
A Recipe for Big Government: Food Insecurity

Segment Length: 5:40 minutes

Lesson Description:

What is food insecurity? What is the difference between food insecurity and hunger? What drives food insecurity in the richest country on earth? How do government initiatives impact dependency and self-sufficiency? In this video, John explores the complexities of food insecurity and welfare programs.

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Explain how food insecurity differs from hunger.
- Identify ways that media has exaggerated this belief of “food insecurity.”
- Discuss how welfare programs perpetuate dependency on government programs.

Concepts & Key Terms:

Dependent: Relying on others or external sources for support or sustenance.

Insecurity: A state of uncertainty or vulnerability, particularly regarding access to basic needs such as food or resources.

Poverty: Lack of access to essential resources and opportunities; being very poor.

Welfare: Government assistance programs designed to provide support and resources to individuals or families in need, typically aimed at addressing poverty and promoting economic stability. Welfare can take a variety of forms (monetary payments, subsidies, vouchers, or housing assistance).

Preview Activity and Questions:

Distribute copies of the K-W-L worksheet to the class. Have students fill in the K and W sections. After showing the video, have students complete the L section and answer the questions at the bottom of the worksheet.

Viewing Guide:

We recommend that teachers show the video segment twice: first to allow students to view the video and focus on the issues presented, and second to allow them time to complete the viewing guide. After they complete the viewing guide, allow students a few minutes to work in pairs to share and verify answers.

Answers to Viewing Guide:

1. hunger
2. calories
3. Healthy
4. food deserts
5. poverty
6. successful

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Viewing Guide

Name _____

Date _____

Class _____

Teacher _____

Directions: As you watch the video, fill in the blanks with the correct term.

1. Food insecurity is not the same thing as _____.
2. Americans are consuming too many _____ rather than too few.
3. _____ food like oatmeal, peanut butter, bananas, and eggs cost much less per calorie than a McDonald's McDouble, or Coke, or chips.
4. But so-called _____ turned out to be a govt trick. When officials designated them, they deviously ignored small businesses and food stands.
5. We've spent more on the war on _____ than all the military wars combined in the United States.
6. "Working really hard is what _____ people do."

Now, take a few moments to reflect on the video and answer the questions below:

What is a "food desert"? What types of businesses are included or excluded when creating this label for a said location? _____

According to Denzel Washington, successful people work hard. Explain what "hard work" means to you. _____

Do you think government programs promote or stifle motivation and hard work? _____

Discussion and Analysis:

1. What is the difference between food insecurity and hunger?
2. Does dependency always help people? Why / Why not?
3. How does culture influence food choices? How does what you grew up eating impact your future food choices? How can that be changed?
4. What impact does transportation have on people's ability to secure food?
5. How does the video suggest that government programs may contribute to continued dependency of people on the government? How might the government benefit from people's dependency on it and its programs?
6. What is meant by the term "food desert"? What types of businesses were discounted when creating this term? Why is that important?
7. What is the War on Poverty? In addition to food assistance programs, what other types of programs or policies are in place to help combat poverty? Have these programs achieved long term success in reducing the number of citizens in poverty? Why / Why not?
8. What is work? According to the video, what are some of the benefits of work besides monetary income?
9. What is self-sufficiency? Would you define self-sufficiency as part of the American Dream or a characteristic in which America's history has been built upon? Why or why not?
10. It's often said about wild animals, "Please don't feed the animals because if you do, they will no longer feed themselves." Meaning, the animals will stop hunting/foraging for food themselves (self-sufficiency) and become dependent on the humans giving them food. Why is this not good for the animals? Do you think the same holds true for humans? If so, how should that impact government programs? (One can also ask if it holds true for businesses as well. Should the government "feed" them, and if so, what might happen to them?)
11. Explore alternative solutions proposed in the video for addressing food insecurity, such as community-based initiatives or promoting work opportunities. What are the potential benefits and challenges of these approaches?
12. What does food insecurity mean to you? Does your understanding of food insecurity differ from the information outlined in the video? If yes, how so?
13. Michelle Obama gave an example of food desert as a mom who wanted to buy some fresh fruit for her kid's lunch having to get on a bus. Does that make sense to you? What about people who live in the suburbs—don't most of them need to drive to a food store? Why isn't that considered a food desert?

