

LESSON 14: Unmasking Global Inequalities



REFERENCE

Page 397-8 [DEVELOPMENT OF
CRITICAL THINKING: ECONOMIC
ANALYSIS and MORAL INSIGHT]



WHAT YOU NEED

- (2) LSM: 'The Double Triangle'
- (3) Reflection Question

AIM

- To gain an understanding of the global economy, the difference between rich and poor, and how wealth is concentrated in the hands of the rich

OUTCOMES

- SKL Learners interpret a diagrammatic representation of the global economy.
- KUI Learners gain an understanding of the global economy and the large gap between rich and poor.

CLASSROOM QUOTE

"... the fundamental division in humankind is that between life and death, between those who die because of oppression and those who live because of it."

(Jon Sobrino & Juan Hernandez Pico. 1985. *Theology of Christian Solidarity*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, p 26)

TEACHER'S NOTE

If possible, provide copies of the Lesson Materials page to each student or group. If not, then join a couple of sheets of newsprint, draw the diagram on that, and write the questions up on the board. Try to draw the diagram with roughly the same proportions as the original since this is important to what the diagram is trying to represent.

When the learners do the exercise, *The Double Triangle*, points you should listen for, or provide for learners, might include the following:

- The triangle shows hierarchical relationships. The segments represent the various classes or socio-economic divisions found in any society. As one moves up the triangle the number of people in any segment or class get smaller. Thus, the triangle shows economic inequality between those at the bottom and those at the top.
- The elite in 'third world' countries live a lifestyle comparable to the elite in 'first world' countries. But, while there are poor in both first and third world countries, the number of poor in first world countries is relatively small, while the numbers of poor in third world countries is relatively large.
- Sometimes the level of exclusion from the country's economy is so great that a second 'informal' economy shadows the 'formal' economy. Participants in this 'second' economy are largely outside the protections and advantages of those in the 'first' economy. (Think of who benefits from labour legislation, who can access bank loans, or who can buy houses, for

example.) In South Africa, President Mbeki has spoken of 'two nations' – but this is not simply a distinction between 'white' and 'black'. Increasingly, it is a distinction between a wealthy elite of both 'black' and 'white' and a poor underclass that is mostly 'black'.

- The diagram doesn't look at the role of the state (apart from the reference to 'Strikes often illegal') or international organisations. Wealthy, first world states usually act in support of big business – import tariffs, subsidies to their farmers, and so on. The World Trade Organisation (WTO) has also played a role in this. One critical question is whether with the enlargement of the WTO to include increasing numbers of 'developing' countries, the role of this organisation can be changed to better serve the interests of the 'developing' countries. Likewise, governments may wish to protect certain interests - for example, by making strikes illegal, the working class has limited opportunity to organise and act in its own interest, and managers and owners can take full advantage of this.
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LESSON OUTLINE

1 Introduction

The focus for this unit of lessons is on the question of economics and justice. Learners will be looking at the structure of the global and South African economies. Explain that 'structural morality' is concerned with economic, social, and political structures and how justice is or is not manifested in them. These structures frame our lives – hence, we need to examine them. These structures may advantage some and disadvantage others. Whether we are among those who are (relatively) advantaged, or those who are (relatively) disadvantaged, we have the moral obligation to examine them and, where necessary, to work to change them.

Students may be able to suggest or understand examples such as family, state, government departments, religious institutions (e.g. churches). In this, and the next lesson, your class will be unpacking aspects of economic structures.

You may need to say that exploring this can be uncomfortable. Some learners may feel uncomfortable or angry or defensive depending on the socio-economic position of themselves and their families. But structural privilege remains privilege even when one has to work for it. Which brings us to social responsibility: the more one has, the more one needs to look for ways to share...

2 Group Work

Hand out the Lesson Materials page 'The Double Triangle'. Students could be asked to work on their own - but pairs or threes are preferable. Explain that the purpose of the exercise is to do two things: (a) to enable them to form a picture of the global economy and its inequality and (b) to begin to help them see how this economy works and why this leads to such large inequality. Point out that the questions are accompanied by some information to help them answer them. Encourage them to draw on their common sense, and whatever knowledge they have about economics in relation to news items they may have heard or read. Monitor their work so that you can intervene where anyone gets stuck.

3 Reflection

A reflection could be included, particularly for those who finish the exercise before others do. It could take the form of a question such as:

'Why is it not the same to be born in the Winterveld / Crossroads / Tsolo / Sloeg / Poortjie (i.e. a poor rural or poor squatter or township setting - substitute one that will be familiar to your class) as it is to be born in Constantia / Sandton / etc. (again substitute a wealthy environment that will be familiar to your class)?' More thoughtful learners might observe that

even a poor person in Sandton (e.g. a domestic worker) may have access to privileges (e.g. schools and clinics) that those born in Alexandra may not have.

4 Conclusion

Deal with any questions that have arisen and reiterate some key points to bring the lesson to a close. These could include: 'the double triangle' diagram shows the relationship between the 'first' and 'third worlds'; that this relationship is structured in an unequal way; that this structure therefore disadvantages the 'third world' in relation to the 'first world'; that gross inequality of this kind is structural injustice in the form of economic oppression. Also, this inequality has been structured into the system for some time - and, over time, this inequality has worked to increase the levels of injustice in the system. But remind the class, too, that the elite in the 'third world' enjoys a standard of living comparable to the elite in the 'first world', and that it is 'third world' governments, together with the 'third world' elite that collaborate in perpetuating inequality in the global economy.

OTHER IDEAS

5 A Simulation Exercise

The CORD file provides a simulation exercise on p 395 which could be used with the class. Some preparation and a double period, at least, would be needed. However, it may be best to do an exercise like this as part of an Intensive RE event, like a class retreat. In that case, the exercise can be properly situated in a larger agenda. It's important to know what the purpose of doing a simulation exercise is, to allow enough time for debriefing, and to include some discussion on 'where-to-from-here'. The debriefing discussion is best done with the learners seated in a circle. You could ask the learners what situation the simulation game set up. Those who played particular roles may need to explain what their instructions were and explain what they were doing. It can be helpful to ask different sets of participants how they felt during the game. Ask whether the simulation portrays our society accurately. See whether anyone observed how institutions (business, army, police, religion – e.g. church) maintain this system that excludes so many. If no one else says it, comment that this is why reflecting on economic, social, and political arrangements is so important – and that this is why they are so hard to change. Sustained effort over many years by various constituencies, including religious organisations such as the Church, may be needed to bring about a more just situation.

6 Personal Application

When the learners are working with 'The Double Triangle', you could ask them to think of their extended families (both living and ancestral) and ask them to identify where members would be with regard to the double triangle. However, this needs to be done with care and sensitivity to feelings of guilt, resentment, etc. Also, be alert for forms of snobbery: e.g. between those with urban or rural backgrounds, or of social status and social class, etc.

