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# Better Than Charity

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Segment Length: 5:30 minutes

## **Lesson Description:**

Do charity and government assistance help people in the long run, or do they perpetuate dependency? Does financial assistance encourage people to look for jobs, or does it discourage them from looking? Has the 27 trillion dollars spent on America's "war on poverty" raised people out of poverty, or has something else? This video examines the complex relationship between charity, welfare, and poverty, and questions the role of entrepreneurs' donations to organizations that help the poor.

## **Objectives:**

Students will be able to:

- Identify benefits and drawbacks of charity and government welfare programs
- Explain how government can inadvertently create dependence
- Formulate ways to help people become independent and self-sufficient

## **Concepts & Key Terms:**

**Capitalism:** An economic system in which private individuals control production and trade.

**Dependency:** Relying on something/someone for support; lacking self-sufficiency

**Philanthropy:** The act of donating money, goods, time, or effort to support a charitable cause.

**Poverty:** Lacking sufficient income or resources to maintain a basic standard of living.

**Welfare State:** A social system based on the assumption that the government is primarily responsible for an individual's well-being.

## **Preview Activity:**

Use Think, Pair, Share to have students answer and discuss these two preview questions: Who should help people get out of poverty? What can people do to help themselves get out of poverty?

**OR**

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. poor | 3. independent | 5. poverty    | 7. economically |
| 2. job  | 4. guilt       | 6. Businesses |                 |

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## Viewing Guide

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Class \_\_\_\_\_ Per \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

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

1. It created a new underclass, generations who stay \_\_\_\_\_.
2. You're losing money by taking on a \_\_\_\_\_.
3. They want you to be \_\_\_\_\_. You're out there and make your own money.
4. Activists \_\_\_\_\_ them into giving money.
5. Once we start deciding what you can do or can't do with your property, what we will get is, and what we've always gotten in history is extreme \_\_\_\_\_.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ are the most efficient because they have the right incentives.
7. They're buying into false ideas, both \_\_\_\_\_ and morally.

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

Other than handouts, what are some other ways to help people in need? \_\_\_\_\_

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Why were people in the video happy about earning their own money? \_\_\_\_\_

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How might government assistance keep people dependent on welfare? \_\_\_\_\_

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How has Amazon helped people? \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Discussion and Analysis**

1. According to John Stossel, how much has America's war on poverty cost so far?
2. Explain how the welfare state might create dependency.
3. How can charities encourage people to take responsibility for their lives? Provide an example from the video.
4. Our government declared war on poverty long ago, but poverty hasn't ended. Why not?
5. Who, according to the video, is best suited to end poverty? How so?
6. John Stossel claims that the government's welfare program reduces the incentive for people to try to become independent. How does welfare reduce the incentive to work? Would you prefer to be dependent or independent? Why?
7. How can people get the resources they need without the government?
8. Can helping someone ever unintentionally hurt them? How?
9. How does the Doe Fund, a charity in the video, help people become independent?
10. Why would working at a job decrease someone's benefits? Why would the government stop or reduce support to someone as soon as they start doing well? What might be a better way for the government to better handle this?
11. One of the charities is said to help people find "real work." What is meant by that?
12. Mark Zuckerberg gave \$100 million to Newark's public schools, but Yaron Brook said that neither the schools nor student performance got any better. If you were to receive a large donation for education, how would you ensure it was used effectively?
13. People complain about Jeff Bezos having too much money, even though he gives away billions to charity. Do you think he helps more people by giving money away or by creating jobs and providing affordable products?
14. Does a job help people more than just giving them help (a handout)? Why or why not?
15. A woman in the video says that as soon as you start doing well, they take all your benefits away. Is that an incentive to work harder? How might this be changed to incentivize poor people to continue to work or work even harder?
16. How would you design a charity program that could help reduce dependency on government aid?

17. How can we balance the need for assistance with the goal of encouraging personal independence and responsibility?
18. How has capitalism reduced global poverty? Did you know that prior to watching this video? Why are many people against capitalism, especially in light of its role in reducing world-wide poverty?
19. Where does the government get the money that it provides to individuals and businesses through various programs? Is it "fair" to take money one person has worked for and give it to someone who doesn't work? How about someone who chooses not to work? Why or why not?
20. Ultimately, who is responsible for your life? Why?

