

5TH - 6TH GRADE CURRICULUM

ART AS SOCIAL CHANGE

Session #1

Who's Hungry in America and How Can Art Help?

MAZON

A Jewish Response
To Hunger

A Guide to the Key Components of Our Study Sessions



STUDY

Make connections between Jewish values, Jewish texts and the issue of hunger.



LEARN

Hear stories about people who are hungry and consider their struggles and ways to help.



EXPLORE

Engage in activities and experiences that bring the issue of hunger alive and make it real for students.



ACT

Empower students to take action and make a difference.



KEEP IT GOING

Stay connected beyond the classroom.

Who's Hungry in America and How Can Art Help?

OVERVIEW

In this session, students will be introduced to MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger as a national advocacy organization, inspired by Jewish values and ideals, working to end hunger for people of all faiths and backgrounds in the United States and Israel.

Students will gain a better understanding of who is hungry in America and why food insecurity is a challenge for so many.

Students will be introduced to the idea of art as a tool of social change and will begin exploring how to apply this strategy to addressing the issue of hunger.

PREPARE

READ through this lesson in its entirety so that you are familiar with all of the various components. Make any adjustments necessary to ensure that the lesson reflects your particular teaching style, your students, and the time allotted.

GATHER the materials needed for this lesson:

- **Teaching Outline** — Print one copy of this teaching outline to use during class.
- **Prepare projections, digital copies or handouts of John's Photo and Story, Quick Facts, and Quotes 1-3** as discussed throughout the unit. Decide how you will share each with your students and plan accordingly.

Please note that the statistics referenced in these lessons reflect the status of food insecurity in the United States as of early 2020. The onset of the pandemic drastically changed the number of people experiencing hunger in the US, and it's always beneficial to explore the most recent data available. Don't hesitate to contact MAZON at outreach@mazon.org with any questions — or encourage your students to undertake the research!

LEARN

Who's Hungry in America: John's Story (10 minutes)

DIRECTIONS

Share John's photo and story with the class. Remind students that this is a true story and that John is a real person. Ask for a volunteer to read John's story out loud.

Engage the class in a conversation about John's story using the guiding questions below.

- What was it like to hear John's story? How did it make you feel?
- How does being hungry affect John?
- How do John's parents try to help and how does John feel about it?
- What programs help John get the food he needs?

Hunger in America (15 minutes)

DIRECTIONS

Use John's story to segue into a conversation about hunger in America. Share the following information with the class.

- Hunger/food insecurity affects kids and families like John all across the country.
- Nearly 1 in 8 Americans struggles to get enough to eat.
- 13 million kids are hungry in America.

DISCUSS

Why are people hungry?

After eliciting some answers or facilitating a discussion, share the following.



There are a lot of reasons people end up without enough food to eat — but the bottom line is that a lot of people don't have enough money to buy all the food they need. This is called food insecurity. Someone who is food insecure is anyone who doesn't have enough access at all times to the nutritious food they need to live a healthy life. More than 36 million people in the United States struggle with food insecurity, including millions of kids.

People who have limited resources can't spend money on everything, so they have to make choices — do I pay rent or the heating bill, or buy the prescription medicine that I need, or fill the car up with gas to get to work, or buy nutritious food for myself or my family? People often spend their money on rent and medicine and don't have a lot left over for food.

It comes down to money — if you don't have enough money to buy food, then you can't make dinner for your family. If you don't have enough money to buy food, you can't pack a lunch to send to school with your kids.

DISCUSS

What is being done?

Ask students to discuss what the differences might be between a charitable and justice response to hunger (defined below), and what the attendant pros and cons might be. Potential pros and cons are expanded on below to share after students have a chance to consider their opinions.

- **Charitable response** — Food banks, food pantries, and soup kitchens provide food and services to those in need.
 - **Pro:** The charitable response supports people who are in an emergency situation and need help right now, immediately.
 - **Con:** This is important, but doesn't fix the big picture problem — it's like a bandaid, which makes you feel better in the moment but doesn't actually heal the underlying issue.

