Unit 1: Thinking about Poverty

Focus Question: What do you know about poverty and justice?

Teacher Notes
Introduce the topic by talking about the direct link between them.

Views about Justice and Poverty
There is a direct link between poverty and injustice.
To seek justice means to ask questions and to seek change.

Justice questions explore why the structures in the world are unjust. For example:
  If justice is about treating people fairly and giving people their due . . .
  How can we determine fairness?
  What if there are competing claims for fairness?

Justice questions examine the causes of oppression and seek to free people from all that oppresses them.
For example, justice asks:
  Why are these families in need of food?
  Why do these children not have access to education?
  Why are these people oppressed?

Poverty in an affluent society PowerPoint
For a general introduction view the PowerPoint Poverty in an affluent society in Resources.
This provides some essential information linked to the posters and the booklet.

Live simply campaign
http://www.cafod.org.uk/secondary/live-simply
One idea started by CAFOD in the UK is the LiveSimply Campaign which encourages us to limit our wants and to focus on helping everyone gain what they need for a worthwhile and fulfilling life. Check out their website for cool ideas about living more simply.
Activities for students
The following activities have been designed as worksheets for students.

- **Worksheet: Starter quiz about poverty**
  This quiz is to test students' current knowledge about poverty.

- **Worksheet: Statements to think about**
  Ask students to read and consider each statement about justice and poverty. For each statement decide whether they would accept, reject or modify it in some way. Complete the table and discuss answers.

- **Worksheet: Wants and Needs**
  Thinking through the difference between wants and needs. Students have several scenarios to help them identify things that are really important for life.

“Just one more $20 should do it (not). Why do I waste my money? I thought I'd win to pay the bills but now I'm really behind.”

Shar, Paeroa

Source: Office of the Children's Commissioner – from the project *This is how I see it: Children and young people's views and experiences of poverty.*
Starter quiz about poverty

Circle your answer. Some questions have more than one right answer.

1. Approximately how many New Zealanders lived in significant or severe hardship according to the most recent (2004) statistics?
   a. 5 percent
   b. 10 percent
   c. 15 percent
   d. 25 percent

2. New Zealand has one of the best records among developed countries of 15-19 year olds in education. True or False?

3. Which of the following best explains the reason why young people from poor homes sometimes don’t seem to want to learn?
   a. they are tired, sick, hungry or stressed
   b. they don’t care

4. Children from high income and low income households have the same likelihood of becoming sick. True or False?

5. Which one or more of the following can be factors in poor health?
   a. poor nutrition
   b. poor housing
   c. low incomes
   d. limited access to health care

6. Which of the following explain what poor housing might mean?
   a. cold
   b. overcrowded
   c. damp
   d. rented

7. Poverty is the fault of people who don’t work hard enough. True or False?

8. Why do you think young people (aged 15-24) have higher unemployment than older people?
   a. they don’t have as many skills
   b. they are lazy
   c. they don’t have as much experience

9. Which of the following is the answer to poverty in our country?
   a. build community and help those in need
   b. advocate for just social and economic policies

10. Why is poverty in an affluent (wealthy) society a social justice issue?
    a. Because poor people don’t spend as much money at the shops
    b. We are all responsible for the wellbeing of all in society, because Jesus said, ‘When ever you did it for one of my people, no matter how unimportant, you did it for me’ (Matt 25).
    c. Because having poor people holds everyone back from being successful.
1. c) Fifteen percent of New Zealanders lived in significant or severe hardship in 2004. It is possible that the Working for Families programme has improved this figure since then.

2. False. New Zealand is ranked at the bottom of the list of developed countries in this measure of education.

3. a) Most young people really do want to learn, but so much of the rest of life may be hard for them that they lack the ability to fully concentrate, focus or have motivation to do schoolwork.

4. False. A child growing up in poverty is three times more likely to be sick than a child growing up in a higher income household.

5. All these factors can contribute to poor health.

6. a), b) and c) Housing that is damp, cold or overcrowded is more likely to cause illness and stress in the families living there. Rental housing can be of a good standard, but unfortunately often is not.

7. False. Sometimes people make bad choices that contribute to poverty, but most of the time poverty is a failure of our economic system to treat all people equally and fairly.

8. a) and c) Younger people often do not have the same skills or experience, so it takes longer for them to find suitable employment.

9. a) and b) We need to work on both helping people in hardship and changing the system which allows that hardship to exist.

10. b) Catholic social teaching is based on the mission of Jesus who modelled the way we should show compassion and love to all. Principles of human equality and dignity and the common good are all important guides to how we should live in a just society.

“This is what poverty is about, having families, the community helping to stop poverty.”
Panepasa, Otahuhu

Source: Office of the Children’s Commissioner – from the project This is how I see it: Children and young people’s views and experiences of poverty.

Solutions to poverty require both personal and structural responses ... We need to constantly engage at all ends of the spectrum; responding to the immediate needs of those in hardship, and at the same time advocating for fair and just social policies.

New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference, Look and look again, 2008
### Statements to think about

*Place a ✓ in either the Accept or Reject column or note what you would change in the Modify column.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accept</th>
<th>Reject</th>
<th>Modify</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All beneficiaries should be required to work for social services in exchange for the unemployment benefit.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All New Zealanders have a responsibility to help the poor and vulnerable in our communities achieve a way out of poverty through advocating for more just systems.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich people in New Zealand should pay more taxes than they do now.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Church should not interfere in situations that are not religious.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young people from poor homes always join gangs to get what they want.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young people (15-24 yrs) have higher unemployment rates because they are lazy.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People get caught up in a cycle of poverty which can be difficult but possible to change.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When one group in society suffer, we all suffer. We must support each other to make a fair and just society which excludes no one.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from *Striving for Justice* by M Ryan, 1998, Social Science Press, Australia.
Wants and Needs

1. Imagine your home has been ruined in a major earthquake. What would you try to recover from the tangled mass of wood, concrete, iron and bricks? Make a list of three very important things YOU MUST TAKE from the wreckage.

2. Imagine a tsunami warning has just been issued. You have four minutes to get out of your home and escape by car to higher ground. You can take one weekend bag. What would you take? Make a list of five very important things YOU MUST TAKE. Prioritise your choices and be able to explain those choices to others.

3. Look at the items that Sam pictured in the worksheet would like to have. Make two lists. One with the heading WANTS and the second one with the heading NEEDS. Choose from the items pictured and place them in either one of your lists.

Now go back to see what you had listed in 1 and 2 above. Compare your Wants and Needs lists with your Must Take lists. Talk with a partner about what you found out about yourself.

4. Read this passage from Scripture:

   Do Not Worry
   He said to his disciples, “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing… Sell your possessions and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Write in your own words what Jesus is saying to his disciples:

........................................................................................................................................................................

........................................................................................................................................................................

........................................................................................................................................................................

........................................................................................................................................................................

........................................................................................................................................................................

........................................................................................................................................................................

Realistically how can those ideas be applied today?

........................................................................................................................................................................

........................................................................................................................................................................

........................................................................................................................................................................

........................................................................................................................................................................

........................................................................................................................................................................

........................................................................................................................................................................
What Sam would like to have