14. What is the difference between “reduced quality” and “insufficient quantity” when talking about food?
15. Does your family purchase brand name food products or generic/store brand products? Why? Do you see a connection between purchasing store brands and food insecurity? Why / Why not?
16. If you were offered healthy food or “junk” food (at no cost to you), which would you pick? (Be honest!) Why?
17. Why is there a myth that junk food is more expensive than healthy variety foods? How does this myth play into the narrative of “food insecurity?”

Discuss These Lines from the Video:

1. The USDA admits it here, for most food insecure households, the inadequacies were in the form of reduced quality, not insufficient quantity.
2. Before government’s war on poverty began, Americans were lifting themselves out of poverty.
3. Handouts encouraged people to be dependent.
4. Our government did something remarkable. It created a new class of helpless people.
5. Americans are consuming too many calories rather than too few.
6. Junk food is cheap.
7. Food deserts turn out to be a government trick.
8. Healthy food like oatmeal, peanut butter, bananas and eggs cost much less per calorie than a McDonald’s McDouble, or Coke, or chips.
9. We’ve spent more on the War on Poverty than all the military wars combined in the United States.
10. The media find deprivation everywhere.
11. Working really hard, is what successful people do.

Quotes for Discussion:

Correlation is not causation. – Common saying in research

We have food deserts in our cities. We know that the distance you live from a supplier of fresh produce is one of the best predictors of your health. And in the inner city, people don't have grocery stores. So we have to figure out a way of getting supermarkets and farmers markets into the inner cities. – Michael Pollan

In Detroit, the distance to the closest market selling fresh produce is twice the distance of the closest fast food restaurant. – Jordan DeLong

Farmers markets, farm stands, CSAs, little convenience stores—there are many more retail locations where people find fresh produce. When you take these into account, you will see not much of a food desert anymore.

– Zeenat Kotval-Karamchandani

Activities:

1. Have students complete the K-W-L chart in class or for homework.
2. After showing the video, have students complete the T-Chart in class or for homework.
3. Have students complete the Matching Activity worksheet in class or for homework.
4. Have students create a “food map” of your local area. Students can use Google maps, report on various areas that they cover on their way to/from school, or a combination of both. Assign a central point for students (the school if a class project, or their homes if individual projects) and have them map out places where food can be purchased within a pre-determined radius. In a more urban environment, you’ll want a smaller radius, in more rural, you’ll need a larger radius. Have students create two food maps: one in which they include bodegas, food stands, farmers markets, etc., and one in which they don’t include them. How much of a difference does that make? What conclusions can the students draw from this exercise?
5. Produce a “man-on-the-street” video in which you ask people what “food insecurity” is. If not, provide them with the accepted definition. Ask the people you interview what they think about the term and if they have ever experienced food insecurity. Do they think that purchasing generic foods is the same thing as having no food to eat? Why or why not? What do they think the government “gains” by making things sound worse than they are?
6. Have students write a five-paragraph persuasive essay arguing for or against a specific policy approach to addressing food insecurity. Students should support their argument with evidence from the video and lesson, additional research, and personal insights. Students should consider factors such as government intervention, dependence issues, community-based initiatives, education, and economic empowerment. The essay should include a clear thesis statement, well-structured arguments, and counterarguments addressed with critical analysis.
7. Provide students with grocery store advertisements, online shopping lists, or pricing information for both “junk” food items (e.g., chips, soda, fast food) and “healthy” food items (e.g., fruits, vegetables, whole grains, meat or other proteins). In pairs or small groups, students compare the costs per serving or per calorie of different food options. Have one pair or group also do a comparison of the cost of a fast-food meal (perhaps for a family of 4) and healthy food from a store. Analyze trends in pricing, identify factors influencing

cost disparities, and discuss the implications for individuals and families facing food insecurity. Students then present their findings to the class.