- **Justice response** — Advocates work for big picture, societal change that can help a lot of people in a systematic way.
 - **Pro:** Government nutrition programs have a huge impact and can help a lot of people get the food they need until they get back on their feet and can afford to do it themselves.
 - **Con:** If someone is newly engaging with the government benefits available to them, they have to wait until they are approved, and then the benefits they receive may not be comprehensive enough to meet their needs (and therefore is still often supplemented by the charitable food system). Here we see (1) an education and accessibility gap that prevents folks who need assistance from knowing what benefits are available to them and navigating the system, (2) barriers and gaps within the system that create a lag in supporting folks who are food insecure, and (3) a need to meet the complete needs of all people who are food insecure, without letting policies put artificial maximums on benefits or defining who can and can't get those benefits. It's an imperfect system, and that's why we need to work to make these programs stronger. A justice response engages with these challenges directly, and constantly works to make the system better.
 - **Expand:** One important program that does this is called SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), which you may be familiar with as "food stamps." These benefits are distributed on a debit card that is loaded with a small amount of money each month.
 - People with low incomes, who don't make very much money, can apply to the government to receive these cards — then they go to the grocery store and use the cards to shop for food.
 - There are a lot of rules and regulations to make sure that only people who really need these benefits are using the cards. They can only use the cards for food, nothing else. Fraud is incredibly rare in this program. Questioning "what fraction of people are mismanaging their benefits or getting benefits they don't 'deserve'?" is a distraction. The justice response is to instead question, "who is not getting benefits they need because of barriers in the system, and how can we make the system as strong and generous as possible?"
 - On average, a person getting SNAP benefits will get about \$1.40 per person per meal.

Share the Quick Facts one-pager with the class. Talk through the information with particular focus on the difference between charity and government programs and why charity cannot end hunger alone.

 STUDY**What is a Jewish Response to Hunger? (5 minutes)****SHARE**

- MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger is a national advocacy organization inspired by Jewish values. It's a Jewish value, an obligation, to help the hungry and share our resources with those in need.
- This obligation goes all the way back to a commandment in the Torah. Leviticus 19:9-10 teaches *"When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not pick your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the strangers: I, Adonai, am your God."*
- We can act on this ancient Jewish tradition today by raising our voices as advocates for those who are hungry and working to support important policies that ensure everyone has access to the nutritious food they deserve.

DISCUSS**Time permitting, discuss the concept of "deserving."**

Who deserves to be hungry? Who deserves help? In the context of direct service and policy, we often find restrictions on who has access to benefits (e.g. if an able-bodied adult without dependents cannot find work for too long, they cannot get benefits). In the context of our tradition and values, we are guided by generosity, compassion, and respect. We are driven to move our system towards a reality where all people are helped based on their need, and their need alone — which is to say, no one deserves to be hungry, and everyone deserves help if they are struggling to feed themselves and their families with dignity.

**EXPLORE****Class Discussion: What is art as social change? (15 minutes)****DIRECTIONS**

Begin by having a conversation with the class based on these two questions:

- Can art change the world?
- How can art help motivate positive social change?

Share the following quotes to deepen the discussion and add additional perspectives:

Quote #1:

"For me, the role of artists in social change movements is not to just provide visuals for activists' communication strategies and immediate needs, but rather... to help shift the way people think about the

world. It's our job to imagine the possibilities, shift the thinking on individuals and situations through our representations of them, to explore the grey areas that make humans complicated and interesting, and to uplift the hope and resilience of communities we are a part of to sustain them."

Sara Z.E.Hughes works at the American Friends Service Committee as a social media specialist. Sara is an artist, filmmaker and cultural worker who uses art for social change.

Quote #2:

"Many artists today are deeply committed to making work that addresses pressing social issues and changes the way we perceive the world... Some artists use traditional forms of visual, literary, or performing arts to make work that comments on, responds to, or advocates for the need for change... Socially engaged art can ignite outrage and demands for change, and/or provide a platform for reflection, collaboration, and building community. It can focus on the residents of a single city block, or reach out to a global audience."

Excerpt from the Art & Social Change contest description from the Big Ideas @ Berkeley project

Quote #3:

"The immigrant rights movement began to slowly adopt the butterfly as a symbol...I wanted to piggyback on the symbol of the butterfly as a visionary symbol. Butterflies can cross borders, so the butterfly is the symbol to talk about the beauty of migrants as they are moving from place to place. Just like butterflies migrate in order to survive, people migrate in order to survive. It is not just about economics, it is also about people wanting to be unified with their families, or people wanting to be safe from environments where they can't be gay, or women escaping situations that are dangerous to them, or young people trying to find opportunities. These are all beautiful stories of who we are as humans, and I think that the butterfly is very symbolic of that.

I think it's an important idea to push out, because art sometimes is about imagining what could be, it's about allowing people to think really big. Even though it may not translate to a policy outcome just yet, its important for the idea to be there."

Favianna Rodriguez is a visual artist best known for her political prints and posters addressing issues from the Iraq war to women's rights. She is the director of CultureStrike, a grassroots collective of artists, and the founder of Presente.org, an online network dedicated to the political empowerment of Latino communities.

- Ask students what stands out for them from these quotes?
- What do they add to their understanding of art as social change?

