



Sample Lesson Plan

Poverty in the United States

Resources:

Elizabeth Kneebone, “Testimony: The changing geography of US poverty,” Brookings Institution, Feb. 15, 2017

“The State of Homelessness in America 2016,” National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2016

CQ Researcher reports:

Pockets of Poverty, June 6, 1956

Persistence of Poverty, Feb. 5, 1964

Child Poverty, Oct. 28, 2011

Poverty and Homelessness, Aug. 4, 2017

Questions for Discussion:

- 1 In her congressional testimony, Elizabeth Kneebone says that “between 2000 and 2015, the poor population in smaller metropolitan areas grew at double the pace of the urban and rural poor populations.”
Why do you think that occurred?
- 2 The National Alliance to End Homelessness states that the number of homeless people has been dropping, “probably due in part to improvements in homeless assistance and increasing investment in proven solutions by the federal government.” But it adds that these factors by themselves “cannot overcome the inability of low-income households to afford housing.”
What steps are needed to further reduce homelessness?
What obstacles make those steps difficult to achieve?
- 3 The 1956 **CQ Researcher** report “Pockets of Poverty” states that “many persons believe that the key to the low-income problem lies in education.... All studies indicate that low income goes along with poor education.” Today, experts still express that view.
Why do you think the problem of poverty and low education persists?
- 4 In 1964, President Lyndon Johnson declared “unconditional war on poverty in America” and urged “all Americans to join ... in that effort.” The main objective, he said, would be “not only to relieve the symptoms of poverty, but to cure it, and above all, to prevent it.”
If Johnson were speaking today, what steps would you recommend to achieve his goal?
Do you think all Americans would join in that effort?
- 5 **CQ Researcher’s** 2011 report on “Child Poverty” states that conservatives tend to say child poverty mainly reflects a steep rise in out-of-wedlock births, while liberals disagree that is the cause.
Which view, if either, is valid in your opinion?
- 6 As noted in CQR’s 2017 report on “Poverty and Homelessness,” some believe work requirements should be attached to anti-poverty programs, while others say such rules can backfire.
Which side do you take and why?

Projects:

- ▶ Working with other students whose views differ on the causes and solutions of poverty, develop a five-pronged anti-poverty policy plan designed to gain support across the political spectrum.
- ▶ Arrange to interview homeless family members or teens at a local homeless shelter to learn what factors led to their situation and what they believe they need to get on a more stable footing.