

Date Reviewed

February 2023

Course

[Social Studies 6](#)

Topic

Poverty and Inequality

Big Idea

Economic self-interest can be a significant cause of conflict among peoples and governments.

Essential Question

What are the causes of poverty and inequality?

Learning Standards**Content:**

Students are expected to know the following:

- global poverty and inequality issues, including class structure and gender

Curricular Competencies

Students are expected to be able to do the following

- Differentiate between short- and long-term causes, and intended and unintended consequences, of events, decisions, or developments (cause and consequence)

Core Competencies

[Communication](#) - I can share my ideas about how to reduce poverty.

[Thinking](#) - I can check information, assess my thinking, and develop reasoned conclusions about the causes and consequences of poverty.

[Personal and Social](#) - I can describe how aspects of my life experiences, family history, background, and where I live (or have lived) have influenced my understanding of poverty.

First People's Principles of Learning

Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.

Introduction

- Ask students to name things they need in order to survive (*food, water, shelter, health care...*). List these in one column. Have students name things that they want. List these in a second column. Discuss the difference between needs and wants.
- Listen to a read-aloud of [Those Shoes](#) by Marybeth Boelts.
- Return to the class-generated list of needs and wants. In a different color, list Jeremy's needs and wants as described in the story.
- Have students respond to the following prompt in their journals: "For a child in grade 6, living in poverty means not being able to..."

Pre-Assessment

Think-Pair-Share

- Why are some people poor?
- How would you know if there is poverty in our country? Our community?
- What are some ways to prevent or reduce poverty?

Interactive Learning Activities

Part 1: What is Poverty?

- Explain that poverty can mean different things. *Absolute Poverty* is when household income is below a certain level, which makes it impossible for the person or family to meet basic needs of life including food, housing, safe drinking water, healthcare, etc. *Relative Poverty* is when a person or family cannot enjoy the same standard of life as everyone else in the country including internet access, clean clothes, a safe home, or even education.
- Provide each student with a copy of the **Needs and Wants** sheet. Ask students to work with their parent or guardian to provide cost estimates.
- Afterwards, have students respond to the following question in their journal: "If you had only enough to meet your needs, how would you balance this with your wants?"

Part 2: Is there Poverty in BC?

- Assess students' prior knowledge of poverty in our province by having them determine if each statement on the sheet **Poverty and Inequality in BC** is true or false.
- Address misconceptions using the facts from **Answer Key: Poverty and Inequality in BC**.
- Explain that Canada's poverty line is based on the [Market Basket Measure](#). This is the cost of food, clothing, housing, transportation, and other items for individuals and families representing a modest, basic standard of living.
- Have students take home the **Monthly Budget** sheet to complete with a parent or guardian.
- Have students respond to the following prompt in their journals: If your family had to live on less than \$95 a day, what would become most important? What would you have to give up?

Part 3: What are the Causes and Consequences of Poverty?

- Using a Think-Pair-Share strategy, ask
 - Why are some people poor?
 - If you didn't have enough money, what problems would you face?
- Read aloud the comic "[On a Plate: a short story about privilege](#)".

- Have students work in pairs to complete the chart and questions on the sheet **Causes and Consequences of Poverty**.
- Debrief the activity using **Answer Key: Causes and Consequences of Poverty**.

Part 4: How Can We Reduce Poverty?

- Show the video [Thinking Upstream](#) (1:14) by the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition.
- Draw the river and bridge on the whiteboard, and use the following questions to support students in filling in the picture:
 - What does poverty look like in your family, neighbourhood or community? *Fill in the river with the student suggestions. Note that many of their ideas may be stereotypes of poverty or the most visible manifestations of poverty e.g. homeless people, drug addicts, etc. Use the **Answer Key: Poverty and Inequality in BC** to add the bigger context to their comments e.g. “actually most poor people are working but unable to make ends meet.”*
 - What kinds of responses to poverty are crisis responses like rescuing people from the river? *Fill in the river banks with the student suggestions. If none, guide them to think about soup kitchens, food banks, shelters, etc.*
 - What could we do in relation to poverty to re-build the bridge so that people aren't falling into poverty? What are some solutions that could prevent poverty in the first place? *Fill in the bridge with the student suggestions. If none, guide them to think about income assistance and minimum wage increases, social housing, free education, dental care, etc.*
- Explain that by downstream, we mean giving help to those who are in need. We might donate to a food bank or support a charity to try to reduce the consequences of poverty such as hunger and homelessness.
- Explain that by upstream, we mean preventing poverty by dealing with its causes. For example, governments can introduce policies to keep people out of poverty. In 2019, the Government of Canada created the [Poverty Reduction Act](#). This Act has the goal of reducing poverty in Canada by 50% by 2030.
- Have students explore Statistic Canada's [Dimensions of Poverty Hub](#) to see how Canada is doing with its goals to reduce poverty in Canada.
- Ask: What is Canada doing to reduce poverty? What areas are improving? What do we still need to work on?

Post-Assessment

Have students respond to the following questions in their journals:

How has your understanding of the causes of poverty changed? How are the consequences of poverty related to the causes? What are some ways to reduce poverty?

Extension Activities

- Read the novel [No Fixed Address](#) by Susin Nielsen about a 13 year-old boy whose mother loses her job causing them to become homeless.

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Materials and Resources (see next page)

Needs and Wants

Talk to your parent or guardian to find out the cost of meeting your basic needs for one month. (If you have the total cost for your family, you can divide this by the number of people in your family.) Then find out the cost of your wants for one month.

