

Hunger Banquet

Grades 7-12
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TIME

2hrs

Materials Needed

- Script (provided attachment pp. 5)
- Color-coded tickets for each participant (pp. 7-8, see pp. 4 for proper breakdown of demographics based on class size)
- "Shift notice" scenarios and script (pp. 19)
- Map of Massachusetts (pp. 21)
- Snack that can easily be passed out in different amounts to the groups (i.e. apple slices, carrots, crackers, m&ms, peanuts, etc.).

Objective

This activity, an adaptation of Oxfam's Hunger Banquet, demonstrates the unequal distribution of food and resources in our own region and helps participants understand some of the underlying causes of poverty and food insecurity that affect those in our communities.

Procedure

- Before the participants arrive:
 - Cut out the color-coded tickets, making sure there is one ticket per participant.
 - Organize the desks or tables so that there is enough chairs at each table for all of the participants with the same colored ticket to sit together.
 - Place the correct color group scenario card on the tables (*see attachment*). It will help to make these scenario cards in the colors of the groups or draw on them with a marker. This way, it's clear to students, for example, where the blue table is located, where the orange table is located, etc
 - As the participants walk into the room, distribute one ticket to each person. Ask the participants to sit at the table with the same color as the ticket they hold.
 - Once everyone has arrived and the groups are assembled, welcome the participants to the Hunger Banquet of Western Massachusetts and read the Hunger Banquet Script aloud (*see attachment*)
 - Pass out the 100 block grid to each table.
 - Ask the participants to color in the correct number of blocks representing the percentage of people living within that income level. For example, Gray Group = 2% = 2 blocks, Purple Group = 25 =25%, etc.
 - While the participants are coloring their grid, ask one participant from each group to read aloud Side 2 of the Income Demographic Card for their table. (*see attachment*)
 - Before passing out the snack to the participants, explain that you will be 'shifting' before they eat the snack, so the snacks cannot be touched until after the 'shift' occurs.
- Pass out snacks according to income level: Yellow = 1 apple slice per student; Orange = 3 apple slices per student; Blue = 6 apple slices per student; Purple = 10 apple slices per student; gray = 25 apple slices per student. (note- apple slices can easily be substituted for a different snack)
- Ask the participants to look on the back of their color-coded ticket. If the participant has a circle on the back of their ticket, ask them to stand.
- Read aloud the 'shift' notices to the standing participants. Allow each participant to move to their new group after their shift notice has been read.
- Once all of the shift notices have been read. Redistribute the snacks so the each student has the correct amount for their new colored table.
- While the students eat, Discuss:

What did you think about this activity?

How did you feel about moving?

Do you think it's fair that some students are getting more of a snack than others?

Ask the students to make a list of possible things that they could do to help fight hunger in their community

Give students 5-10 minutes to discuss their answers among their group members

Ask one member from each group to present their groups suggestions to the rest of the class.

Possible Actions

Use the student's suggestions to create an action plan for helping your community

Other possible actions should be to host a real hunger banquet, where the students make food and charge members of the community to come eat. The money raised could then be donated to a hunger cause in the community.

Students should also host a food drive.

MA DOE Standards

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Anchor Standards

1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support the conclusions drawn from the text.
2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas
8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH

Nutrition

- 3.3 Recognize hunger and satiety cues and how to make decisions based upon these cues
- 3.7 Describe how food choices are influenced by availability, individual and family preferences, media, and background, and identify healthy foods within various social groups.

Community and Public Health

- 14.4 Identify how individuals can be knowledgeable and active in the school and community to promote health
- 14.6 Describe how local public health departments have developed and implemented policies to keep communities safe.

HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

Economics

- E.1.10 Formulate a savings or financial investment plan for a future goal
- E.6.1 Explain the basic function of money

American Government

- USG1.8 Explain how civil society contributes to the maintenance of limited government in a representative democracy or democratic republic such as the United States.

