

# Dinner for the World



## Introduction:

This luncheon game is meant to simulate for students some of the inequities of the present socioeconomic world situation and some of the feelings of helplessness and frustration that result from these inequities. By enabling the participants to deal with a concrete experience of purchasing power, the exercise becomes a learning tool that explores global imbalances. Through this luncheon, students will become more familiar with the disparity of resources around the world and may then make the links to the disparity of resources in the United States.

Over the years, there have been a number of activities developed by nonprofit organizations working to raise awareness of food issues. Oxfam America, [www.oxfamamerica.org](http://www.oxfamamerica.org), has a quite extensive activity called "Hunger Banquet" for making this a large-scale community event. This version, adapted from an activity from the American Friends Service Committee, works well in a middle, junior high or high school setting and can be done as a school-wide event or with a segment of the student body.

## Materials:

Food (see menu for items needed – you will need larger quantities of the cheaper items, since most students will only be able to afford those)

Tables and chairs (enough to seat 2/3 of the participants)

Tablecloths (enough for 1/3 of the tables being used)

"Chips" (small squares of cut paper)

Visas (small cards marked "visa"; 15 per 100 participants)

Role Identity Cards\*

Menus for each participant (or one large menu posted for the class)\*

*\*Quantities of the materials listed above will be determined by the number of participants in the luncheon activity.*

## Procedure:

### Set-up:

The simulation can be done with any number of people. Use the following figures in proportioning your players and resources. For example, for a group of 100 students, 15 would be assigned to High Income Countries, 48 to Middle Income Countries, and 37 to Low Income Countries. For a group of 200 students those numbers would change to 30, 96, 74, and so on.

## Concept:

Much of the world suffers from chronic hunger and malnutrition due to population pressures and the inequitable distribution of food and wealth.

## Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Discuss their reactions to the inequities of the luncheon in a debriefing session.
- Express their values as they respond to the global distribution of population, wealth, and food.
- Understand the global disparities of resources as well as the disparity of resources within their own communities.

## Subjects:

Civics/Government, Economics, Family and Consumer Sciences, Geography, Health, History, Social Studies

## Skills:

Communication, bargaining, conflict resolution, strategic planning, writing

## Method:

Students participate in a luncheon-game that simulates inequities in the global distribution of food and wealth.



You will need approximately 15 visa cards for every 100 people.

The number of chips needed will be determined by how many participants you have. Simply multiply the number of participants in each category by the number of chips they receive, as indicated on the chart below.

	Population Distribution	Per Capita GDP	Chips per Player
High Income Countries	15%	\$38,412	77
Middle Income Countries	48%	\$4,370	20
Low Income Countries	37%	\$590	3

\*Economic classification based on per capita gross national income (GNI) as listed in *The World Bank Development Indicators Database, 2012*. (High Income: \$12,616 or more; Middle Income: \$1,036-12,615; Low Income: Below \$1,035.)

There should be several people available for selling food and visas.

The game is prepared around the setting of a luncheon buffet. Feel free to adapt the menu provided.

The food or buffet table should be made to look as attractive as possible. Beautifully furnished tables with chairs should be placed in a corner of the room for the High Income Country players. Provide a set of modest tables and chairs for the Middle Income Country players. The Low Income Country players should be confined to a small unfurnished section of the room, providing only chairs or sitting room on the floor. There should be a clear difference in the three settings.

Prepare envelopes for each student including a role identity sheet and the proper number of chips according to the table above. Also, you might include a menu in each envelope. Extra chips can be used by the food and visa sellers for change.

#### Facilitating the Activity:

1. Give each player his or her materials. If you know the students, it might be a good idea to place a vocal individual in each of the three “categories.” Should you not know the players, simply give a set of materials to each player at random.



2. Tell the participants that:
  - a) This is a simulation approximating the distribution of wealth, population, and food as it is in the real world.
  - b) They are to deal with the situation as they see it and enjoy the meal.
  - c) There are no rules other than those on their role identity sheet.
3. The dilemma of how to deal with the inequities of the food and wealth distribution may take various forms. The group may immediately take on a “just and humane” style and work toward providing every player with an equal or adequate share of food. This is “the ideal” and will not necessarily happen. It might happen that the game results in “confrontation” or “revolution.” In that case, it should be resolved by having the sides draw up a statement of “grievance” or “justification,” etc. This should express both their feelings and their plan to resolve the situation.

The facilitator should judge when the simulation has been played out and declare it over. At the finish, it is important to invite the players to drop the rules and share the food. However, you might want to let the inequality go unresolved. This would not be recommended if the session were to be lengthy. This is an exercise in exploring difficult issues, not frustrating students.

## Debriefing:

The debriefing session is very important and the facilitators need to draw out students’ reactions and synthesize their perceptions and insights. Also, after the group debriefing session, have students write about their personal experience and response. This should be a non-graded exercise that could either be handed in or shared in small groups. The debriefing should motivate students to study the complex problems of the global and local situations.

