

DOLLARS FOR DARFUR

NATIONAL SCHOOL CHALLENGE

Sample Curricula and Student Activities

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Darfur in Geography

Objective:

Students will learn the geographical location of Africa, Sudan, and the Darfur region. They will use a combination of topographical and political maps to determine the characteristics of Darfur. Technology can be integrated to show recent satellite pictures of Darfur.

Materials:

World political map
Africa topographical map
Computers and internet connection
Chalkboard or whiteboard and writing supplies

National Standards Met:

National Geography Standards

- Standard 1: Understand how to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective.
- Standard 3: Understand how to analyze the spatial organization of people, places, and environments on Earth's surface.
- Standard 4: Understand the physical and human characteristics of places.
- Standard 5: Understand that people create regions to interpret Earth's complexity.
- Standard 18: Understand how to apply geography to interpret the present and plan for the future.

Lesson Plan:

Start with a basic background on the conflict in Darfur, available as a Power Point document on the Dollars for Darfur website. Students should know that the conflict began in 2003 after decades of repression by the Sudanese government. Two rebel groups mounted an insurgency against the government. These people had been experiencing severe drought and had no resources or supplies and no help from the government.

The government responded to the insurgency with brute force. They began a campaign against not just the Darfur rebel groups but innocent Darfuri citizens as well, bombing their villages, raping their women and children, and killing the men. This has forced 2.5 million people from their homes and has left up to 400,000 dead.

After a background on the conflict, students should identify Sudan on a world map. Teachers should then show the class where the Darfur region lies, in the west. Give students a reference point by saying that Darfur is about the size of Texas and that, before the conflict, 6-8 million people called it home. According to the 2006 census, Texas has 23.5 million inhabitants. Let students brainstorm why there are so few people living in the Darfur region. Common reasons include harsh climate, poor economy, relative isolation from major cities, little infrastructure.

Students can then look at a topographical map to understand the climate and landscape of Darfur and Sudan in general. This should lead to a discussion of the struggles of creating a city or an economy in the desert and how that may have contributed to the tension leading up to the Darfur conflict.

Students can find fantastic information and visual representations of the Darfur landscape and the ongoing crisis there online. Teachers or media professionals should lead students through a discovery of Google Earth, where students can view satellite pictures of Darfur. Google Earth also provides icons for the villages that have either been damaged or destroyed during the conflict.

Teachers can end the lesson by asking students to reflect on life in Darfur and the differences between our good fortune and their poverty. This can lead to many different discussions, including social responsibility, economic practices and how they affect citizens of different countries, effective leadership and good governance practices, and agriculture and its role in the world market.

The Desert of Darfur

Objective:

Students will learn about the ecosystems of eastern Africa and how they affect human population, migration, and politics. They will use critical thinking and reasoning to determine how a desert environment could foster conflict and the resulting redistribution of Sudanese lands. Finally, students will investigate current migration patterns of Darfuri citizens and discuss future consequences this may pose.

Materials:

Topographic map of Africa

Political map of Africa

Paper mache supplies, including strips of newspaper, flour and water, or wallpaper paste and water

Large flat piece of sturdy cardboard

National Standards Met:

National Geography Standards

- Standard 1: Understand how to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective.
- Standard 3: Understand how to analyze the spatial organization of people, places, and environments on Earth's surface.
- Standard 4: The physical and human characteristics of places.
- Standard 5: That people create regions to interpret Earth's complexity.
- Standard 6: How culture and experience influence people's perception of places and regions.
- Standard 9: The characteristics, distribution, and migration of human populations on Earth's surface.
- Standard 12: The process, patterns, and functions of human settlement.
- Standard 13: How forces of cooperation and conflict among people influence the division and control of Earth's surface.
- Standard 14: How human actions modify the physical environment.
- Standard 15: How physical systems affect human systems.
- Standard 16: The changes that occur in the meaning, use, distribution, and importance of resources.

Lesson Plan:

The lesson should begin with a brainstorming session asking the students what they know about African geography. Ask what types of ecosystems exist there and discuss what ecosystems are and how they are defined. Talk to the class about what defines a desert.

Bring the discussion to Darfur, particularly. Tell the students about the geographic realities of Darfur, including these features:

- Several mountain ranges, including the Nuba Mountains in the south-central region and the Jabal Marrah Mountains in the west
- Vast plains and desert
- Northern Darfur part of Sahara Desert
- Wadis—floodlands that support life and provide water for inhabitants
- Rainy season from June to September

Move the discussion to desertification and its impact on Darfur. Ask students their opinions about the reasons for man-made desertification and tell them that as early as 1988, scientists were warning of the expansion of the Sahara desert into Darfuri lands farther south. Discuss what economic impacts the impending desertification could have and how it is affecting human life. Ask students what they think constitutes mismanagement of the land and what specifically people could have done to increase the problem. Discuss what impact the land has had on the people, as well as the effect the people have had on the land.