MATERIALS

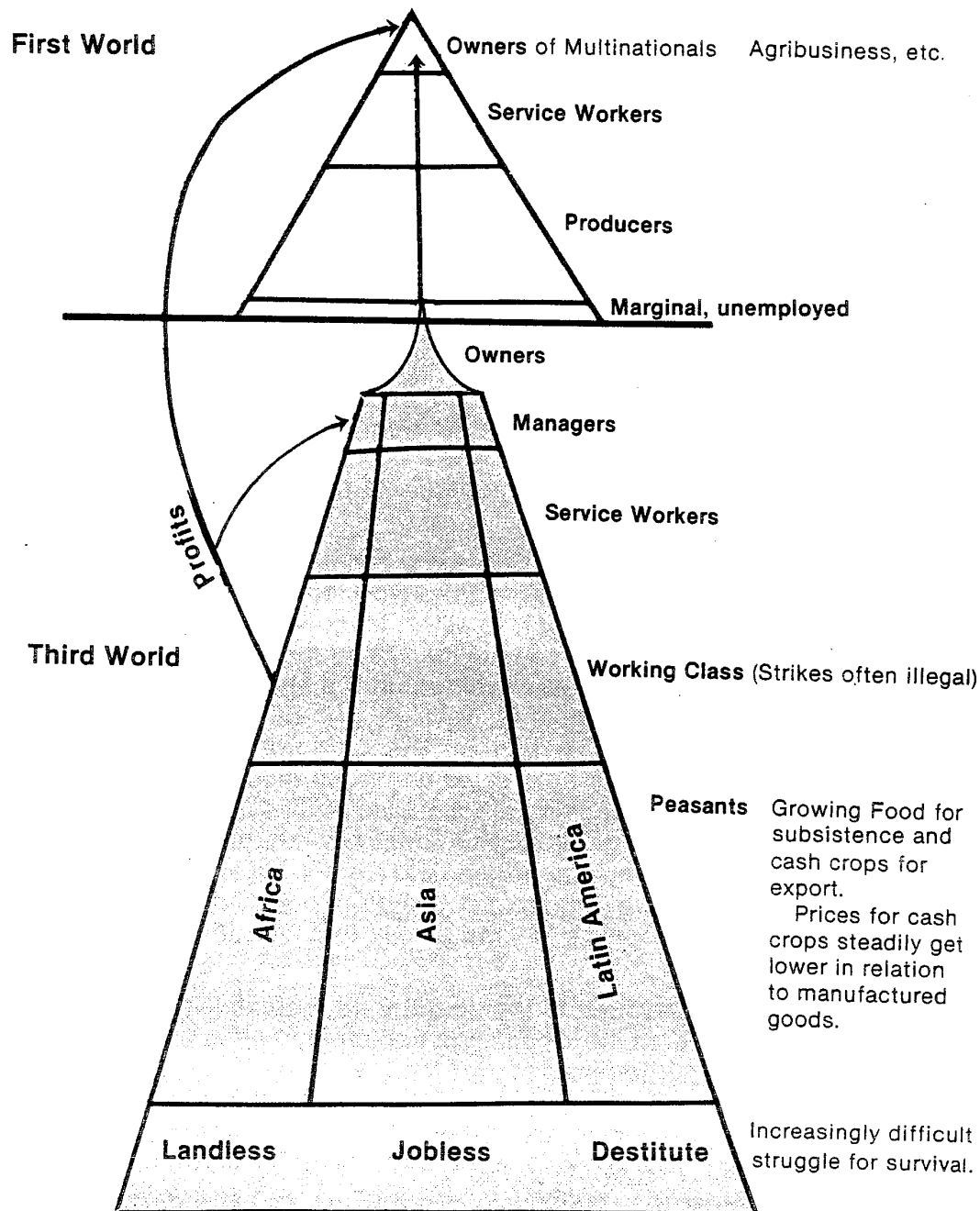
LEARNER

- Anne Hope & Sally Timmel. 1995. 'The Double Triangle' in *Training for Transformation: A Handbook for Community Workers* - Book 3. Gweru: Mambo Press, p 16



Lesson Materials

The Double Triangle



© Anne Hope & Sally Timmel. 1995. 'The Double Triangle' in *Training for Transformation: A Handbook for Community Workers* - Book 3. Gweru: Mambo Press, p 16

Towards an initial understanding/...

Lesson Materials

THE DOUBLE TRIANGLE (cont.)

Towards an initial understanding of the diagram

1. Find the line that divides the 'first world' from the 'third world'.
2. Name the three large geo-political zones that the diagram places in the 'third world'.
3. Name some countries which you think are part of the 'first world'. Can you think of a city in each which is particularly associated with international trade or finance? (These – with a few others, and some heavy industrial zones, more strictly speaking form what are called economic centres.)
4. What do you understand by the terms 'first world' and 'third world'?
5. What are the most striking differences you can identify between the triangle representing the 'first world' and the triangle representing the 'third world'?

Beginning to look more critically at the diagram

6. Can you see any difficulty with the way the triangles show social stratification (i.e. social layering)? Here are three points for you to think about:
 - The strata in each triangle represent broad socio-economic divisions. Each could be further subdivided. For instance: when discussing the working class, a distinction is often made between skilled, semi-skilled, and un-skilled workers. This is important because it highlights one difficulty with the triangles – that some members of the working class – particularly if they work in un-skilled and temporary forms of work – are very close to those identified as landless, jobless, and destitute (i.e. the poorest of the poor).
 - Likewise, consider agriculture. Large-scale, capital-intensive farming is not the same as peasant farming whether cash-cropping or subsistence. This kind of farming really belongs to the top four sections of the third world triangle (i.e. owner, manager, and working class). But note, the rural working class context is different to an urban working class context. (Can you think why?) And, in agriculture, some labour is seasonal. (Think of some features of this form of employment.) Also, in the first world, governments have been paying subsidies to keep their farmers on the land. (If they hadn't done this, large sectors of first world agriculture would probably have collapsed.)
 - However, let's look further at peasant production. Peasants who grow cash-crops (e.g. coffee, cotton, tea, flowers, maize) for export will be in the top half of the peasant category. Some may even be relatively prosperous and do better than many people in the working class. But most peasants will not find it so easy to produce beyond subsistence levels, particularly if there is little local demand and poor infrastructure and no export potential. Still, those practicing subsistence agriculture still have some form of access to land, unlike the jobless and destitute in urban areas.

Towards understanding why/...

Lesson Materials

THE DOUBLE TRIANGLE (cont.)

Towards understanding why the rich get richer and the poor get poorer

7. Where do the profits go? What does this suggest about the comparative status of the owner and manager classes (strata) in the 'first' and 'third worlds'? (Also, think back to question 3 above. This illustrates the 'centre-periphery' model shown in the diagram. Basically, goods and profits flow to the first world centres – often via smaller centres in each third world country. Thus, most of the world, but particularly the 'third world' finds itself on the periphery (i.e. away from the centre, on the margins) in relation to these centres.
8. Look at the blurb that accompanies the heading 'Peasants' on the diagram. Why do prices for cash crops get lower in relation to prices for manufactured goods?
9. If the 'third world' largely provides agricultural produce and raw materials (e.g. coal, iron, manganese, and so on) can you see how a similar problem results with regard to manufactured goods?
10. What about currency exchange? (Think about the 'should-South-Africa-have-a-stronger-or-weaker-Rand' debate. Who (i.e. which kinds of business / economic activity) benefits in South Africa when the Rand is weaker? Who (i.e. which kinds of business / economic activity) benefits in South Africa when the Rand is stronger? But can you see how the cycle you discussed in relation to questions 8 and 9 remains in place?