DETERMINING GROUP SIZES

Number of participants	Income \$10,000 or less Yellow Group 5%	Income \$10-24,999 Orange Group 13%	Income \$25-74,999 Blue Group 48%	Income \$75-199,000 Purple Group 25%	Income \$200,000+ Gray Group 1.8%
30	2	4	15	8	0*
35	2	5	17	8	1
40	2	5	20	10	1
45	3	6	21	11	1
50	3	7	22	12	1

* The over \$200,000 income level for this size sample would be less than zero. However, for the purposes of the activity one person should be placed in this group.

SCRIPT (FOR TEACHER)

Read Aloud:

“Welcome to the Western Massachusetts Hunger Banquet. To better understand the needs and lifestyles of various groups in the area, living at different income levels, we will share one mealtime together. You were each given a ticket and placed within a group that depicts the range of annual income for a family. Some of you noticed that your ticket has a mark on the back. We will apply those later in the simulation. First, let’s take a bird’s-eye view of the region, and then we will cover details about each group.”

(Show the class the map of Massachusetts)












“The combined population of the 4 counties of western Massachusetts is approximately 820,000. Each of you symbolizes a family household with your own children, under age 18, who live with you. There are approximately 316,755 families in the region. Most of them live in Hampden County in the area bordering Connecticut, and the smallest population is located in Franklin County, which borders Vermont to the north. For the purposes of this activity we combined statistics on income and poverty from the 4 counties.

Often the fewer people living in an area means that there will be fewer people paying taxes to support the infrastructure of a community. Infrastructures include town services like trash pick-up, schools and teacher salaries, snow plowing, police, and road repair and maintenance. In areas with small populations, there are usually fewer state and federal dollars supporting public health and welfare concerns as well. Now let’s examine each group.”

(Refer to the ‘Procedures’ for the next step.)

COLOR CODED TICKETS- BACK SIDE

Distribute one color-coded ticket per student. (This ticket about is set for 30 participants, extra ticket may be printed off if you have more than 30 participants)- You may also want to color in the tickets to make them more visual for the students

COLOR CODED TICKETS- FRONT SIDE

Distribute one color-coded ticket per student. (This ticket about is set for 30 participants, extra ticket may be printed off if you have more than 30 participants). You may also want to color in the tickets to make them more visual for the students

Blue	Blue	Purple
Blue	Blue	Purple
Blue	Blue	Purple
Blue	Blue	Purple
Blue	Blue	Purple
Blue	Orange	Purple
Blue	Orange	Purple
Blue	Orange	Purple
Blue	Orange	Yellow
Blue	Gray	Yellow

INCOME DEMOGRAPHICS – SIDE ONE

Blue Group

The blue ticket holders are the mid-range income group, earning between \$25,000-75,000 per year. Many of you are married and at least one of you has a college degree. One adult works full-time and the other works at least part-time. Your careers could be in education, social services, manufacturing, technology or business. Since you want to send your 2 children to college in a few years, you are trying to save money, since their tuition could cost you over \$30,000 each year if they go to private colleges.

You bought your home and pay a monthly mortgage. A large portion of your annual salary goes to the mortgage, property taxes, car and health insurance, and utilities such as heating oil and electricity. You can easily use credit for large purchases, such as new appliances, or plane tickets.

You plan your food budget carefully and purchase items on sale. For recreation you take advantage of many local parks and free cultural activities. One week each year the family vacations in Florida, when you stay with a retired grandparent. When they are old enough, both children will earn money at summer jobs and work after school a couple of days each week. Eventually, the kids will have to put most of their summer income into college savings. Overall, as long as your family stays healthy and the car keeps running, life goes along smoothly for you. Your group equals about 48% of the area's families with children less than 18 years.

INCOMEDEMOGRAPHICS – SIDE TWO

Read Aloud to the other students in your class:

Blue Group

- We make up 48% of the population
- We earn \$25,000-\$74,000 a year
- Many of us married and at least one of us has a collage degree
- One adult works full-time and the other at least half-time; Our careers are in education, social services, manufacturing, technology, or business
- We are trying to save money so our kids can go to college
- We own our own home and pay a monthly mortgage; a large part of our salary goes to the mortgage, taxes, car and health insurance, and utilities
- We use credit cards for large purchases, such as plane tickets or appliances
- We plan food budgets carefully and buy things that are on sale
- We go to the local parks and free activities; We a vacation about once a year
- As long as everyone stays healthy and nothing big goes wrong, life goes along smoothly for us.

