

Critical Challenges

ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Sample Critical Challenge

Judging quality of life

Taken from
Caring for Young People's Rights

Authors

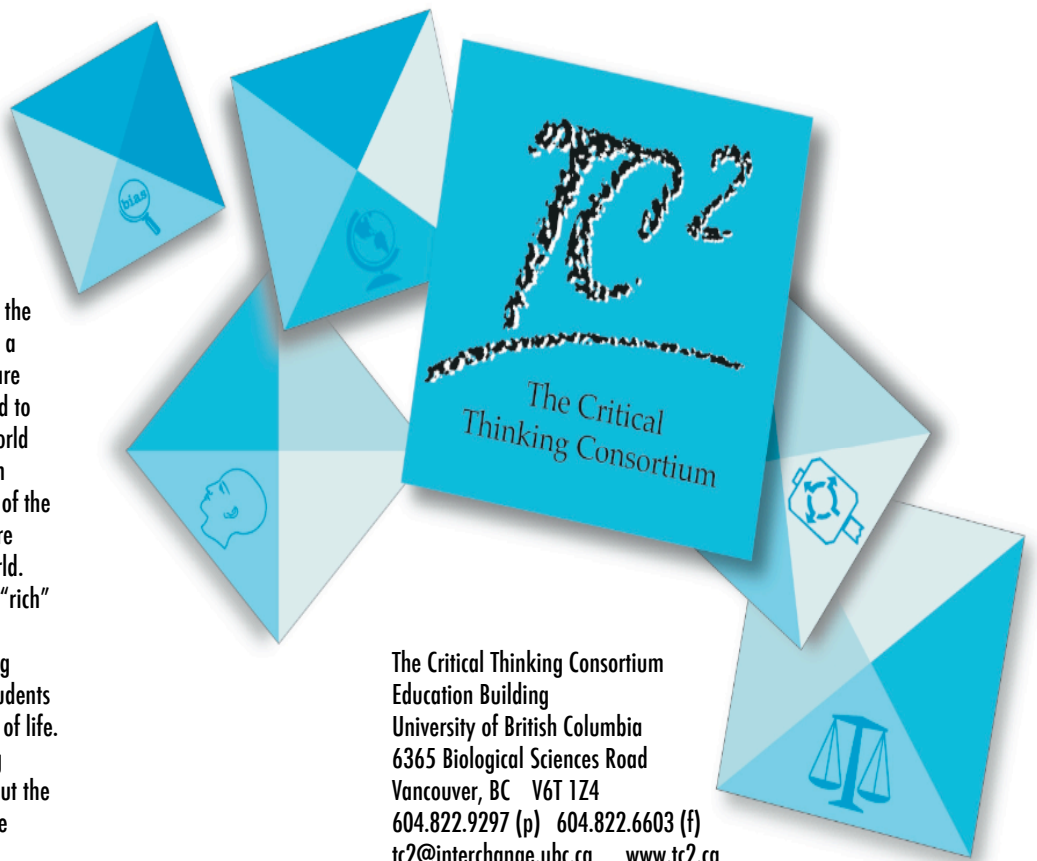
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Synopsis

In this two-part critical challenge, students explore the factors affecting a young person's quality of life as a prelude to understanding which basic necessities are protected by human rights. Students are introduced to the importance of caring that others around the world do not have enough to live on through a simulation involving unequal distribution of treats. Discussion of the unfairness of this situation leads students to explore more significant and lasting inequalities in the world. Students then consider what constitutes a good or "rich" life and read about two young people, looking for indicators of the quality of their lives. After deciding which of these young people has the richer life, students develop a list of key factors that determine quality of life. Working as a class, students read about five young people from various countries, share evidence about the quality of each youth's life and then rank order the quality of these five lives.



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Judging quality of life

Critical Challenge

Critical question/task

- A. Which person, José or Emma, has the better quality of life (or richer life)?
- B. Rank order the quality of life of the young people profiled in the stories.

Overview

In this two-part critical challenge, students explore the factors affecting a young person's quality of life as a prelude to understanding which basic necessities are protected by human rights. Students are introduced to the importance of caring that others around the world do not have enough to live on through a simulation involving unequal distribution of treats. Discussion of the unfairness of this situation leads students to explore more significant and lasting inequalities in the world. Students then consider what constitutes a good or "rich" life and read about two young people, looking for indicators of the quality of their lives. After deciding which of these young people has the richer life, students develop a list of key factors that determine quality of life. Working as a class, students read about five young people from various countries, share evidence about the quality of each youth's life and then rank order the quality of these five lives.

Objectives

Broad understanding

The quality of life for young people around the world differs greatly. Quality of life is not simply a matter of a person's material possessions.