NOTE: while this diagram really shows present inequalities in terms of trade, the pattern is one which was, by and large, established during colonial times. Land accumulation (through conquest or expropriation, plantation farming, logging, mining – all were carried out to the advantage of the colonising country. And, often this was done through with the legal sanction of the colonial government (- whether the government in the colonial centre, or it's local representative in the form of a governor, or forms of settler government in the country itself).

NOTE: it's important to recognise the role that the state plays because the diagram doesn't focus explicitly on it. One gloss is given in relation to the working class which does touch on the role of the state: 'Strikes often illegal.' This is another area we won't have time to explore here. But, quickly:

- (a) consider what trade unions do
- (b) what advantages might be given to businesses if the workers they employ are not allowed to organise, and
- (c) what kind of state it is that does not allow workers these basic freedoms.

LESSON 15: Unmasking Inequality in South Africa



REFERENCE

Page 397-8 [DEVELOPMENT OF
CRITICAL THINKING: ECONOMIC
ANALYSIS and MORAL INSIGHT]



WHAT YOU NEED

- (1) LSM: 'Inequality in South Africa'
- (1) Newsprint & kokis for each group
- (2) Prestik

AIM

- To develop an understanding of the economic inequality in South Africa, and to see how this is very similar to the global inequality investigated in the previous lesson.

OUTCOMES

- SKL Learners are able to interpret a graph.
- KUI Learners gain an understanding of the South African economy and the large gap between rich and poor.

TEACHER'S NOTE

The two diagrams, 'GDP per square mile in South Africa' and 'South Africa's highly stratified class society, 2001', essentially show up the same economic patterns as the 'The Double Triangle' diagram in the previous lesson. However, this time they illustrate economic inequality in South Africa. The first shows the difference between rich and poor by illustrating the vast discrepancy in incomes. The second shows how much of this economic wealth is based in the main urban areas: Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Durban. This also shows how wealth is 'sucked' towards economic centres – just as the diagram from the previous lesson illustrated. Thus, those on the margins or periphery of economic activity find themselves as a poor underclass in urban and peri-urban centres, or as poor people within marginal subsistence economies in rural areas. Because wealth is concentrated in urban centres or among a small capitalist farming elite, government policy, development programs, economic policy designed to push exports, and so on, actually serve to further advantage those who are already part of this economic centre in some way. Frequently, these policies and programs – often despite the intentions of those who draft them – further marginalise those who are poor. But this will be looked at later.

The diagram 'GDP per square mile in South Africa' was drawn up in the 1970's. Although this diagram is quite old, it clearly shows the centre-periphery structure of the South African economy. Were it drawn up today (2005), its depiction of centre and periphery in South Africa would still be very similar.

The diagram "South Africa's highly stratified class society, 2001" contains some terms that may be unfamiliar to learners. Here are some explanations.

- *Bourgeois elite* – Managerial (business and banking) and professional groups within society (e.g. chartered accountants; top lawyers, doctors, dentists). The handful of very wealthy family owners of large corporations (including large farms) are probably also included here. Could also include owners and managers of 'medium-size' businesses (including farms), and so on.

- *Petit bourgeoisie* – French for ‘little middle class’. Would include middle management, ‘white-collar workers (traditionally clerical and secretarial). Teachers and nurses would also fall into this category.
 - *Lower class* – Basically this refers to the ‘working class’. However, only those in the upper lower class are likely to be in permanent work or regular casual jobs. Trade unions are likely to represent workers from the lower sections of the petty bourgeois class down through the upper lower class, and perhaps elements from the middle lower class.
 - *Lumpen-proletariat* – defined on diagram 2 as those unemployed and with little opportunity to find any form of paid work. Any work which does become available will be infrequent, last only a short while, and probably be in the form of casual labour. Note that this applies to the two the bottom two categories of the lower class. Social movements, such as the Landless People’s Movement or squatter organisations, may represent the aspirations of people from the bottom of the middle lower class and lower lower class.
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LESSON OUTLINE

I The group work process

- i. Divide you class into groups of four or five.
- ii. Distribute the Lesson Materials page ‘Inequality in South Africa’
- iii. Explain the terms that are used in diagram 2: ‘bourgeois elite’, ‘petite bourgeois’, ‘lumpen-proletariat’
- iv. Assign each group a social class from diagram 2, e.g. group 1 – bourgeois elite, group 2 – petite bourgeois, and so on. You can have more than one group for each social class – but you do need to have at least one for each.
- v. Tell each group that they will need to imagine themselves into their assigned class (or social strata). But, first, they will answer the first and second sets of questions as preparation for doing this – i.e. Question 1 (with diagram 1) and Question 2 (with diagram 2). You will need to monitor the groups to see that the questions are being understood.
- vi. Then, each group will build a profile of a typical, or average, member of their assigned class (social stratum) by answering the third set of questions – i.e. Question 3 (with diagram 2).
- vii. They will write their answers to this third set of questions on a piece of newsprint.

2 Gallery walk and class discussion

- i. The newsprint responses to the third set of questions from all the groups will be hung up on the classroom walls – as in a gallery.
- ii. Allow the groups to walk around the class and read what the other groups have done.
- iii. If you have time, take some discussion from the class.

3 Conclusion

Briefly draw attention to those profiles which are most realistic. Also, refer to the socio-economic aspects of health and disease. This is important because it shows that where you are born or the social class into which you are born impacts greatly on your chances in life. It also relates to why this is a moral issue, a question of justice, and why communities and countries have a responsibility to try to change these things. The next lesson will explore the causes of poverty.

OTHER IDEAS

4 Individual Reflection

You will notice that a fourth set of questions is given on the Lesson Materials page. You could squeeze it in (if time allows) for those students in groups who finish the group work process (1) before the others. It should be done quietly by each student on their own. If this works then you can pick up on feelings that learners might have experienced as part of 2 (iii). Alternatively, you could ask the students to do this reflection in their own time, perhaps for homework.

MATERIALS



LEARNER

- Sampie Terreblanche. 2002. 'South Africa's highly stratified class society, 2001' in *A History of Inequality in South Africa, 1652-2002*. (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press and Sandton: IMM Review Publishing Pty Ltd, p 36.
- Klaus Nurnberger. 1999. 'GDP per square mile in South Africa' in *Prosperity, Poverty and Pollution: Managing the Approaching Crisis*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications and London: Zed Books Ltd., p 40.
- CIE. 2005. 'Inequality in South Africa'.