INCOME DEMOGRAPHICS – SIDE ONE

Purple Group

This is the high income group, with a salary range between \$75,000-199,000 per year. Your children might attend private schools, and you take two vacations each year, staying at resorts or small inns. You have invested money in a second home that you rent out and make income from each month. Your monthly expenses are high, but your combined salaries allow you to live very comfortably. You can choose any food items that appeal to you when you shop, and you frequently dine out. The cost of these restaurant meals is easily over \$60. You are considering purchasing a vacation home, and also a new car.

Since one of you works from a professional home office, you deduct the business expenses on your income taxes, as well as the purchase of new business equipment such as a computer and phone system. You might have a career in architecture, public relations, law or business. You have already saved for your children's education by wisely investing a modest inheritance you received when your grandfather died. This group is about one-quarter, or 25%, of families who live in western Massachusetts.

INCOME DEMOGRAPHICS – SIDE TWO

Read Aloud to the other students in your class:

Purple Group

- We make up 25% of the population
- We earn \$75,000-\$199,000 a year
- Our children might go to private schools
- We take several vacations each year, staying at resorts or small inns
- We might have a second home that we rent out to make more money
- Our month expenses are high, but salaries are high, so we can comfortable
- We can choose any food items that appeal to us when we shop, and we frequently dine out
- We might have a new car
- We might work in architecture, public relations, law or business
- We have already saved for our children's education by investing money.

INCOME DEMOGRAPHICS – SIDE ONE

Orange Group

The orange tickets comprise a low income group of families with incomes between \$10,000-25,000 per year. You represent nearly 13% of the families in western Massachusetts. You may have immigrated to the U.S. and are staying with relatives until you save money to move into your own home, or your family has a voucher to help you with your rent payments. Maybe you live in your own home and find it difficult to pay the mortgage, taxes and repairs. It is also possible that you rent out a room in the house to a non-family member to help make ends meet.

In this income group both adults work at least part-time. However, it is likely that there is a single adult female head of household. Your service jobs are often only 30 hours/week, so that employers do not have to pay health, vacation, or pension benefits. Friends and family are recruited to provide day care, if your children are not yet enrolled in school, since the cost of day care is too high, and you would need to wait ten years to get a day care voucher from public welfare.

You might manage a fast food restaurant, work for a motel chain, in a warehouse, as a secretary, or as a paraprofessional in a school. Your children are covered by Mass Health, but you still must find the money for a co-payment for each visit to the doctor, dentist, or hospital. The adults probably have limited or no health coverage.

Some of you own a car, and you have to spend time and energy to keep it in good repair, since the costs of having a garage fix it are too high. You regularly shop at second-hand stores for clothing and household goods. It sometimes feels impossible to save money, although you can put a little aside if you have earned enough, but not too much, to qualify for Earned Income Tax Credit. If there are any emergencies, you will need to use your savings. Families in this situation could easily be, and often are, recipients of free food through food pantries. A night out for a meal could be a soup kitchen or a fast food restaurant to keep costs down.

You might have completed high school, and perhaps had a year or two of college. Some day you plan to finish your education and are encouraging your children to stay in school. Although you could use a vacation to relax and rest, it places too much of a strain on the budget to take any time off from work. Right now the necessities of daily life - food, shelter, and clothing - and the family's well-being are your priorities.

You could live in any of the counties, since rural, urban and suburban poverty rates are nearly equal. You would have better access to services if you lived in a high-density population center, such as Pittsfield or Springfield. It is extremely difficult to travel to state offices to apply for food stamps or transitional assistance if you live in rural or outlying areas.