**Discuss These Lines from the Video:**

1. Because charity doesn't end poverty, our government declared unconditional war on poverty in America.
2. It's helped some people, but it had a bad effect. It created a new underclass, generations who stay poor. People who don't try to become independent.
3. The government creates dependence by the very fact that it sends you a check.
4. This charity encourages them [people] to take responsibility for their lives instead of taking handouts.
5. They don't allow you to get food stamps or anything like that. That's not allowed at the Doe Fund. They want you to be independent. You go out there and you make your own money. You know, you get your self-esteem back.
6. Facebook's founder donated big to Newark's public schools—a hundred million dollar challenge grant.
7. The New Jersey public schools didn't get better, the performance of the students didn't get better. It has been completely wasted.
8. Activists guilt them into giving money away.
9. Protesters gathered outside Bezos home and assembled this guillotine. The message: rich people should be beheaded.
10. And yet, all of our lives are dramatically better because of somebody like Jeff Bezos.
11. Once we start deciding what you can do or can't do with your property, what we will get is, and what we've always gotten in history, is extreme poverty for everybody.
12. The system that has brought people out of poverty, that system is capitalism.
13. 250 years ago, almost all of us, we basically were earning what the United Nations today defines as extreme poverty: \$2 a day or less. That was 94% of all people on planet earth. Today only about eight percent are that poor. Why? Not because of charity, not because of foreign aid, but by employing people.

### **Quotes for Discussion:**

The most important social welfare program in America is a job. – Newt Gingrich

Anyone who can walk to the welfare office can walk to work. – Al Capp

The more people who are dependent on government handouts, the more votes the left can depend on for an ever-expanding welfare state. – Thomas Sowell

A check in the mail every month will not teach responsibility, it will not build confidence, and it will not break the cycle of dependency and poverty.  
– Deborah Denine Pryce

Welfare makes you dependent upon someone to take care of you.  
– Charles Evers

We should measure welfare's success by how many people leave welfare, not by how many are added. – Ronald Reagan

Today we have an historic opportunity to make welfare what it was meant to be: a second chance, not a way of life. – Bill Clinton

We can lift our citizens from welfare to work, from dependence to independence, and from poverty to prosperity. – Donald Trump

### **Activities:**

1. Have students complete the K-W-L chart in class or for homework.
2. Have students complete the Pro/Con table or the Better Than Charity Arguments worksheet after viewing the video.
3. Have students complete the political cartoon activity in class or for homework.
4. Have students form debate teams to argue for or against the proposition: "Government welfare programs do more harm than good." Have them use evidence from the video as well as material from additional research to support their arguments. (Allow students time before the debate to do the research for their position.)
5. In April 2018, President Trump signed the Reducing Poverty in America by Promoting Opportunity and Economic Mobility. Have students research that law, and write an essay on whether it was successful or not in doing what it was intended to.  
<https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/presidential-actions/executive-order-reducing-poverty-america-promoting-opportunity-economic-mobility/>
6. Have students read about President Clinton's Welfare Reform, found below, and summarize whether or not it was successful. (Students might also look at how the welfare reform laws have been changed and what the result of those changes are.)  
<https://www.history.com/news/clinton-1990s-welfare-reform-facts>

7. Have students choose and research a government program such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or another such program and prepare a slideshow about how it works and how effective it is in accomplishing what it was intended to. You might ask the students to recommend ways to make it effective.
8. Have students write a short essay reflecting on the statement "Charity is better because it encourages responsibility," citing examples from the video and providing their own opinions on the role of charity vs. government aid.
9. Have students research the Doe Fund discussed in the video and prepare a slideshow to demonstrate how it works.
10. Have students research how much money is spent on one or more welfare programs and how much of that money goes directly to people in need and how much is spent on administering the program.
11. Have the students research and report on the COVID stimulus funds the government provided many Americans. What were the conditions the government used to send people money? How much did they get? If people were not directly affected by illness or job loss, did they get stimulus funds? Did they "need" it? What impact did all this "free money" have on the U.S. economy?
12. Have students research how much tax revenue the federal government brings in and how much the federal government spends in one year. Where does the government get the rest of the money? Have students either write an essay or create a poster board or slideshow to show what they find.
13. Have students watch [3 Keys to Success](https://youtu.be/J36pd3sDcNo). Have them write an essay about the "3 Keys" presented in the video and how they relate to welfare, poverty, and success. How does individual responsibility play a role in success? How does the charity in the story (which is also mentioned in the Stossel video) help people develop successful lives? How can the students plan to adopt these three keys, from whatever starting point they're at right now?  
<https://youtu.be/J36pd3sDcNo>
14. Have students watch [Reading Matters](https://youtu.be/-TTDD984fw). How did reading help Thomas Sowell achieve success and lift himself from poverty? Do they find his story inspirational? Why/Why not? Libraries are publicly funded with taxpayer money. Are libraries better uses of taxpayer dollars than other programs? Have students research the offerings of your local library and demonstrate how they can get a library card to access the facilities and materials. Have them also create a plan to read more on their own time for one week. What will they give up? What will they read? At the end of the week, have them reflect on the experiment. What did they gain from it? Can they leverage self-education (through reading or other self-education avenues) as Thomas Sowell did to better their lives? If so, how will they do that?  
<https://youtu.be/-TTDD984fw>

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Class \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

## Better Than Charity

### 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.

<b>K</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>L</b>
What I know about the impact of welfare programs and charities...	What I want to know about the impact of welfare programs and charities...	What I learned about the democratic socialism in the U.S....
What is the difference between welfare and charity? Does it matter? Why / Why not?	What is the most effective way to move people out of poverty?	What do people get from having a job that they don't get from either welfare or charity?