Lesson Materials

Inequality in South Africa

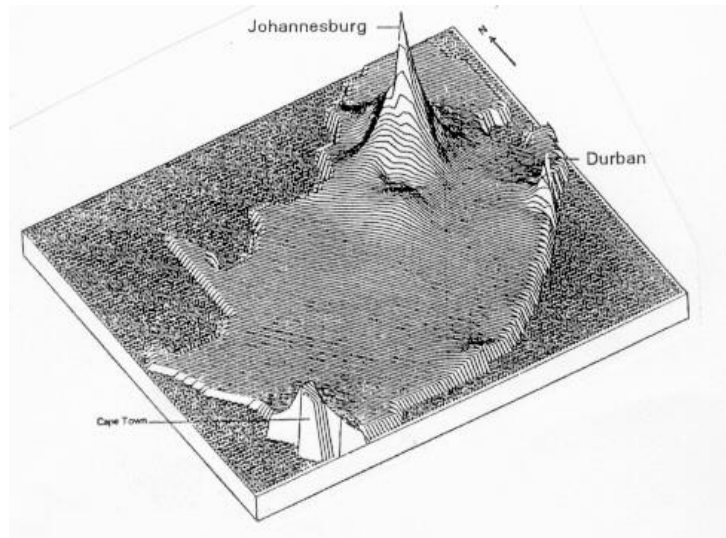


Diagram 1: Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per square mile in South Africa in the 1970s
© Klaus Nurnberger. 1999. *Prosperity, Poverty and Pollution: Managing the Approaching Crisis*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications and London: Zed Books Ltd., p 40

Although this 'map' was commissioned in the 1970s – and so is quite old – it does show how the centre-periphery of South Africa's economy is structured. You will see that the centres are clustered around urban areas. Gross domestic product (GDP) refers to the total value of all goods and services produced during the course of a year in a particular country.

Question 1 (Diagram 1): Centre and periphery in the South African economic landscape

- Which is the largest urban centre? (It's really a conglomeration of urban centres. Some texts call this the PWV region. Can you work out what the letters stand for? Which province, today, does this region largely fit into?)
- Identify the next two largest centres.
- Identify any other centres you can discern (make out) on the diagram.
- Use your general knowledge to name those provinces, today, which are the poorest in South Africa.

Question 2 (Diagram 2): Interpreting the graph

- How many people live in South Africa according to the graph?
- How many people make up the lower two classes?
- What percentage of the population is extremely rich?
- How much of the total income available to South Africans is earned by the poorer 50% of the population? How much does the other 50% earn?
- What is this graph designed to show us?
- What does 'stratified' mean? Explain what the heading of the graph means by rewriting it in your own words.

Question 3/...

Lesson Materials

INEQUALITY IN SOUTH AFRICA (cont.)

Question 3 (Diagram 2): Building a profile of a typical (i.e. average) person in your assigned class (social strata).

Answer these questions on newsprint for class display.

- What might your family life be like?
- Where might you live?
- What might you eat?
- What kind of work, if any, would your father/mother/caregiver do?
- How long are you likely to live?
- What are you likely to die of?
- How healthy are you?
- What are the greatest risks you face?
- What would be your most precious possession?
- What are your educational prospects?
- What do you feel (i.e. as a typical member of your class) when you think about your socio-economic position relative to those above you (if any) and those below you (if any)?
- Think about what each of you in your group would like to be. Where would your work / career place you?

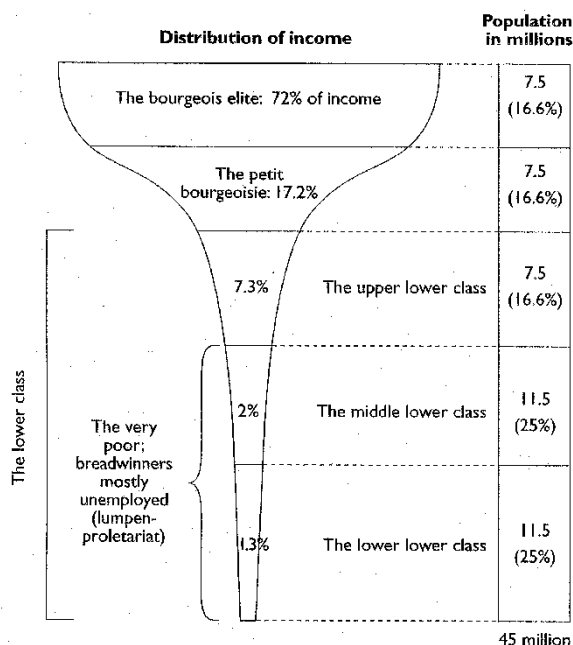


Diagram 2: South Africa's highly stratified class society, 2001

© Sampie Terreblanche. 2002. *A History of Inequality in South Africa, 1652-2002*. (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press and Sandton: IMM Review Publishing Pty Ltd, p 36)

Question 4 (Diagram 2): Personal reflection

Do this very quickly by yourself. You need not share your responses with anyone.

- Where would you place your immediate family (father / mother / caregiver) on this diagram?
- Think about the form of work or career you would like to follow. Where would that place you on this diagram?
- If you lived in an urban area where would you be likely to live? If you lived in a rural area where would you be likely to live?
- What could happen if we don't find ways – as a country, region, globally – to reduce this inequality?
- What might this mean for individual lifestyles? (You will consider some other options –e.g. tax and government expenditure later.)
- What do you feel (not think) when you interpret this graph?

LESSON 16: The Causes of Poverty



REFERENCE

Page 397-8 [DEVELOPMENT OF
CRITICAL THINKING: ECONOMIC
ANALYSIS and MORAL INSIGHT]



WHAT YOU NEED

- (I) LSM: 'Causes of Poverty'

AIMS

- To explore what causes poverty
- To deepen understanding of the concept of poverty
- To (briefly) touch on how to begin to address poverty

OUTCOMES

- KUI Learners demonstrate knowledge, understanding, and insight into poverty and its causes.
- KUI Learners demonstrate an understand of how to address poverty.

CLASSROOM QUOTE

'Not to know is bad; not to wish to know is worse.' (Nigerian proverb)

TEACHER'S NOTE

The first two lessons introduced global and South African economic patterns and drew attention to the wealth gap that exists between rich and poor. These lessons showed how wealth is sucked towards wealthy centres and that economic and political (both national and international) forces establish and maintain this 'tributary system'. During this lesson, the learners need to grasp that poverty is more than being poor. It's about the various patterns, processes, and structures that cause people to be poor and that keep them poor.

The causes of poverty are easier to identify than to address. Those given in the list on the Lesson Materials page 'Causes of Poverty' can all be applied to South Africa. Allow discussion from the class related to the ranking of these, but (2iii) and (4) in the Lesson Outline show that the relationships between these causes are complex and mutually reinforcing. One caution: we must be careful not to end up blaming the poor for being poor, or for only viewing them as helpless victims. The first is glossed under (5) below. The second is balanced by remembering that ways out of poverty are only found when individuals, families, and communities feel involved in their own development. Their involvement helps restore dignity through finding ways to value their experience and draw on the skills they have. Projects often fail when the community is insufficiently involved – either because they weren't consulted, or because the project serves the interests of donors or governments more than the intended beneficiaries themselves.

