



Socially-based Curriculum Unit: Globally Conscientious Consumer

Unit Title: Globally Conscientious Consumer

Time Frame: Five lessons

Unit Developer(s): A.J. Blauer

Developed for Course Name and Course Code: Civics, Grade 10 (CHV20)

Strand(s) and Curriculum Learning Expectations Addressed:

Informed Citizenship Strand

ICV.05 - Demonstrate an understanding of citizenship within a global context.

IC5.01 - Analyse contemporary crises or issues of international significance (e.g., health and welfare, disasters, human rights, economic development, environmental quality) in the context of the global community.

Purposeful Citizenship Strand

PC2.04 - Describe how their own and others' beliefs and values can be connected to a sense of civic purpose and preferred types of participation.

Active Citizenship Strand

ACV.01 - Demonstrate an ability to research questions and issues of civic importance, and to think critically and creatively about these issues and questions,

AC4.02 - Compare and evaluate the impact of various types of non-violent citizen participation (e.g., advocacy, community service, voting, serving on juries) in resolving public issues in Canada.

Desired Results

Unit Description:

This unit allows students to explore their spending habits with the intention of tracking where their money goes and what industries and corporate practices – good and bad – their money is supporting. The unit begins with an overview of economically-linked global issues, including: fair trade, labour rights & standards, corporate environmental stewardship, sustainable agriculture and industry, animal rights and ethical marketing practices. Students are prompted to fill out a simple chart identifying their spending habits in the categories of: fast foods/snacks, beverages, clothing & jewelry, and toiletries. Having identified preferred products, the students then conduct internet research on the corporate track record of each producer/manufacturer or service provider. Critical research skills are employed as students learn to separate fact from fiction, truth from embellishment, reality from PR.



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Enduring Understandings / Learning:

Students will walk away from this unit with inquiry and investigative skills that will allow them to judge whether their consumerism contributes to positive or negative economic practices in a global context. More often than not, students will learn how their daily spending habits betray their sense of fairness, justice and environmental sustainability. To that end, students will learn how with a little effort – and sometimes a little more money – they can become globally-conscientious consumers, and use their money as means of leveraging positive change in the world.

Assessment Tasks

Performance Tasks and Other Evidence That Will Demonstrate the Knowledge and Skills Acquired:

GROUP DISCUSSIONS: Students will discuss major concerns in the global marketplace including: exploitative trade arrangements, sweat shop labour/indentured slaved labour, animal testing, union busting, environmental destruction and unethical marketing strategies. Students should demonstrate clear understanding of these concepts and draw connections to current events.

CONSCIENTIOUS CONSUMER PROJECT: Students will track their spending habits in areas of fast food/junk food, beverages, fashion and cosmetics/toiletries and investigate the corporate practices of the companies behind the brands/products they buy. This project prompts students to conduct online research to seek out links between their favourite products and brands and global issues including fair trade, human rights, labour rights, animal rights, environmental stewardship and ethical marketing practices. Students may uncover positive and/or negative corporate practices, upon which students are prompted to email a corporate CEO with their praise/concerns as well as submit a written reflection of their *enlightened* spending practices.

Assessment Criteria:

Evaluation criteria is included with the Conscientious Consumer Project handout. In summary, students will be evaluated on the depth and scope of their research endeavors and on the breadth of their reflection insofar as they have demonstrated a sense of how they may become more conscientious consumers.



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Unit Planning Notes

Prior Learning Necessary:

Charter of Rights and Freedoms

- Guarantee of Rights and Freedoms (Sect. 1)
- Fundamental Freedoms (Sect. 2)
- Democratic Rights (Sects. 3-5)
- Legal Rights (Sects. 7-14)
- Equality Rights (Sect. 15)
- Application of Charter (Sect.32-33 – Including “Notwithstanding Clause”)

UN Declaration of Human Rights (All 30 articles)

United Nations composition, mandate, roles & projects

United Nations power structure (security council)

Key concepts: Students should have functional understanding of these concepts...

- Civil rights
- Multinational corporations
- “Living wage”
- Unions
- Management
- Collective bargaining
- Organic/sustainable agriculture
- Humane working conditions
- Exploited/indentured workers
- Free market economy and government regulation

Preparation Materials:

VIDEOS:

- *Black Coffee – Part 3* (Documentary aired on TV Ontario. Purchase a copy at blackcoffeemovie.com)
- Walmart – The High Cost of Low Price (purchase at www.walmartmovie.com, or view in Google Videos)



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TASTE TESTING (Keep receipts for price comparison):

- Equal quantity and quality (cocoa %) of Fair Trade chocolate (eg: Cocoa Camino 70%) & non-fair trade chocolate (eg: Nestle Special Dark 50%)
- Equal quantity and quality (roast) of Fair Trade coffee and conventional coffee (eg: Maxwell House)

CLOTHES, ACCESSORIES & TOILETRIES (Optional)

- Canadian/American/European-made organic-cotton garments versus comparable garments made overseas
- Running shoes: Nike, Reebok, Brooks, Adidas, New Balance
- “Cruelty-Free” shampoos (try health food store) versus conventional brands