## Discussion Questions:

1. What was your emotional reaction to your rules? To the rules of the other groups?
2. How did you feel toward the people in the other groups?
3. Did you agree with the manner in which your group resolved problems? Do you think it was “realistic”?
4. Did your feelings change significantly during the experience? If so, when? Why?
5. What does the global situation make you think about your own community?
6. Is the distribution of resources in North America equal?
7. Are resources distributed equally in the United States? Brazil? Rwanda?



## Follow-up Activities:

1. Have students list three things they can do as individuals to work towards more equitable food and resource distribution worldwide. Have students extend this list to three more things they can do as individuals within their own communities.
2. Design an extra credit project for students to volunteer at a soup kitchen or with other community service projects.
3. Celebrate World Food Day on October 16th by facilitating this exercise in order to engage students with the issues and to heighten awareness around your school. Contact the U.S. National Committee for World Food Day at [www.worldfooddayusa.org](http://www.worldfooddayusa.org).
4. Share with students the book, *Hungry Planet: What the World Eats* by photojournalist Peter Menzel and writer Faith D'Aluisio (Ten Speed Press, 2005). The authors visited 30 families in 24 countries and chronicled their weekly food purchases with photos and information that allow readers to witness the amazing disparity in eating habits around the globe. Among the families profiled, we meet the Mellanders, a German household of five who enjoy cinnamon rolls, chocolate croissants, and beef roulades, and whose weekly food expenses amount to \$500. We also encounter the Natomos of Mali, a family of one husband, his two wives, and their nine children, whose corn and millet based diet costs \$26.39 weekly. It's an eye-opening book that can spark interesting classroom discussions.

## Assessment Ideas:

1. Have students research what an average person in a developed (High Income), developing (Middle Income), and least developed (Low Income) country eats in an average day.  
  
\*The World Bank Website at [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org) can be a helpful start, as is the book *Hungry Planet*, mentioned above.
2. Based on the countries selected, have the students research the gap between the richest and poorest within that country to show the inequity of distribution on a countrywide and worldwide basis.

Adapted with permission from the Americans Friends Service Committee. The original activity, "Simulation Game," appeared in *Hunger on Spaceship Earth*, The American Friends Service Committee, New York Metropolitan Regional Office.



# DINNER FOR THE WORLD ROLE IDENTITY CARDS

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## High Income Country Citizen

You are a privileged citizen of a “developed” country such as Japan, Germany, Australia, Canada, and the United States. You are part of the 15% of the world’s population that lives in high income countries, and you have an almost unlimited access to the goods of the Earth.

You are invited to enjoy the luncheon we have prepared for you. You have been given 77 chips, which entitles you and your fellow developed country citizens to enjoy most of all that is being served because as a citizen of a High Income nation you have control of 77% of the world’s wealth.

Because you enjoy a high level of well-being, health, literacy, and wealth, you are granted an unconditional visa to travel anywhere you choose. However, each time you visit a Middle Income Country, you must donate 2 chips to the country, and each time you visit a Low Income Country, you must donate 1 chip.

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## Middle Income Country Citizen

You are a member of a Middle Income country that is part of the “developing” world. About a quarter of these countries are classified as “Upper Middle Income” by the World Bank and include progressing industrialized countries such as Mexico, Romania, Malaysia, and Brazil. The other three-quarters are classified as “Lower Middle Income” and include countries such as Egypt, Bolivia, Thailand, and Jamaica. Citizens of Middle Income Countries enjoy 20% of the world’s wealth. You are part of the 48% of the world's people that have been given a relative buying power of 20 chips. Please feel free to purchase whatever you can from the luncheon table.

Since you enjoy a growing level of literacy, health, and wealth, you are free to travel to Low Income Countries under these conditions:

- 1) You must travel in pairs
- 2) Visas must be purchased at the luncheon table. One chip must be deposited at the luncheon table for each visa, and no more than 2 people may be issued visas at a time.



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## Low Income Country Citizen

You are hereby classified as a citizen of one of the “least developed” countries in the world such as Afghanistan, Rwanda, and Cambodia. Unfortunately, that will be of some disadvantage to your participation in this luncheon, for you have only 3% of the world’s wealth.

Since you make up 37% of the world’s population, it is not quite possible for you to have full freedom in consumption of the Earth’s resources, or in fact, of our luncheon. You are entitled to a small fraction of the Earth’s goods and have been given a relative buying power of 3 chips. We encourage you to be creative in your efforts to increase your buying power, perhaps through combining your chips.

Due to your high level of disease and illiteracy as well as your lack of wealth, we regret to inform you that your ability to travel is restricted.

Cost: Visa to High Income Country 9 chips  
      Visa to Middle Income Country 7 chips

Visas may be purchased at the luncheon table.

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# Menu

<b>Item</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Lunch meat	1 slice	8 chips
Cheese	1 slice	8 chips
Bread	1 slice	2 chips
Carrot sticks	1 portion	6 chips
Salad	1 portion	6 chips
Condiments	1 packet or portion	1 chip
Chips or pretzels	1 portion	10 chips
Granola bar	1 bar	10 chips
Rice dish	1 portion	2 chips
Raisins	1 portion	1 chip
Crackers	1 portion	1 chip
Fruit	1 piece or portion	6 chips
Milk	1 cup	2 chips
Juice	1 cup	5 chips