It may be worth spending a few moments thinking about your own family, especially if you intend to use (5) – but also because these issues affect our lives and families and may cause discomfort in ourselves and the learners which needs to be handled sensitively if it arises. Think about your

grandparents as well as distant relatives. Even in fairly well off families it's possible to find relatives (historical and current) who are poor. What enabled some to climb out of poverty? What caused others to sink into it? How do those who have climbed out keep themselves out?

LESSON OUTLINE

1 The Causes of Poverty

- i. Give the Lesson Materials page 'Causes of Poverty' to each student. Or, have it written up on the board. Take the class through the instructions and give them a chance to rank the causes individually.
- ii. Ask the students to form groups of 4 or 5.
- iii. Ask each group to choose the 5 most important causes of poverty and to rank these.

2 Feedback and Discussion

- i. List the responses of two groups on the board and allow some discussion on the differences between them (and other listings from other groups).
- ii. Ask the students if there are any important causes of poverty not listed on the handout and list these quickly on the board. For instance, a growing debt – both for countries and for individuals and families – can be a very important trigger for a fall into poverty.
- iii. Introduce the idea of a 'vicious circle' (or spiral). (This is a circular pattern of inter-locking problems which then reinforce each other – hence, *vicious* circle. An example: no job, no money, no food, weakness and hunger, sickness, apathy and hopelessness, etc.)

3 Conclusion

- i. Review key ideas about poverty: e.g. it's more than just being poor. It's also about the processes which bring poverty about by steadily worsening the economic situation of communities / classes / people and by preventing them from getting out of it.
- ii. Introduce the challenge: How can we begin to counteract the vicious circle of poverty? Take a few ideas. Let the class know that in the course of this unit they will need to prepare two actions – an act of charity and an act directed at changing the structural forces that keep people poor. Invite them to begin thinking about what they may like – as individuals or collectively – to do. But, before this, why do we need to do anything about poverty at all?

OTHER IDEAS

4 Other Orderings

Invite the class to see how else the list could be ordered. For example, some causes are closer and more personal than others. Others are larger – e.g. historical and global processes. A continuum (line) could be drawn and the causes placed at points on it – e.g. individual/family, community, regional, national, international. (This could also be done as a set of concentric circles, or even as sets of widening vicious circles.)

5 Breaking Out of the Circle

Ask the class how their families try to (depending on their circumstances) break out of poverty, or keep themselves from poverty. (If you do this, keep the assumptions referred to in the Teacher's Note in mind. Remember, too, that even when people are relatively advantaged, that they usually have to work hard to maintain this advantage. This is why they are sometimes unable to see why others who don't have the same advantage are not able to succeed. Thus, they may notice apathy, for instance, and say 'That person is just lazy and does not know the meaning of hard work.' What they are probably failing to notice is the inter-locking aspects of

the larger vicious circle which brought about that person's sense of apathy in the first place. We should be aware that our judgements usually reflect the way we see things. We should be mindful that they can show others – and us, if we are alert enough – our bias or prejudice. Often our bias or prejudice is based on a narrow view of a person or situation. It gets worse when we move beyond individuals and begin to label whole groups or communities as 'lazy'. Indeed, a bad South African habit of generalising or labelling revolves around the use of 'They'. Think about this next time you catch yourself saying 'They...', 'They're just...', or 'They're always...')

MATERIALS

LEARNER

- Anne Hope and Sally Timmel. 1995. 'Causes of Poverty' in *Training for Transformation*, Book 1. Gweru: Mambo Press, p 108 (adapted)



Lesson Materials

Causes of Poverty

Look at this list of the causes of poverty. Quickly read through the list. Then, in the right hand individual ranking column, place 1 beside what you think is the most important cause, 2 next to the second most important, and so on.

	Individual ranking		Group ranking
A	_____	Poor land and / or shortage of land and natural resources	_____
B	_____	Lack of education	_____
C	_____	International trade policies and practices	_____
D	_____	Feelings of apathy and hopelessness	_____
E	_____	Exploitation and domination by other countries	_____
F	_____	The colonial past	_____
G	_____	The indifference of other countries	_____
H	_____	Overpopulation	_____
I	_____	Hunger and sickness	_____
J	_____	Wealth and power concentrated in the hands of a few local or national leaders	_____
K	_____	Dependency on other countries	_____
L	_____	The HIV/AIDS pandemic	_____
M	_____	No job opportunities	_____
N	_____	Lack of personal initiative	_____
O	_____	Prevailing (capitalist) economic structures	_____
P	_____	Crime and violence	_____
Q	_____	Labour strikes, civic protest, and growing rebellion	_____
R	_____	Multi-national companies	_____
S	_____	Poor technology	_____

LESSON 17: Responsibility for the Poor



REFERENCE

Page 394 [AWARENESS: COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITY]; Page 398 [GUIDANCE: Discovering the emphasis of SCRIPTURE]



WHAT YOU NEED

- (1) Bibles
- (1) Readers
- (2) LSM: 'Responsibility for the Poor'

AIM

- To look at our individual and communal responsibility towards the poor.

OUTCOMES

- KUI Learners understand that they have a personal and communal responsibility towards the poor.
- DAP Learners develop a concern for justice.
- SKL Learners practice the skill of reflective listening.

CLASSROOM QUOTES

'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.'

(Leviticus 19:18; Mark 12:31, Matthew 22:39b, Luke 10:27; Romans 3:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8b)

'This, rather, is the fasting that I wish:

releasing those bound unjustly,
untying the thongs of the yoke;

Setting free the oppressed,
breaking every yoke;

Sharing your bread with the hungry,
sheltering the oppressed and the homeless;

Clothing the naked when you see them,
and not turning your back on your own.'

(Isaiah 58:6-7)

TEACHER'S NOTE

Lessons 1-3 have been quite demanding in terms of their content and concepts. This lesson offers a chance to enter a more relaxed mode in order to hear some scripture and share some views on neighbourliness and community, and our individual and collective responsibility to the poor.

One way of thinking about this kind of reflection is to liken it to a 'catena' - Latin for 'chain'. This is a name given to a form of commentary used in the early Church. Basically a text - say from the Gospels was quoted - and then, in sequence, commentary excerpts from the works of the Church 'Fathers' would be given. The difference, here, is that a basic question is being asked and then teased out through various texts which, in effect, offer a commentary on the question and each other.

LESSON OUTLINE

1 Preparation

Do this as a whole class activity, sitting the class in a circle, or in two semi-circles. Hopefully your class is mature and practiced enough to handle a quiet, reflective, open discussion for 20 or so minutes. You will need some learners to read the given biblical texts and others to read the 'comment' section. Either deliberately choose readers beforehand so that they can prepare, or ask for volunteers at the beginning of the lesson.

