s Story.” The story shows how forces outside Hodan’s control make it difficult for her to feed her family. Discuss what students think will happen to Hodan and her family.

SUMMARY QUESTION: What were the causes of famine in Somalia?

HOMEWORK: Pretend you are an American aid worker in Somalia who meets meets Hodan and her family. Write a letter to a friend at home describing your thoughts and worries.

APPLICATION:

- Working individually or in groups, students should match a cause of famine today with each paragraph. The full class should discuss student choices.
- How is famine in Somalia today similar to and different from famine in nineteenth century Ireland?

<p>REFLECTION: Teachers feel that this lesson requires a map of Africa and also benefits from a map of the world. Some students found the passages difficult to understand. Teachers found it helpful to review questions before students read the passages. Some teachers recommended this as a “read aloud” activity with teachers reading the passages so students can concentrate on meaning instead of deciphering text.</p>

ACTIVITY SHEET

Malnutrition and Famine

Malnutrition occurs when the human body gets less food than it needs to function properly. The average adult needs 2,400 calories per day. Anyone receiving below this amount is undernourished. The critical minimum limit is 1,600 calories per day. Below this there is little chance of survival. Those most at risk of malnutrition include the poor (especially the rural poor), slum dwellers and the landless, women and children among the poor, refugees and tribal people. Malnutrition is a creeping problem -- people are slowly affected by a lack of adequate food over a long number of years

Famines occur when people cannot get the food they need to survive. Sometimes there is no food. Sometimes there is food, but people do not have the resources to purchase it. It results in a sharp increase in the number of deaths in a particular area. These deaths are caused by both disease and starvation. Famine is not an uncontrollable tragedy. In the modern world they are preventable.

Questions

- 1- What is malnutrition?
- 2- What is a famine?

Hodan's Story

1. Hodan lived with her husband, Gibreel and their three children near Baidoa in Somalia. She was poor: she had no money and just a few farming tools. Her small plot was barely large enough to provide food for her family. If she was better off she could have bought more land but she had already sold some of her goats to survive. The few goats she had left provided the family with milk.
2. The land Hodan has was poor. Until a few years ago she had a larger piece of land but her neighbours who belonged to another clan took over some of her best land. Since then, each year she had to farm the same piece of land and as a result, the land became less and less fertile, producing less and less maize. Meanwhile, her neighbours were growing bananas and cotton and getting richer and richer.
3. Hodan cooked the maize for her family on their stove of three stones. Each day the children would gather firewood while the goats grazed on the vegetation nearby. Hodan knew cutting the trees was damaging the environment. When the rains came she could see the soils being washed away and with it valuable nutrients. But Hodan had no choice.
4. The first year the rains failed, Hodan and her family survived on the maize they had stored from the previous harvest. The next time the rains failed they had nothing stored because the harvest had been so poor. They survived by eating wild grasses, berries, leaves and roots. Gibreel went to work on their neighbours farm. Relatives gave them seed for the next year.
5. Hodan took her remaining goats to the market where she hoped to sell them to buy food for her family. Many of her neighbours were there -- everyone wanted to sell their animals. Most of the animals were already in poor condition because the grazing was so poor. Few people had money to spend. Because of this the price of goats had fallen and Hodan got very little money for her goats. To make matters worse

the price of food had risen. This was because food was scarce. Food was being imported from neighbouring countries and this was very expensive.

6. Because of the shortage of food, Hodan's family's health was suffering. The youngest child became seriously ill with measles and the other children were suffering from malaria. Hodan could not afford the medicine they needed. She herself was becoming weaker and weaker and was finding it harder to work.

7. Somalia had a long history of war. Britain and Italy had taken control of Somalia at different times. Somalia had also been at war with Ethiopia. Clashes between clans were common. The President Siad Barre encouraged clan rivalry. When he fled to Kenya, Somalia was left with no President and no government and the violence continued. One day, Hodan's village was attacked, her home and crops were destroyed and she was left with nothing.

8. Hodan and her family left their village and walked for several days. Finally they arrived at a refugee camp where some international Aid agencies were giving out food. Thousands of others had already flocked into the area. Hodan and her family were given shelter made out of plastic sheeting. There wasn't enough food, clean water or proper sanitation in the camp. The militia sometimes raided the camp for food. Some of the agencies ended up paying the militia for security. Hodan could see that this was actually keeping the factions in business for longer.

Questions

- 1- Why are Hodan and her family described as "poor"?
- 2- Why does Hodan's land produce less food each year?
- 3- How did Hodan and her family survive without rain?
- 4- How did the shortage of food affect Hodan and her family?
- 5- How did war make conditions in Somalia worse for Hodan and her family?