Give a short background to the history of the conflict and the myth that the crisis in Darfur is an Arab versus African conflict. Explain that the Janjaweed militias, the main perpetrators of the violence, are generally labeled as "Arabs" and the civilians as "Africans". This creates the myth that the crisis is an "Arab vs. African" conflict. This is not true; Darfur is a diverse land – people speak many different languages. The terms "Arab" and "African" apply not only to ethnic and linguistic similarities but also to cultural and socio-economic connections.

It is true, however, that the conflict has intensified identity differences between groups. Before the crisis, identity was very fluid and the distinctions between "Arab" and "African" were not absolute. Since the conflict began, identity has been redefined due to security, blood money or material interest, or incentives of being recruited as Arab militia. The government exaggerated identity differences and *completely new community groups* emerged as a result. Therefore, identity divisions are less of a cause of the conflict than a result of it.

Ask students how a desert environment could affect politics and violence. Common answers may include: a lack of resources causes people to fight, the constant moving of one group of people might encroach on lands belonging to another group, and the lack of resources may have forced people together to help each other out, and the more contact there is between groups, the more fighting might erupt.

Finally, talk about the migration of millions of Darfuris and where they are going. The majority of these refugees are living in internally displaced persons camps in Darfur or in refugee camps in Chad. The conflict has spread to Chad and the Central African Republic, which both border the Darfur region. Ask students to explain what problems could be caused by the influx of that many people to another country and what responsibility, if any, the neighboring countries have to help the people of Darfur.

Student Activity:

This activity is geared toward middle school students and includes a paper mache panorama of the Darfur region. The class should break into groups and study a section of Darfur. Teachers can split these groups up by land forms, such as wadis, Nuba Mountains, Jabal Marrah Mountains, Sahara desert, and central plains.

These groups should study their specific land forms and how they work with the other ecosystems in Darfur. Then, everyone should come together to create a giant paper mache rendition of the geography of Darfur. The paper mache glue can be colored to represent sand or rocky mountains. Teachers can also provide additional materials like real sand or leaves and plants, real or fake, to represent the sparse vegetation in Darfur. Students should be encouraged to decorate the landscape with markers, crayons, and other coloring utensils and props to help build out the

entire scene. This should be done only when the panorama is entirely dry. When the panorama is dry, the groups should speak in front of the class and tell what they learned about their land form and why it is important to Darfur.

Darfur Conflict Resolution

Objective:

Students will learn the civic process of conflict resolution as well as practice skills in negotiation. Students will also learn the history of the problems between the ethnic groups in Darfur and practice mediation during a role-playing event.

Materials:

Chalk board or white board
Writing utensils

National Standards Met:

National Standards for Civics and Government

I A: What is civic life? What is politics? What is government? Why are government and politics necessary? What purposes should government serve?

IV A: How is the world organized politically?

IV C: How has the United States influenced other nations, and how have other nations influenced American politics and society?

V B: What are the rights of citizens?

V C: What are the responsibilities of citizens?

V E: How can citizens take part in civic life?

Lesson Plan:

Begin by explaining the different ethnic groups in Darfur. Tell students that before the crisis, identity was very fluid and the distinctions between "Arab" and "African" were not absolute. Since the conflict began, identity has been redefined due to security, blood money or material interest, or incentives of being recruited as Arab militia. The government exaggerated identity differences and *completely new community groups* emerged as a result. Therefore, identity divisions are less of a cause of the conflict than a result of it. There are also differences in religion. The majority of the country is Muslim, but there is a large Christian group in the South that took part in the Sudanese Civil War for over 20 years. Discuss some of the differences of these groups and how the Arabs came to inhabit Sudan.

Next, discuss the role of government in the conflict. Students will probably have well-defined ideas of the role of government in their lives, and this lesson is likely to go against what they are used to. If students do not have a good idea of the role of government, start here to help them define what a government does and how it operates.

In the conflict in Darfur, the government is systematically and purposely attacking innocent civilians under the cover of hunting out rebel groups and inciting local and tribal violence with the help of the Janjaweed militias. Help students understand what this means and the impact it would have on their lives if the U.S. government sent military troops into different states with the intention of harming the citizens.