2 Instructions

Distribute the Lesson Materials page 'Responsibility for the Poor'. Invite the students to share out of their experience and knowledge of their own faith tradition and/or their own concern for justice. Invite them to respond to the questions and biblical texts from their perspective. Ask them to listen for the way successive texts echo each other. Say that the reflection will begin with a short silence and proceed section by section. Sometimes there will be time for quiet comments in response to the text or questions to be shared. Quickly point to the sections and passages so that everyone gets a sense of how things will go - and those who are reading (if you've chosen people beforehand) are reminded of their place.

3 The Reading Process

Begin with a moment of silence. When the group is settled - and don't feel rushed into this - start with Section 1. Allow the group to hear the text. Allow the group to hear the questions. Then, according to what seems needed, allow for some silence or some discussion before moving on to Section 2. Proceed in this way until the reflection reaches its end. Close with a short silence. Conclude by thanking those who read, those who commented, and - if all went well - the class for their good behaviour.

OTHER IDEAS

4 Other Scriptures

Ask those from various religious backgrounds present in the class (or school) to bring some scripture texts and/or stories that illustrate our individual and communal responsibility towards the poor. These texts and stories will help learners to see the role of almsgiving and charity in religious traditions; they may also illustrate socio-economic aspects of concept of justice. One link with African societies is to ask learners to explore social welfare practices such as foraging and gleaning, or *ukusisa / ukunqoma / mafisa / kholomo yau swahelwa*. Scripture texts brought by the learners, in particular, could be written up on newsprint and displayed on the classroom walls for this lesson and the rest of the unit.

5 Different Approaches

Decide how you will approach the lesson. For instance, you could: (1) use it more meditatively and let individuals work at their responses. Or, probably better, (2) let pairs or threes work through the texts and questions together. You could also decide on a combination of approaches where one seems to suit a particular text and set of questions, but changing as appropriate. The reading process above is written as a whole class activity.

MATERIALS

LEARNER

- CIE. 2005. "Responsibility for the Poor"



Lesson Materials



Responsibility for the Poor

SECTION 1

1.1 Why do we need to respond to the plight of the poor?

Christian faith answers:

'God created man in his image;
in the divine image he created him;
male and female he created them.' (Genesis 1:27)

1.2 What does it mean for the way we relate to people if we say that all people are God-imaged?

1.3 How should each of us view ourselves in the light of this text?

1.4 How does this relate to 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself'?

[Allow some silence, or some discussion - try to sense what it is that the group needs.]

SECTION 2

If we say we 'love our neighbour' too glibly (i.e. too quickly and too easily) two texts lie in wait:

2.1 Consider the story of the rich man who runs up to Jesus and asks: 'What must I do to inherit eternal life?' Listen to the story as told in Mark 10:17-22 (also 23ff.).
[The text is read.]

Comment

We may have heard this text interpreted as being the story of the rich young man who claims to have kept the commandments but who, in the end, loved wealth more than he was able to love God; or that he was unable to commit himself to discipleship and that God wants our all. But St Basil of Caesarea offers a particularly blunt reading. He simply says that this man must have been lying. If he had kept the commandments he would not be rich. His obligation towards his neighbours and those in need simply would have meant that he would not have been able to accumulate that amount of wealth. If he has been loving his neighbours as himself he would be giving even as any money or goods come in.

2.2 The next text reminds us that we sometimes answer 'Who is my neighbour?' in ways that might not go far enough. Listen to Matthew 25:31-46. *[The text is read.]* Did you notice the irony (surprise) that unfolds in the text when those who do God's will were not even aware that this is what they were doing. On the other hand, those who cried 'Lord, when did we see you?' are subjected to the same challenge so frequently thrown out by the prophets. Here is an example. *[Isaiah 58: 6-7 is read.]*

Is there anything/...

Lesson Materials



RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE POOR (cont)

Is there anything here that sits at odds with your religious tradition?
Even if you are (inclined towards) being an agnostic or an atheist, is there anything here you would disagree with? (If so, why?)

[Allow some silence, or some discussion - try to sense what it is that the group needs.]

SECTION 3

Thus, faith is lived out as 'loving action' or 'love-in-action'. Hear James 2:14-17:

'What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well," but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead.'

Comment

James is addressing a Christian community. But in the passage immediately following he refers to Abraham in a way that both Jews and (Jewish) Christians of his time would have accepted. Is this a challenge, then, like the Isaiah text, to all who wish to take following a religious path seriously? Would anyone like to offer a text from their faith tradition which says something similar to what we have been called to so far?

[Allow some silence, or some discussion - try to sense what it is that the group needs.]

SECTION 4

If people of faith are trying to live close to God, then the good news (gospel) is that God is close to those who are poor. Therefore, being more mindful of those who are poor and more attentive to their needs is an important way through which to grow closer to God. Listen to some of the good news God has for the poor as expressed in the mission of Jesus Christ. *[Luke 4:18-19 is read.]*

How are we sent - to our neighbours, our communities, to the poor we encounter? Do we bring justice with us? Do we who are God-imaged recognise this God-image in others? Do we allow ourselves to recognise their God-image in ourselves?

[Allow some silence, or some discussion - try to sense what it is that the group needs.]

[Short closing silence. Thanks.]

LESSON 18: Economic Justice in Scripture



REFERENCE

Page 398 [GUIDANCE: Discovering the emphasis of SCRIPTURE]



WHAT YOU NEED

- (3) LSM: 'Scripture Reading'
- (6) TSM: 'Let Justice Roll'

AIMS

- To explore what some passages of scripture say about economics, justice, and oppression, and to show that justice is a key theme in scripture and an essential dimension of faith
- To consider some elements of reading scripture in relation to issues of oppression and justice

OUTCOMES

- KUI Learners recognise that justice is a key biblical theme.
- KUI Learners understand that justice is an essential dimension of faith and faithful living
- KUI Learners understand that while Scripture sheds light on current situations, it does not provide ready-made answers.

CLASSROOM QUOTES

'With what shall I come before the Lord
and bow down before the exalted God?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
with calves a year old?
Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of
rams,
with ten thousand rivers of oil?
Shall I offer my firstborn for my
transgression,

the fruit of my body for the sin of my
soul?
He has showed you, O man, what is good.
And what does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God.

(Micah 6:6-8)

TEACHER'S NOTE

BACKGROUND

Some scripture passages express an obligation to look after the homeless, the orphan, the widow, and the sojourner (traveller or alien). (For example: Deuteronomy 10:18-19 with regard to the fatherless, the widow, and the alien, and Deuteronomy 15: 1-11 with regard to the poor. A concordance will provide many further instances.) This responsibility is justified in various ways. For instance, we should look after the weak because God looked after the Israelites when they were weak and in captivity in Egypt and liberated them from their oppression. These Scripture passages enjoin social responsibility for the poor or marginalised – sometimes in the form of hospitality (the sojourner), levirate marriage (the widow), or charity (visiting those in prison, providing clothes, food, water, etc.). The practice of gleaning can be seen as a form of social welfare – see the biblical book, Ruth. Vandana Shiva mentions this practice in relation to traditional farming methods in India and how it provided sustenance to the poor, or those who could not work, e.g. pregnant women. Can you think of similar practices in European or African history?