INCOME DEMOGRAPHICS – SIDE TWO

Read Aloud to the other students in your class:

Orange Group

- We make up 13% of the population
- We earn \$10,000-\$24,999 a year
- We may have immigrated into the U.S. and are staying with relatives until we save enough money to move into our own house
- We may be two adults who work at least part-time, but more often we are single mothers
- We often work service jobs about 30 hours a week; our employers don't have to pay us health insurance, retirement, or vacation time
- Friends and family help take care of our children
- We might manage a fast food chain restaurant, work for a motel chain, in a warehouse, as a secretary, or as a paraprofessional in a school
- We shop at second hand stores for our clothes
- Vacations are too expensive
- It is difficult for us to take off of work and travel to state offices to apply for food stamps or other assistance if we live in a rural area.

INCOME DEMOGRAPHICS – SIDE ONE

Yellow Group

With an income of under \$10,000 per year, this group represents the most impoverished families in the region. The lack of internal resources creates intense stress on the family members, creating additional hurdles to earning more money. Those of you in this category are probably younger than 25 years old and often a single female head of household. You did not finish high school, but you would like to get your GED eventually and go on to the local community college.

Your survival depends partly on charitable support from non-profit social services and religious groups. You know how to access food from meal sites and food pantries, but you often find long lines and not necessarily the food items you prefer. You receive monthly food stamps, but they generally do not last very long. Since you get housing through public assistance, your choices are very limited and could be dangerous for your children. By forcing impoverished families into isolated areas of cities, towns or suburbs where the low-income housing or sub-standard housing is located, we create ghettos. Schools in many low income areas are often under-funded and overwhelmed with special needs of the children. In many cases your children are at risk for numerous childhood ailments, and the incidence of asthma is very high.

You tend to use the hospital emergency room for general health care, since your coverage is limited to the state-run MassHealth plan. Again, your choices about food, housing, schools, and recreation are determined by your meager income. In rural areas you could be a farm family trying to survive during a poor market for your crops or products. Although you raise food and barter with neighbors, it is difficult to grow independently all that your family will need. Another scenario is that the head of the household is disabled and unable to work. The supplemental social security benefits that the family is entitled to receive do not cover the basics of daily life.

Unfortunately, this group is often “punished” for their poverty, with strict restrictions on amounts of income that can be earned while using public assistance and severe limits on the length of time the state will offer any help. When you accept part-time work at a local factory, you lose most of your welfare benefits and your children’s health insurance, making it even harder to support your family. This paradox makes it nearly impossible to save money to shift out of poverty. Massachusetts has one of the most punitive welfare policies in the nation.

INCOME DEMOGRAPHICS – SIDE TWO

Read Aloud to the other students in your class:

Yellow Group

- We make up less than 5% of the population
- We earn \$10,000 a year
- There is a lot of stress in our families because we do not have enough money
- We are probably younger than 25 years old, and many of us our single mothers
- Many of us did not finish high school, but we would like to get a GED and go to community college
- We depend on support from social services and religious groups
- We know how to access food from meal sites and food pantries, but the lines are often long and do not have the food we prefer
- We receive monthly food stamps, but they don't last long
- We live in public housing in isolated areas
- We tend to use the emergency room for general health care because many of us do not have health insurance

INCOME DEMOGRAPHICS – SIDE ONE

Gray Group

There are very few of you in the top income group. In western Massachusetts only 1.8% of the families make \$200,000 or more per year. You control a greater proportion of the wealth than all the other groups combined, because this sector also includes those who make millions of dollars per year. This is the income divide that we are seeing across the nation. Fewer and fewer families control more and more of the cash in this country.

Somewhere along the line you either earned a significant amount of cash, or you were entitled to it through family connections, or you won the lottery.

You have a multitude of choices about food, housing, clothing, health care, and educational opportunities. These options extend to your children as well. You could have started or inherited a successful business, or just have been privileged to be born into wealth. You may make significant contributions to political campaigns and to charitable organizations.