GROCERY ITEMS (Packaging or labels will suffice – keep receipts for price comparison) (Optional)

- Wild pacific salmon, frozen (Eg: Highliner, President’s Choice) and fish farm salmon, frozen
- Free-run chicken eggs and conventional (caged chickens) eggs
- Organic produce and conventional produce (eg: Bananas)
- Hormone & antibiotic-free milk and conventional milk

Learning Plan

LESSON 1: Conscientious Consumer

Key concepts: Fair trade, sustainable agriculture, labour rights, ethical marketing

Background information:

- **Fair Trade** (<http://us.oneworld.net/article/view/160684/1/>)
- **Chocolate & Slavery** (<http://www.american.edu/TED/chocolate-slave.htm> and http://www.su.ualberta.ca/mainpage_content/news/20061106_CarolOff)

Taste Test Activity: Sample chocolate and coffee products. Explain & discuss production of each relating to the following issues...

- **Fair trade:** What are the price differences between fair trade and non-fair trade products? How much do growers earn for each finished product (eg: bar of chocolate/cup of coffee) sold? Is this a living wage?
- **Sustainable agriculture:** How are commodities grown? Are growing practices natural, safe & sustainable?
- **Labour rights:** Under what conditions do growers work? Is slavery, indentured servitude or child labour involved?



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- **Marketing practices:** How are products marketed? Are there any questionable nutritional, health or lifestyle claims?
- **X-Factors:** What are the community and global benefits of fair-trade markets versus non-fair trade markets?

Students should take notes in the form of T-charts weighing costs and benefits of each option. Teacher may refer to background documents to assist in class discussion.

LESSON 2: Global Marketplace Paradigm (Coffee case study)

Black Coffee Video (Episode 3 – 60 minutes)

Discussion Questions

- What is the connection between what we buy and the world we live in?
- What standards of living should be deemed universal human rights?
- Is “fair trade” truly fair? Suggest some measures that would make it more fair.
- How can consumers of coffee and other imported products push for fair trade?
- Compared to quality, cost, convenience and image, how highly does “fair trade” rank when it comes to purchasing a luxury product like coffee?
- To what extent are we as individuals and a school responsible for exploitation overseas?
- Should Canadian governments pass laws restricting non-fair trade coffee?
- What is the best way to put pressure on mainstream coffee companies to change their practices?
- How can customers express their concern at the coffee counter?

LESSON 3: Food & Beverage

Key Concepts: Corporate ownership, animal rights, sustainable agriculture, transportation, ethical marketing

Background information for students:

- A. Organic farming <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/96-325-XIE/2007000/article/10529-en.htm>
- B. Link between tobacco and food http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/resources/educational/handouts/tobacco_advertising/activists_say_no.cfm
- C. Fish farms <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/life/story/4171803p-4759871c.html>
- D. Fast food <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/28/business/28burger.html>
- E. 100-Mile Diet <http://100milediet.org/category/about/#1>
- F. Bottled Water <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/newfoundland-labrador/story/2007/02/01/suzuki-water.html> and <http://www.canada.com/ottawacitizen/news/story.html?id=55b08e2a-b1d1-488b-9f95-a4831fbeeae4>



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JIGSAW PRESENTATIONS: Organize the class into small groups. Give each group one of the following media products. Each group will review one media product and present the information to the rest of the class. Please leave time for a brief discussion between each group.

- Organic and conventional produce (Item “A” above.)
- Kraft/Marlboro connection (Item “B” above)
- Difference between wild and farm fish (Item “C” above)
- Fast Food restaurants and animal cruelty practices (Item “D” above)
- Local vs. international products (Item “E” above)
- Water bottling: (Item “F”)
- Sugar exploitation (Documentary “Big Sugar”
<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=8046348031279865399>)

LESSON 4: Clothing & Accessories (Computers required)

Key concepts: Labour rights, environmental stewardship, ethical marketing

Clothing inventory: Students make a list of all brands of clothing, shoes, jewelry and cosmetics/toiletries on their person. In groups, students will conduct internet research to determine which brands are the worst when it comes to labour rights, environmental stewardship and ethical marketing.

Mock fashion show: Each group will present various garments in a satirical fashion show, identifying each garment, shoe and toiletry product by results of their research.

VIDEO: Walmart: High Cost of Low Price (if short on time, view Chapter 12 on Chinese sweatshops)

LESSON 5: Consumer Advocacy

Key Concepts: Corporate structure identification, consumer research skills, letter campaigns, petitions

Internet Research Guide handout (Appendix A): Review guide on how to research companies/products and how to judge sources

Persuasive letters (Appendix B): Practice writing a letter to a politician or CEO

ASSIGNMENT: Ethical Consumer Assignment (Appendix C)



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Attachments

Appendix A: An intuitive guide to researching sources on the Internet

Appendix B: Writing a an advocacy letter

Appendix C: Consumer Activism (Ethical Consumer Assignment & Rubric)

Other Possible Course Applications

This unit could also be applied to a Careers Studies course, whereby students would learn to investigate the corporate practices of companies they are interested in working for and investigate the origins of products they sell. Students could be taught skills for advocating better corporate practices, for example.