My Needs	Cost of my Needs	My Wants	Cost of my Wants
Food		Clothing of choice	
Housing		Phone/Internet	
Utilities (water, heat, electricity)		Recreational Activities/ Entertainment	
Transportation		Travel	
Other		Other	

Absolute Poverty is when household income is below a certain level, which makes it impossible for the person or family to meet basic needs of life including food, housing, safe drinking water, healthcare, etc.

Relative Poverty is when a person or family cannot enjoy the same standard of life as everyone else in the country including internet access, clean clothes, a safe home, or even education.

If you only had enough money to meet your needs, how would you balance this with your wants?

Poverty and Inequality in BC

	True	False
BC has the lowest poverty rate in Canada		
20% of people living in BC are considered to be poor		
Most people who are poor in BC are unemployed		
Over 100,000 people use foodbanks in BC		
Indigenous people, single mothers, people who identify with LGBTQ community and seniors are most likely to be living below the "poverty line"		
There are about 1000 homeless people in the Vancouver area		

Answer Key: Poverty and Inequality in BC

	True	False
<p>BC has the lowest poverty rate in Canada</p> <p>BC has the second highest poverty rate in Canada at 10.3%, using the Market Basket Measure -that's 481,000 British Columbians struggling to get by. BC has been first or second for over 15 years. We use MBM because it tracks actual cost of living and changes by region so captures BC's housing crisis.</p>		X
<p>20% of people living in BC are considered to be poor</p> <p>BC's child poverty rate is 1 in 5 using the Low Income Measure. That's 172,550 children, larger than the population of Coquitlam.</p>	X	
<p>Most people who are poor in BC are unemployed</p> <p>The majority of poor people in BC are working – they have a job but they still can't make ends meet.</p>		X
<p>Over 100,000 people use foodbanks in BC</p> <p>In a typical month, over 100,000 people in BC use food banks and the need is increasing: 1 in 3 are children; almost 1 in 3 are Aboriginal; about 1 in 6 are or were recently employed.</p>	X	
<p>Indigenous people, single mothers, people who identify with LGBTQ community and seniors are most likely to be living below the "poverty line"</p> <p>Poverty is concentrated in specific populations, such as indigenous people, people with disabilities, recent immigrants and refugees, queer and transgender people, single-mother households and single senior women.</p>	X	
<p>There are about 1000 homeless people in the Vancouver area</p> <p>There are approximately 3605 homeless people in Metro Vancouver and an estimated 7,655 homeless people across BC – both of these are recognized as undercounts. In the first youth homelessness count conducted in 2018, 681 youth and children were found homeless in Metro Vancouver, with half being in or from government care.</p>		X

Monthly Budget

Canada's poverty line is based on the Market Basket Measure. This is the cost of food, clothing, housing, transportation, and other items for individuals and families representing a modest, basic standard of living. The current poverty line is \$48,000 for a family of four living in Vancouver. If you divide this amount by 365 days in a year, the poverty line become \$95 a day for a family of four.

Talk to your parents or guardians about the following costs for your family over one month.

Food	
Housing	
Utilities (including electricity, heat, water)	
Transportation	
Clothing	
Communication (cell phone & internet)	
Extra-curricular activities	
Entertainment	
MONTHLY TOTAL	
DAILY ESTIMATE (divide monthly total by 30)	

If your family had to live on less than \$95 a day, what would become most important? What would you have to give up?

Causes and Consequences of Poverty

Instructions: Read the comic “On a Plate: a short story about privilege”. Then complete the chart to analyze the differences in the lives of Richard and Paula. Finally, use the comic, your chart, and your own knowledge of the world to answer the questions.

Richard		Paula
	Living Conditions	
	Health	
	Family Support	
	Education	
	Money	
	Social Status	

Hard work and determination are related to success. How are both Richard and Paula hardworking and determined?

Do Richard and Paula have equal opportunities? Explain.

What responsibility, if any, does someone with Richard's opportunities have for someone with Paula's opportunities?

What could the government do to improve the opportunities for children like Paula?

Answer Key: Causes and Consequences of Poverty

Instructions: Read the comic strip. Then complete the chart to analyze the differences in the lives of Richard and Paula:

Richard		Paula
His house is warm, dry, and full of books and food.	Living Conditions	Her house is crowded, damp, and noisy.
He feels comfortable.	Health	She keeps getting sick.
His parents will do anything for him. Family connections help him get jobs and promotions.	Family Support	Her parents have to work two jobs, leaving her home alone. She takes care of her sick parent.
His school is great with lots of resources, good kids, and teachers who love their job.	Education	Her school is underfunded, rundown, and has many students in each class. Her teachers are tired and stressed.
His parents pay for his education. He is able to borrow money from bank. He does not worry about money.	Money	She works in order to pay for school. The bank does not want to help her. She is worried about money.
People have high expectations for him. He has good connections through his family and is treated with respect.	Social Status	People have low expectations for her. She works low paying jobs and is treated disrespectfully.

Use the comic, your chart, and your own knowledge of the world to answer these questions:

Hard work and determination are related to success. How are both Richard and Paula hardworking and determined?

- Richard studies at university, gets a job, and gets promoted.
- Paula takes care of herself, studies, takes care of her family, and works.

Do Richard and Paula have equal opportunities? Explain.

- No.
- Richard's parents are able to provide him with everything he needs, so he can focus on his education. His family connections help him get a good job and promotions.
- Paula's home and school are chaotic. She has to take care of herself and her sick dad, so she has little time to study. Her family isn't able to help her get money or jobs.

What responsibility, if any, does someone with Richard's opportunities have for someone with Paula's opportunities?

- Treat everyone with respect
- Be honest about his advantages
- Be generous with his time and money to help those who have less opportunities

What could the government do to improve the opportunities for children like Paula?

- Childcare and preschool for children living in poverty
- Better funding for schools in poor neighbourhoods
- Loans for students