

Day 1 – What Is Poverty and Who Are the Poor?

Introduction

Thanks to movies, TV, and our own experiences, we all have personal mental images of poverty. While these images help to form our individual opinions about issues surrounding world poverty, the very fact that they are personal means that they may be difficult to discuss with others. Fortunately, we can take steps to make communication easier. Discussing a controversial issue like world poverty is more likely to be productive if the word "poverty" means the same thing to everyone in the discussion.

Before attempting to answer the question of whether capitalism is good for the poor, we must agree on some common vocabulary. The goal of this research is to arrive at a working definition, so that when a classmate refers to "world poverty," or "the poor," those participating in the discussion actually hear what the speaker thought she said.

Your Group Task – Make a Poster!

- Answer the following question and create a graphic/visual product that portrays your answer.

In terms of the world's population, what is poverty and who are the poor?

Steps to Take:

1. Individually, generate a working list of characteristics and indicators that you believe define world poverty and/or characterize the world's poor.
2. In your group, discuss the individual lists and compile a list of possible **critical attributes** of world poverty.
 - The term "critical attributes," as used in logic, means *those characteristics of a concept which must be present for the concept to exist*. Identifying the critical attributes of world poverty allows you to examine an instance or circumstance and decide if it is an example of the concept.
 - (For example, here's an interesting question: Does poverty in the U.S. have the same critical attributes as world poverty?)
 - Another way to think of critical attributes is to ask yourselves: "How do we tell who is poor and who isn't?" or "How do we decide whether or not a *nation* is poor?" or "How do we draw a line to separate the poor from the non-poor?"
3. Divide the critical attribute list among group members and use the websites given under the Resources section to reconsider the items in terms of what information you find from the sources about the world's poor. Be alert to commonalities, patterns, trends, magnitude as you compare the web content to your listed items.

4. Use the resources section (below) to start your research. **Try to stay off Google!** Remember, we're trying to develop useful vocabulary here. The resources below will steer you in the direction of the United Nations, the Economics, the International Monetary Fund, and other sources that *actually use* this common vocabulary!
5. Reconvene your group and share your findings. Reach a consensus on the critical attributes list. Based on your findings, write a short (no more than 2 sentences) answer to the question:

In terms of the world's population, what is poverty and who are the poor?

6. Create a visual of the "typical" poor person to illustrate your answer. Your visual must contain 3 elements:
 - A title: you can use the question or another related, more creative option.
 - Your names (discreet, but on the front of the poster).
 - a human figure labeled with the characteristics of world poverty - age, gender, race, health, etc
 - A printed map that shows of the location and/or distribution of world poverty
 - 5 startling statistics that surprised you during your research
 - A list of your group's '**critical attributes**' of world poverty (4-6 attributes)

Draw your "typical" poor person or you may print out or create a picture that you like, then link the concepts above to this person in a visually appealing way.

7. Put it up! Hang your poster in a visible spot on the wall.
8. Gallery walk! In groups, take a look at the work developed by the other groups.
 - Was your 'picture' the same? Different? Why?
 - Does your group agree or disagree with the distribution of world poverty
 - How do your critical attributes line up with those of other groups?
 - How can we use these posters to develop a common 'definition' or set of critical attributes that help us talk about poverty?

Assessment: 15 points (formative). 5 points for each category.

Refinement:	Is the poster refined to the best of your abilities, and represent the artistic talents of your entire group?
Content:	Does your poster demonstrate a complex engagement with the required core content?
Group Cohesion:	How well did you group work together to research and create the final product?

Internet Resources: What is Poverty?

Articles:

The Economist: “[Measure by Measure](#): How the world’s richest country tries to count its poor” (emphasis on the American struggle to define and track poverty across demographic lines)

<http://www.economist.com/node/17961878>

The United Nations: Learning to Live Together. (Absolute versus relative poverty, income perspective versus basic needs perspective)

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/international-migration/glossary/poverty/>

Websites:

The World Bank – Poverty Data: provides in-depth information on world poverty.

- www.worldbank.org/depweb/english/modules/economic/gnp/map1.html

The United Nations: The UN website contains a significant number of embedded links to further information on poverty and the state of the world’s population.

- International Human Development Indicators: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries>
- [Millennium Development Goals](#) - www.undp.org/mdg
Note: Each of the 8 items (purple font) is a link to a set of graphic data. For example:
[Eradicating Hunger](#)

World Poverty: These links will provide other information on poverty.

- [The IMF \(International Monetary Fund\)](#): Is World Poverty Falling?
<http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2002/06/deaton.htm>
- [EarthTrends](#): This is a searchable database. Select “population” or “economics” lists at the top of the page. – earthtrends.wri.org/searchable_db/

Poverty in the United States: These links may help you to decide how (and if) the United States fits into the picture of **world** poverty

- [US Census Bureau – Poverty Data](#) www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/poverty.html
- [Poverty Threshold](#) - www.irp.wisc.edu/faqs/faq1.htm
- [Institute for Research on Poverty \(University of Wisconsin, Madison\)](#) - www.irp.wisc.edu/faqs/faq1.htm
- [Beyond Poverty – US Census measures of household goods](#) - www.census.gov/hhes/poverty/beyond/
- [Income Tables – US Census Bureau](#) - www.census.gov/hhes/income/histinc/incfamdet.html

Some important vocabulary:

Income – a *flow* of goods and services.

- the rewards earned by the owners of resources for contributing their resources to production.

Wealth – a *stock* of assets.

- the accumulation of income saved and reinvested in savings accounts, stocks, bonds, property and other assets

Absolute poverty – defined with reference to a minimum threshold of material well-being.

- usually stated in dollar terms
- dollar amounts are converted by PPP (purchasing power parity) to real dollar amounts

Relative poverty – defined by comparing the well-being of one segment of a population with that of another segment of the population

Reflection:

- **What was your personal definition of “poverty” or “the poor” before beginning your group research?**
- **Describe your mental picture of the characteristics of the world’s poor and how it compared to what your group discovered by doing the research.**
- **Did your group’s research challenge/contradict/support your beliefs or viewpoints concerning the poorest regions of the world? Were you surprised?**
- **How would you distinguish between world poverty and being “poor” as we see it in the United States?**