However, whether we are concerned with the world that gave rise to the Bible, or with our world today, we need to carefully evaluate whether particular arrangements will serve the cause of justice or not. For instance, take levirate marriages again where, in some societies, a widow is expected to marry her husband's brother. While in Israel and in Africa this was intended to provide a home for widows and their children, and an opportunity for the widow's husband's brother to sire children on his brother's behalf, we need to acknowledge that this practice could lead to abuses. Widows may find themselves coerced into marriage with their dead husband's brother. When this happens, family possessions, including land, pass into the control of the brother. We also might feel that the social expectation to have a sexual relationship with her husband's brother places constraints on her freedom to choose or not. And, in this time of HIV/AIDS, this may place her life at risk. Further, we live in a time where other moves (the constitutional and legal entrenchment of women's rights) to protect the dignity of women and to safeguard the property of widows are available. The Zimbabwean film, Neria, portrays this situation: as Neria is widowed, and threatened by predatory relatives, she struggles for justice and her independence with the help of a then new law designed to do just this. Indeed, one purpose of the film was to bring changes in women's rights and the laws of inheritance to the general attention of Zimbabweans.

Nevertheless, when we look at prophetic passages of scripture addressed to those in power, whose lifestyles, actions, economic practices, etc., lead to the oppression and exploitation of the poor, we also need care in thinking about the world we live in relation to the world of the text. Because the prophet is challenging a particular situation, we need to know something about that situation. But even here, we can work with the general principle that the prophet is criticising a situation in which political, legislative, and economic power is being used against the poor. Thus, when we look at our context, we need to ask how economic, political, and legislative frameworks may be working - even against their stated intention of helping the poor, or to increase justice - to disadvantage the poor and marginalised.

LESSON OUTLINE

I Preparation

- i. You need to decide whether there is enough time to do one, and which one, or both of the text-based exercises on the Lesson Materials page 'Scripture Reading'. Or, you could ask the groups to decide which one they will look at. Or, you could split the exercises between the groups. (Or, if, for instance, it's not possible to make copies of the page for the students, it's probably best to work only with the exercises on the 'Lord's Prayer'. The class is more likely to be familiar with the phrases, and less by way of background or comment is provided.)
- ii. You could invite those of other faiths to bring key texts from their scriptures and traditions that focus on economic (and business) justice to the class. These could be shared with the class during the introduction, and also displayed on the classroom walls.
- iii. Organise the class into groups of 4 or 5.

2 Introduction

Ask the class if they can recall scriptural passages referred to during the course of previous lessons in this unit. Also, remind them that while we are looking at the Bible, some of the points that emerge will apply to other scriptures and traditions of interpretation in other faiths.

3 Group work

Hand out the Lesson Materials page 'Scripture Reading'. Give each group the task assigned to them. Say that the tasks include some background information and comment, along with the questions, as an aid to their reflection. Let the groups work on their task. Monitor discussion to get a sense of how things are going.

4 Questions and discussion

Take some questions and allow for some discussion of their responses.

5 Conclusion

Reinforce key points such as:

- The theme of justice is a major biblical theme.
- Yahweh requires justice rather than (mere) religious observance. (Texts to this effect can also be found in other faith traditions.)
- But care needs to be taken in how we read these texts in relation to our own situation – one analogy is that they shed light on our situation and help us to see what is wrong, but we still need to decide on a faithful and justice-oriented response for ourselves.

6 Let Justice Roll

You might like to teach the class the song found on the Lesson Materials page 'Let Justice Roll'. It may be appropriate to use it in a paraliturgical or liturgical service should the class decide to do this as an accompaniment to their action on behalf of the poor (See Lesson 7: Relief Work).

OTHER IDEAS

7 Scripture Passages

To further the learners' look at what Scripture has to say about oppression and injustice, you could invite an exploration of some of the following passages.

HEBREW SCRIPTURES	CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lev 19:11-18 ▪ Lev 25:23 ▪ Neh 9:36-37 ▪ Ps 12:5 ▪ Ps 51:14 ▪ Ps 103:6 ▪ Eccl 4:1-2 ▪ Is 1:11-17 ▪ Is 58:1-9 ▪ Jer 9:24 ▪ Amos 5:21-24 ▪ Amos 8: 4-7 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mt 5:1-12 (especially v 6) ▪ Mt 6:19-21, 24 ▪ Mt 16:24-26 ▪ Mt 19:23-24 ▪ Mt 25:31-46 ▪ Mk 12:14 (cf Gen 1:26-27) ▪ Lk 1:46-55 ▪ Lk 4:18-19 (cf Lev 25 on the Jubilee Year, i.e. 'the Lord's year of favour') ▪ Lk 6: 20-26 ▪ Acts 2:44-47 ▪ Acts 4:32-34 ▪ James, especially 1:27, 2:1-9, 5:1-6

(Michael Burke. 1991. 'Scripture on Justice' 185 in *Connections*. Pietermaritzburg: Centaur Publications, p 148)

8 Scripture Reading

If you have selected either Exercise 1 or Exercise 2 of the Lesson Materials page for this lesson, you could plan a follow-up lesson with the reading you did not select this time.

MATERIALS

LEARNER

- CIE. 2005. "Scripture reading"

TEACHER

- John de Gruchy (ed). 1986. 'Let Justice Roll' in *Cry Justice! Prayers, meditations and readings from South Africa*. London: Collins Liturgical Publications, p 234



Lesson Materials

Scripture Reading



In your group, read the text and answer the questions with the help of the explanatory notes and your view of contemporary society.

EXERCISE 1:

[Matthew 6:9b-12] Excerpts from the prayer that Jesus taught

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread ...
... and forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors...

Excerpt 1

- How can we speak of God's kingdom? Is it wherever the reign of God appears? In what ways is it different to the kinds of things we experience here? Where, in our daily experience, are we able to glimpse aspects of God's reign? (i.e. where on earth do we experience something of the truth of what we are praying for? Surely the prayer is always being answered in some way?)
- Note: 'your will be done, / on earth as it is in heaven' recognises that this is far from the case; yet asks (implores) that it should be; but also reminds those who would live as God wants them to live of their responsibility in this regard.

Excerpt 2

- 'daily bread' - consider this from two perspectives. What might these lines say to those who struggle to obtain their 'daily bread'? What might these lines say to those who have more than their 'daily bread'?

Excerpt 3

- 'forgive us our debts' – i.e. not 'sins' or 'trespasses' as it is frequently translated, or as it appears in the liturgy of many churches.
- Interestingly the Afrikaans preserves the possibility of both meanings: *skulde* can be used for both 'debts' and 'faults' – the question though is whether enough stress is ever put on 'debts'; likewise with *skuldenaars* – those in debt to us (money or in any other way – e.g. in obligation to us; also those who have transgressed / trespassed against us).
- What other languages are spoken by members of your group / class? How is this phrase translated in those languages? See what meanings are possible; see what this might add to our understanding of this excerpt; see whether the economic / business meaning is retained, submerged, or lost.