Name \_\_\_\_\_

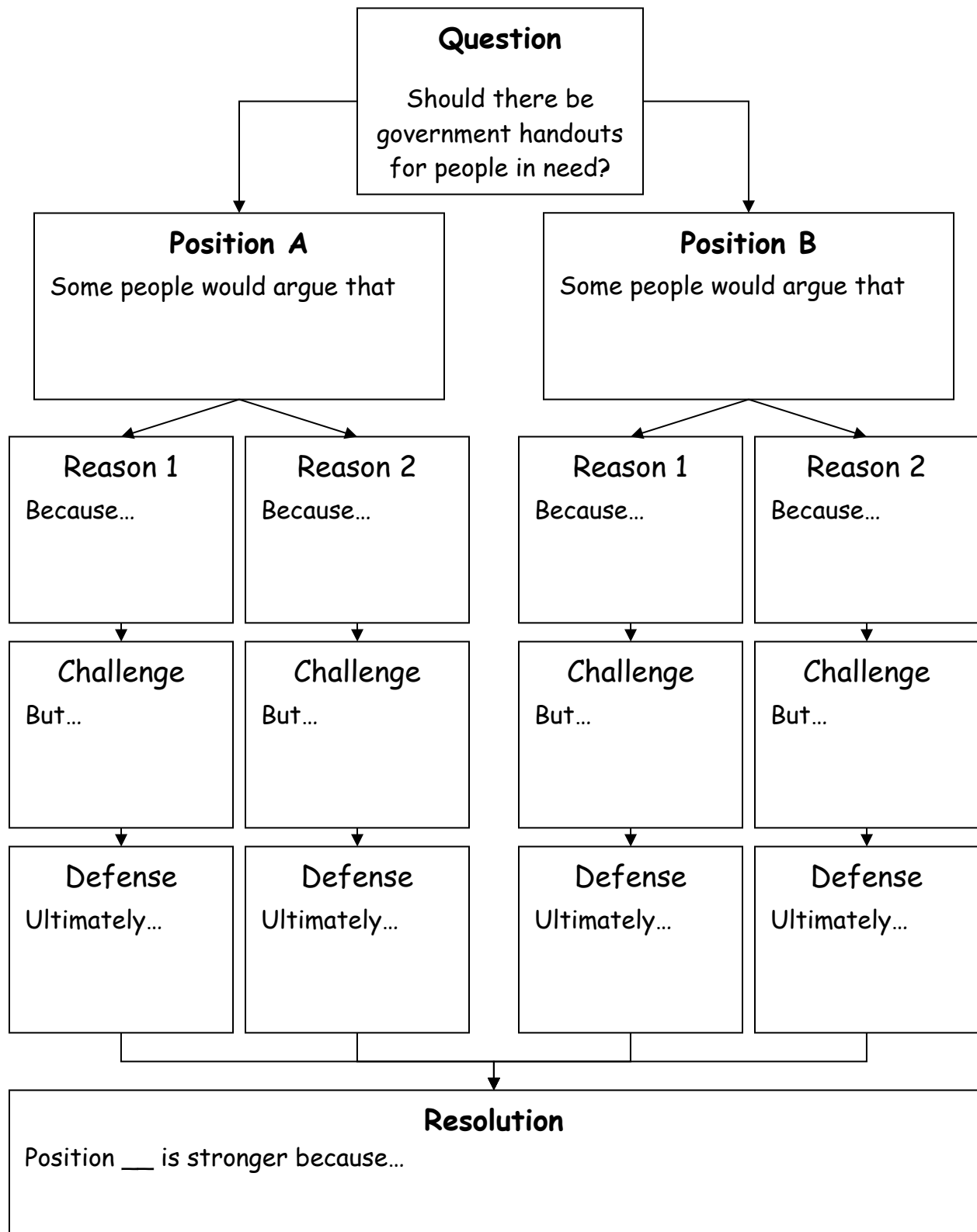
Date \_\_\_\_\_

Class \_\_\_\_\_ Per \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

## Better Than Charity

**Directions:** Use the flow chart below to layout the arguments for and against promoting government handouts, and to challenge and defend those arguments.





Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Class \_\_\_\_\_ Per \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

## **Better Than Charity** **Pros & Cons Table**

**Directions:** After reviewing the video and discussing it in class, complete the chart below.

CHOICE	PROS	CONS
Provide government handouts to those in need.		
Provide alternative solutions to people in need (for example, jobs or private charity).		

Which of the two choices above is more important? In a brief paragraph, explain why.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Class \_\_\_\_\_ Per \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

# Better Than Charity

## Political Cartoon Activity

**Directions:** Use the political cartoon to answer the questions below.



Briefly describe what is happening in the cartoon. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Why does the character seem surprised that he's ineligible after 16 years? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Why might the character no longer be eligible for the checks? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How can the welfare system help people while encouraging them to become independent? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_