Using Art to Address Hunger (10 minutes)

DIRECTIONS

Bring the conversation back to the injustice of hunger in particular and use the following prompts to allow the students to begin thinking about using art to address the issue of hunger and create change.

- How would you go about representing the issue of hunger in a drawing?
- How could you use symbolism to communicate your message?

WRAP UP (5 minutes)

Let students know that next session, the class will:

- Look at examples of art as social change, both videos and visual art pieces such as paintings, prints, and sculptures.
- Continue the conversation about how art can help elevate the issue of hunger and create positive change.
- Begin projects in small groups that will be created and presented within the next three sessions.

5TH - 6TH GRADE CURRICULUM

ART AS SOCIAL CHANGE

Session #2

Art as Social Change

MAZON

A Jewish Response
To Hunger

Art as Social Change

OVERVIEW

In this session, students will explore examples of art as social change and will begin to design and plan their own group projects using art as a way to create change on the issue of hunger.

PREPARE

READ through this lesson in its entirety so that you are familiar with all of the various components. Make any adjustments necessary to ensure that the lesson reflects your particular teaching style, your students, and the time allotted.

GATHER the materials needed for this lesson:

- **Teaching Outline** — Print one copy of this teaching outline to use during class.
- **Social Change Videos and Visual Art** — Decide how you will share and make arrangements for necessary A/V equipment. Review the videos and visual art in advance and review the suggested discussion questions.
- **Prepare Hunger By the Numbers, Stories, Quick Facts, 8 Myths and SNAP Infographic** — Decide how you will share each with your students — as hard copies or digitally — and plan accordingly. If they will be accessing on individual computers or tablets, check the internet connection.
- **Any materials needed for brainstorming sessions.** If your students work best with structure, create a worksheet for them to fill out.



EXPLORE

Examples of Art as Social Change (30 minutes)

Art as social change can come in many forms. This session will look at two forms of art that have been used to raise awareness about various social justice issues: digital art and visual art.

Show Examples of Social Change Videos addressing hunger:

- **A Good Day** — <https://bit.ly/tableagoofday>
- **What If?** — <https://bit.ly/takepartwhatif>

DISCUSSION

- What was powerful about these videos? How did they creatively share their message?
- Which video do you think was more effective? Why?
- Can you think of examples of other art pieces that define, inspire, or are modes of social change? Encourage your students' creativity, in form, content, or specific examples, e.g.: protest signs, graffiti, political cartoons, Picasso's Guernica, Frida Khalo's whole portfolio.

SHOW EXAMPLES OF VISUAL ART AS SOCIAL CHANGE:







DISCUSSION

- What was powerful about these pieces of art? How did they creatively share their message?
- Which piece of art do you think was most effective? Why?
- Can you think of examples of other art pieces that define, inspire, or are modes of social change? Encourage your students' creativity, in form, content, or specific examples, e.g.: protest signs, graffiti, political cartoons, Picasso's Guernica, Frida Khalo's whole portfolio.



Student Projects: Design and Plan - 30 minutes

- Introduce the student projects:
 - Students will divide themselves into small groups and will choose to create either a video or visual art pieces as the medium for a work of art that addresses the issue of hunger in America.
- Give students time to divide into their groups.
- Groups should review info about the issue of hunger using materials provided:
 - **Hunger By the Numbers**
<https://mazon.org/this-is-hunger/hunger-by-the-numbers/>
 - **Stories**
<https://mazon.org/this-is-hunger/stories>
 - **Quick Facts**
<https://mazon.org/this-is-hunger/hunger-by-the-numbers/quick-facts-about-hunger>
 - **8 Myths**
<https://mazon.org/this-is-hunger/hunger-myths>
 - **SNAP Infographic**
<https://mazon.org/assets/This-is-Hunger-Resources/SNAP-Impact.pdf>
- Groups should decide on the focus, the message, the artistic vision.
- Students work together to outline plans for a video or piece of visual art to educate and raise awareness about hunger.
- Groups share their plans with the teacher and review what materials are needed.

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ART AS SOCIAL CHANGE

Session #3

Student Projects – Create

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Student Projects – Create



Work on student projects in class. Check in with students' progress, and ensure they will have a project to present in the following session.

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ART AS SOCIAL CHANGE

Session #4

Student Projects – Share

MAZON

A Jewish Response
To Hunger

Student Projects – Share



Groups present their finished projects to the rest of the class, explaining the thinking and planning that went into each one.



Invite students to find ways to feature their projects online, and share with their greater communities. This is an opportunity not only to share their art, but carry what they have learned about hunger beyond the classroom.