Your careers could be in sales, politics, entertainment, technology, medicine, or industry. If you are the owners or executives of corporations, you often commute by plane to a job in another part of the U.S. or overseas. Even if you continue to choose to hold a daily job, you know that money makes money, so you will find ways to invest and expand your income base. Most tax laws favor the rich, even if it appears that you pay a lot to the government, and new tax cuts for the highest income levels are being proposed at the federal level.

There is no question about having enough funds for college. In fact, you expect your children to attend one of the best schools in the country and then continue on for specialized training. Your family enjoys their numerous vacations around the world each year.

INCOME DEMOGRAPHICS – SIDE TWO

Read Aloud to the other students in your class:

Grey Group

- We make up only 1.8% of the population
- We earn over \$200,000 a year
- We control a greater proportion of the wealth than ALL of the other groups combined
- We either earn a lot of money or get it through family connections, or won the lottery
- We have a lot of choices about food, housing, clothing, health care, and educational opportunities
- We tend to make significant contributions to political campaigns and to charitable wealthy people
- We have enough money to send our children to the best schools in the country
- We enjoy numerous vacations around the world

SHIFTING DEMOGRAPHICS (FOR TEACHER)

Read aloud:

“In this section of the Hunger Banquet we will look at the impact on families when their income changes. Those of you who have a circle on the back of your tickets will receive a “shift notice.” I (*the teacher*) will read your scenario aloud, and you can join your new group. Remember that each of you represents an entire family with children, so the shift in lifestyle affects everyone in your household.”

“shift notice” cards

Note to Teacher: Each student with a dot on their ticket will receive a different ‘shift notice’. Make sure to call the students name before reading the shift notice, so that each student knows which shift notice belongs to them.

Blue Group

Person 1: “You are a manager at a precision tool company that is closing its Franklin County plant. Although the company will continue operations at its home base in Germany, you have not been asked to re-locate. You no longer have a job and the family will rely on your spouse’s part-time income of \$20,000. You must move to the Orange Group.”

Person 2: “Unexpected health care costs for your child have put you in debt. Although your income is stable, the overwhelming expenses due to the illness have changed the way you once lived. You now move to the Orange Group.”

Person 3: “As an employee at a famous candle company, you are often requested to work overtime. One night you refuse to stay, and the following week you receive a termination notice. Please move to the Orange Group.”

Person 4: “You held an excellent job as a personal assistant in an exclusive private home. With little warning you were dismissed from your job. You will be in the Yellow Group until a new job appears.”

Purple Group

Person 1: “This has been a very bad year for your investments. You also had to close your home-based business in the travel industry. Your spouse is still employed, and you still have money in savings, but the changes in your budget mean you have to move to the Blue Group.”

Person 2: “After your divorce, the changes in your income force you to be more conservative in your spending. Take your place with the Blue Group.”

Orange Group

Person 1: “After many years of saving money, you return to college and attain a professional degree. Your new position as a school adjustment counselor moves you to the Blue Group.”

Person 2: “You held a steady job as a housekeeper at a hotel until your recent injury. Even though you receive disability payments, the loss of income now places you in the Yellow Group.”

Person 3: “You started a home-based enterprise with a loan from friends. The success of the business moves you and your partner (pick one other person from your group!) to the Blue Group.”

Yellow Group

Person 1: "Your social worker has found a placement for you in a life skills program that enables you to get a technical degree. You now have a job with benefits that moves you to the Orange Group"

Gray Group

Person 1: "Your income has been deeply affected by the recent corporate scandals. Your assets protect you from feeling much of a change in lifestyle, and you will get to deduct the stock losses from the income tax you pay. Unfortunately, you did have to let go of one of your personal assistants. You can stay where you are."

Person 2: "We have completed the changes section of the activity, and it is now time to eat. Each group stays together for their meal. Depending on your income level, you will find varying degrees of quality and quantities of food. Once we have finished the meal we will de-brief about the experience. A student organizer will help each color group with acquiring their food."

(After the participants have shifted to their new groups, refer to the 'procedures' for discussion questions)

Hunger Banquet

The Food Bank of Western
Massachusetts