Brainstorm with students what a government should do for its people and how the Sudanese government is failing in its role to protect and serve. Let students suggest actions the Sudanese government should be taking to end the violence in Darfur.

Discuss the meaning of conflict resolution and the role it plays in governmental affairs. This is a great way to include information on what the U.S. government is doing to help the situation of Sudan. Highlight items like President Bush and Congress declaring the violence a genocide and the U.S.'s role in the UN to push for sanctions against Sudan and the deployment of the UN/African Union peacekeeping force. Ask students if they feel that the U.S. is doing enough and, if not, what else we should be doing. Help them understand that political processes are often frustratingly slow and have many flaws, which leave people dying in the meantime.

Student Activity:

Split the class into five groups. One group is the Sudanese government. One is the Janjaweed militia forces attacking Darfur. One is a group of Darfuri civilians forced from their homes. One is a rebel group fighting against the Sudanese government. The last is a group of international peacekeepers and mediators.

These five groups must come together to discuss their problems, suggest solutions, and compromise to find an acceptable solution to peace. Encourage the groups to meet together for a few minutes before beginning the activity to decide what issues they feel most strongly about and what they are willing to compromise on. Groups should fully assume the roles of these different parties, even if they disagree completely with what is happening in Darfur. It should be clear that anything students say while in the role of a character is not necessarily how they personally feel.

Oversee the conflict resolution process and help where necessary. Students should do the majority of the work themselves, and everyone should get a better sense of how hard it is to come to a solution that everyone accepts. Encourage negotiation and the creation of deals and introduce the concept of "quid pro quo."

Student Activity:

Gather the class around the chalkboard or white board and draft a peace plan for the Sudanese government. Act as advisors to the government and give them clear actions that they should take to stop the violence in Darfur, protect the civilians, resettle the people, provide resources to avoid another conflict, and help ease tensions between the Arab and indigenous African groups. This document can be typed out and handed in or simply done orally.

Another option for this activity is to split students into groups and assign the project as a group report. Each group would devise its own strategy and present it to the class before handing in their report.

The Devil on Horseback

Objective:

Students will learn current events surrounding the Janjaweed forces in Darfur and their connection to the Sudanese government. This will be tied to the role of militias and militaries in U.S. history.

Materials:

Poster board
Markers

Skills Used:

Current events, research, comparison, drawing connections between past and present, analyzing history, forming opinions, oral communication, group collaboration

Lesson Plan:

Teachers should tell students about the Janjaweed forces and their role in the Darfur conflict. The Janjaweed are militiamen supported by the Sudanese government. The majority of them are Arab nomads from Sudan, but more recently, Sudan has brought in Arabs from other countries to inhabit the land once occupied by Darfuris and to work with the Janjaweed.

Janjaweed translates to "devil on horseback" in the English language. These men come into villages and kill the inhabitants, forcing those who are alive to flee into the desert where there is no water or food. They rape women and children and set fire to entire villages after pillaging them for anything of value.

Show how the Janjaweed are trained and give characteristics of the members themselves. Many of these soldiers are not adults yet and can barely handle the weight of their automatic guns. Paint a very real picture for students so that they understand that their peers are the ones committing these horrible acts of violence. Discuss with them what would drive someone to act in this way and what it would take for they themselves to get involved in a conflict at such a young age.

Discuss with students the differences between a militia and a military. Talk about the differences in controlling a militia, the power struggle that can sometimes occur, and what role militias have played in the past.

Draw in connections with the militias of the Revolutionary War and the success they had against the British government. Talk about the different strategies of the Janjaweed compared with the Revolutionary militiamen and what impact both have on history.

Discuss the reaction of the Sudanese government to the Janjaweed and the refusal they have had to connect themselves with the group. Provide support for both sides to show that the Janjaweed forces are supported by the government and are not supported by the government. Allow students to decide whether they think the Janjaweed is acting independently or not and, if so, what motivation they have to take part in the conflict.

Student Activity:

Students will draft a "Militia Rules of Engagement" meant to govern militias throughout the world. Together, a class should decide what rules a militia should be governed by and why. They should also develop punishments for not following these rules and discuss the law process associated with crimes against humanity and other international offenses.

The final document should be displayed in the classroom or a copy sent home to each student so that everyone can see their contribution on paper.

Additional Resources:

- Read excerpts from *The Devil Came on Horseback* by Brien Steidle and Gretchen Steidle Wallace.
- Show clips from *The Devil Came on Horseback* produced by Annie Sundberg and Ricki Stern.