EXERCISE 2/...

Lesson Materials

SCRIPTURE READING (cont)

EXERCISE 2:

[Amos 5:21-24] Listen to what God, through the prophet, says:

I hate, I spurn your feasts,
I take no pleasure in your solemnities;
Your cereal offerings I will not accept,
nor consider your stall-fed peace offerings.
Away with your noisy songs!
I will not listen to the melodies of your harps.
But if you would offer me holocausts,
then let justice surge like water,
and goodness like an unfailing stream.

Some questions and thoughts for you to reflect on

- '... trampling on the dignity of the poor'. Think of our society. Where and by whom is the dignity of the poor trampled on?
- Look at the image 'stall-fed peace offerings'. What does this suggest about how God is being treated by those who profess faith in God? Is there a danger that we (i.e. in our places of worship - religious sanctuaries, temples, synagogues, churches, or mosques) treat our Creator in this way?
- Amos could see many ways in which injustice was being done – and saw religious observances carried out by those doing these injustices as hypocrisy. Where might we see this today? (However, when you answer, be mindful that it is always easier to see and label what 'we' see as hypocrisy in 'others'. Jesus had some strong words for those, like 'us', who fall blind to 'our' own hypocrisy - see Matthew 7:3ff. / Luke 6:42ff.)
- According to Amos, only one offering ('holocaust', by the way, here means 'burnt offering' – i.e. where the whole carcass of the sacrificial animal was burnt) will satisfy God. What is it? Why is it that we sometimes seem to hear so little about this in our religious institutions?

Consider the image: a torrent of justice. Much of Israel (and Judah) is hilly and dry. So think of the effect of a sudden downpour and how the water runs off in gullies and ravines and river beds. It's steep - the water rushes down in a spate. Imagine justice running down in this way. How do you feel about the tension in this image? Water in such quantities that it can sweep obstacles (including trees, boulders, livestock, and people) away. What about our socio-economic structures and the people who inhabit these? (The occasional flood is said to be beneficial to the life of a river system - it flushes out accumulated debris, and frees channels to allow a steady flow again.) Or, should we celebrate this water as being a liberatingly plentiful supply for all?

Notice, justice/...

Lesson Materials

SCRIPTURE READING (cont)

- Notice, justice is not said to be stored like water in large dams. Nor, is it something which is left to 'trickle-down' to the poor. 'Trickle-down' theories of economic growth are notorious - seepage happens so slowly and losses occur at each stage on the way down, such that when it finally gets close to the poor there is little or nothing left. *An analogy (comparison) to think about:* Do our efforts at distributive justice (remember lesson 5 of this unit) sometimes look a bit like a grudging opening of a dam's sluice for limited periods at a time? But before the water gets to the poor community at the bottom, most of it is siphoned off for irrigation purposes on large farms.
- Christians (and Jews, who share a large part of their scriptures with us) read the Bible for spiritual nourishment. We link passages to the liturgical year; we can also read the bible in relation to social issues. However, sometimes the text seems far from our lives today. At other times, it seems very close to us. When the text seems close to us it is probably because we have a concern and would like the Bible to validate it. But we need to be careful not to assume that Amos' time is just like our own. Rather, when we read, it's a bit like trying to let a candle flame shed some light on our situation. The light lets us see what the problem is - we still, in faith, need to decide what we are going to do about it.
- We need to read with those who are poor, oppressed, or marginalised in mind. In the Bible, the widow, the orphan, and the sojourner (i.e. the traveler / stranger) are specially mentioned. So too, the poor. But in texts like Luke's version of the Beatitudes (- which also includes 'woes' -), 'Blessed are you who are poor, for the kingdom of God is yours' even has a special kind of poor in mind - not just the poor but the beggar who has lost their connection with any family they might have and, thence, any access to shelter or land (cf. Luke 6:20-26).

Some background notes to the life, times, and message of Amos

- If we had more time we could (a) read the whole book of Amos and (b) look up some details of his life, times, and message in a Bible dictionary. But here is a quick gloss that does both.
- Amos, a Judean (i.e. from the southern kingdom of Judah), works / lives as a shepherd in Tekoa, in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, circa 760 BCE. Today, we might call him a migrant worker, possibly even an 'illegal immigrant'.

The economy of Israel, at this time, is doing (relatively) well - but the benefits this brings are (largely) limited to the elite - those with land, those in good favour with the royal court and who can take advantage of these benefits because of the combination of their social status and official duties. However, many ordinary people live in poverty and oppression – and face a lack of compassion and treatment that strips them of their dignity. So, basically, Amos says that it is not enough to look at the economic health of a country – it's morality, it's concern for justice, among government and people, is what is important.

In the Book of Amos/...

Lesson Materials

SCRIPTURE READING (cont)

- In the Book of Amos, some of the acts this prophet condemns include: the unequal measure of the worth of rich and poor (like the difference between silver and sandals), and the way the rich trample on the heads of the weak (cf. 2:6b & 7); bribery (5:12b); the way merchants fix scales, cheat (8:5), and even sell the chaff (8:6b); the way land-owners exact levies of grain from the poor (5:11a) – i.e. the extraction of an unfair surplus from tenant farmers (a form of sharecropping?) – and how the rich (land-owners) build fine houses of stone (5b) from these stolen funds...
- He also states that justice no longer prevails at the gate (cf. the injunction that it return in 5:15). In his time, elders would meet at the gate – those with a complaint / grievance could approach them; they would hear the case and make a judgement. (You could think of this gathering of elders as something like a *kgotla* / *legotla* / *khoro*.) But the implication, in Amos, is that these ‘courts’ / ‘councils’ are not places where justice can be found – the implication is that they can be influenced by wealth or social position or even by bribes. Remember, too, that the elders would be men and, with few exceptions women would not have had direct access to the court. Generally, their complaint would be dealt with in the male-headed household or, if necessary, presented by their husband or father to the court. (A famous case where women – Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah, also known as Zelophehad’s daughters – do approach the court directly on a matter of justice can be found in Numbers 26:33; 27:1-11; 36:1-13 and Joshua 17:3-6. And sex-workers / prostitutes were one category of women who did approach the court in their own right. Can you suggest why and tease out some possible social implications of this?)

Lesson Materials

Let Justice Roll



Amos 5:24ff
Setting and tune by
Students' Union for Christian Action

Chorus

G D A D

G F#m Bm Em A D

Verse

D A D G A D

G A D F#m D A D

Chorus: But let justice roll like a river,
Righteousness like a mighty stream;
And let justice roll like a river,
Righteousness like a stream.

Listen to the Lord!
I despise your pious festivals
I hate your sacred meetings,
Listen to the Lord!

Listen to the Lord
I will not accept your offerings
I disregard your sacrifice
Listen to the Lord!

Listen to the Lord!
I cannot endure your instruments
I will not hear your empty songs
Listen to the Lord!