8. Have students research and compile a list of community resources (beyond government programs) available to help families that are dealing with hunger. This assignment could become a resource made available to families at your school. (Some schools even have their own food pantries, which should be included on this list.) What other options are there besides “giving” people food?
9. Use the internet to find news articles about food insecurity. Read articles that support and oppose the concept of food insecurity, then write a one-page summary citing the articles. Highlight words used that show the POV (point of view) of the article.
10. Research the federal government food program SNAP. Did you know about this program prior to watching the video? How does this program work? What makes one eligible to participate in this program? Create a poster or slideshow showcasing the SNAP program. Are there any unique or noteworthy qualities about this program? What types of people most readily participate in this program. Present your findings to your group or class.
11. View “Government Central Planning Fails,” also by John Stossel. How does this video relate to what was conveyed in the Food Insecurity video with regard to promoting self-sufficiency? What were some of the benefits of government loosening its controlling grip that were cited in this second video? Discuss in class or use this video as a homework in which students compare and contrast the nature of government control or dependency in each video.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wKoB5FYhC6Y>
12. Have students review the summary for the government article “Characteristics and Influential Factors of Food Deserts.” Particularly, have them focus on these two last bullet points under What Did the Study Find:
 - a. Residents in the Northeast are less likely to live far from a store than their counterparts in other regions of the country with similar income levels.
 - b. Rural areas experiencing population growth are less likely to be food deserts.

Have students create hypotheses about why those two findings may be so. Why are residents in the Northeast less likely to live far from a store? Why are rural areas that are experiencing population growth less likely to be food deserts?

https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/45014/30940_err140.pdf

13. Have students read “A Hand Up, Not a Hand Out” by Edwin Feulner, and highlight noteworthy or thoughtful ideas within the article. What can be done to enact policy changes regarding food assistance dependency? Have each student share what they thought was enlightening or encouraging about the article.
<https://www.heritage.org/hunger-and-food-programs/commentary/hand-not-hand-out>

Name _____

Date _____

Class _____ Per _____

Teacher _____

A Recipe for Big Government: Food Insecurity Matching Activity

Directions: Match the terms with their definitions.

Term:

Definition:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 1. _____ Dependent | A. The amount or number of something. |
| 2. _____ Food Desert | B. The lack of access to sufficient food, or to an inadequate quality of food. |
| 3. _____ Food Insecurity | C. Activity involving mental or physical effort done in order to achieve a purpose or result. |
| 4. _____ Hunger | D. Requiring someone or something for financial, emotional, or other support. |
| 5. _____ Obesity | E. The level of excellence of something as measured against other similar things. |
| 6. _____ Poverty | F. Financial support given by government to people in need. |
| 7. _____ Quality | G. Having too much body fat, which increases the risk of health problems. |
| 8. _____ Quantity | H. Feeling of discomfort or weakness caused by a lack of food. |
| 9. _____ Welfare | I. The state of being extremely poor. |
| 10. _____ Work | J. Geographic area where residents have few or no convenient options for securing affordable and healthy foods. |

Answer Key:

1. D
2. I
3. B
4. H
5. G
6. J
7. E
8. A
9. F
10. C

Name _____
Class _____ Period _____

Date _____
Teacher _____

A Recipe for Big Government: "Food Insecurity" K-W-L Chart

Directions: Complete the **K** and **W** sections prior to watching the video. After you have seen the video, complete the **L** section and answer the questions below the K-W-L chart.

K	W	L
What I know about food insecurity and food deserts...	What I want to know about food insecurity and food deserts...	What I learned about food insecurity and food deserts...
Is a study about food availability that doesn't include some sources of fresh produce fair and accurate? Explain.	How do "government handouts harm the very people they're meant to help?"	If offered the choice of healthy food or "junk" food, which are you more likely to choose and why? (Be honest!)

Name _____
Class _____ Period _____

Date _____
Teacher _____

A Recipe for Big Government: Food Insecurity T-Chart

Directions: Complete the chart by listing the differences between “food insecurity” (as defined by the government in the video) and the traditional meaning of “hunger.”

Food Insecurity	Hunger