

Lesson Title: Disposable People: “Unfreedoms” in Today’s Society

Grade Level: 9-12

Class Time: One or two class sessions

Content Standards: See page 18-19

Objectives:

Students will enhance their understanding of contemporary injustices, or Unfreedoms,* and develop critical thinking as citizens of the global community.

Rationale:

By reading parts of the book, Disposable People by Kevin Bales, and visiting the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, students will have a better understanding of contemporary Unfreedoms – racism, illiteracy, genocide, hunger, tyranny, and slavery. They will analyze connections between the global economy and injustice, as well as the role of individual citizens and governmental organizations in ending Unfreedoms throughout the world.

Description of Lesson/Activity:

1. Have students write a journal entry and/or discuss the Pre-Reading/Pre-Visit Discussion Questions (attached).
2. Before (or after) your visit to the Freedom Center, have students read Chapters 1, 2, and 7 of Disposable People by Kevin Bales (University of California Press). Note: If time does not permit, consider reading only Chapter 2.
3. Post-Visit Activity (if visit is planned).

Review the six Unfreedoms identified at the Freedom Center (RIGHTS worksheet, attached)

Have students list examples of each of the six types of Unfreedoms in today’s society.

Write a 2-3 page position paper from the perspective of one of the following:

A slave in contemporary society

A concerned citizen, or

A government official

The paper should urge the global community to put an end to one of the six Unfreedoms. Use data from your reading and/or visit to support your argument.

Materials:

Disposable People by Kevin Bales

Discussion Questions (attached)

RIGHTS worksheet (attached)

*Unfreedom is a term used at the Freedom Center that describes racism, illiteracy, genocide, hunger, tyranny and modern day slavery.



Contemporary slavery has been defined and banned in international treaties and within nations around the world. But outlawing slavery has not prevented its expansion into a multi-billion dollar global industry on par with drug trafficking and illicit arms sales. Efforts to combat slavery will have only limited effectiveness unless anti-slavery laws are recognized, implemented and enforced by law enforcement officers, courts, and political leaders. Public awareness is also critical: slavery will remain an invisible scourge unless or until an informed public becomes actively engaged and committed in helping identify situations in which some form of slavery is suspected. A concerned public also can apply pressure to public officials to affect change in the international community.

R. racism—the belief that a particular race is superior to others

I. illiteracy—unable to read and write

G. genocide—the systematic, planned extermination of an entire national, racial, political, or ethnic group

H. hunger—the discomfort, weakness, or pain caused by a lack of food

T. tyranny—absolute power, especially when exercised unjustly or cruelly

S. slavery— The state of being a slave; bondage or The practice of owning slaves.



1. A student recently said, “I don’t care about slavery. That happened a long time ago, and I don’t want to think about it in my life today. It is no longer important.” What do you think about this statement? Tell why you agree or disagree. What would you tell that student if you had the chance to have a conversation?
2. Students in the United States enjoy lots of freedom. List some of the freedoms that you enjoy. Were these privileges always available to everyone? What might someone have had to do in order to make sure you have these freedoms? How does that make you feel about the privileges you enjoy?
3. What happens if a rule, law or a practice in a country is immoral or wrong? Who decides if it is right or wrong? What is done to change that law or rule or practice? How does someone decide what to do?
4. Discuss what you expect to see, feel and learn when you visit the Freedom Center. After your visit, you will have a chance to compare your expectations to the reality.
5. Do you believe that slavery still exists today? If so where and why?
6. How many people do you believe are enslaved today around the world?