Requisite tools

Background knowledge

- knowledge of conditions in developed and developing countries
- knowledge of young people's living conditions



Criteria for judgment

- criteria for quality of life (e.g., basic material necessities, sense of purpose, feeling wanted/loved, being respected)



Critical thinking vocabulary



Thinking strategies

- underline key words
- positive and negative factors
- rating chart



Habits of mind

- empathy



Suggested Activities

Pre-planning

Blackline Master #1

Pre-assess student knowledge and attitudes

- ▶ OPTIONAL: You may want to use *Views on human rights* (Blackline Master #1A-D) as a pre- and post-test to assess student growth in concern for human rights and knowledge of international development efforts. Before beginning any class discussion of the theme of the unit, duplicate a copy of this blackline master for each student and administer the pre-test. Explain to students that they are to record their answers in the “before” boxes. The “after” boxes are reserved for the post-unit assessment. Store the completed sheets for redistribution to students at the end of the unit.

Assemble materials for simulation

- ▶ In Session One, we suggest a brief simulation to introduce students to the unit theme of caring about inequalities around the world. Assemble the following materials:

- playing cards or coloured cards to randomly distribute among the class—one to each student in approximately the following percentages (numbers shown are for a class of 30):
 - gold (spades) cards to 10% of the class 3
 - silver (hearts) cards to 30% of the class 9
 - green (diamonds) cards to 40% of the class 12
 - white (clubs) cards to 20% of the class 6

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- candies, food or some other benefit to distribute in varying amounts depending on the assigned card. Below are two suggestions for possible benefits. Select one of these distribution schemes or create your own.

Colour (suit)	Treat	Meal
Gold (spades)	• handful or half-cup of Smarties or candies (25)	• sandwich, milk, apple and a cookie
Silver (hearts)	• modest serving of Smarties or candies (10)	• sandwich
Green (diamonds)	• a few Smarties or candies (3-4)	• plain slice of bread
White (clubs)	• one Smartie or candy	• crust of bread

Views on human rights Blackline Master #1A

Name: _____

Overall instructions: After each question, you will find two boxes labeled “Before” and “After.” When beginning the unit, use only the “Before” box to indicate your answers. At the end of the unit, these sheets will be returned to you and you will be asked to use only the “After” box to add to or change your earlier answers.

Part one: Indicate in the “Before” box the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement. Check one rating and explain your answer, giving supporting evidence. At the end of the unit, use the “After” box to indicate any changes in your rating for each question and to explain why your rating has or has not changed.

1. It doesn't matter who you are or where you live, all young people deserve to have the same basic rights.

Before

definitely agree agree somewhat not sure disagree somewhat definitely disagree

After

I haven't changed my rating I now have a different rating _____

2. Everyone shares equally in the world's resources.

Before

definitely agree agree somewhat not sure disagree somewhat definitely disagree

After

I haven't changed my rating I now have a different rating _____

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Preview novels

- **OPTIONAL:** Another possible suggestion to foster empathy for the hardships faced by young people is to read aloud or invite students to read a novel about youth in a troubled part of the world. One recommendation, which focusses on life in war-torn Afghanistan, is Deborah Ellis' trilogy (see References at the end of this challenge):
 - *The Breadwinner* describes the difficulties in Afghanistan that Parvana faces when the Taliban takes her father away and she has to disguise herself as a boy to earn money. A map, glossary and author's notes provide background information and context.
 - *Parvana's Journey* tells of Parvana's quest to find her family. She and other young victims of war make their way across Afghanistan when the war breaks out.
 - *Mud City* continues the story of Parvana's best friend. Living in a refugee camp in Pakistan, she decides to leave the camp and try her luck on the streets. For a time she is cared for by an American family but then is driven back to the refugee camp.

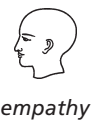


Implement "inequalities" simulation

Session One

Blackline Masters #2-4

- **OPTIONAL:** The pre-planning section identified materials for a simulated activity to introduce the unit theme of young people's rights and our collective responsibility to safeguard them. At the start of class, randomly distribute a card to each student. Offer no comment about the card, but at a suitable time distribute the food or other benefit you have assembled in the quantities explained earlier. It will likely take little time for students to erupt into complaints about unfairness. Debrief the activity by discussing two issues:
 - the parallel unfairness, on the one hand, of some students getting substantially more goodies than others merely because they get a particular card and, on the other hand, of people having vastly greater wealth than others merely because they are born in a particular country or social class.
 - the responsibility, if any, that Canadians have to ensure that people in other countries are treated fairly, especially if their lives depend on it.



To avoid anxiety and resentment, end the activity by equalizing the distribution of goods among students either by handing out additional benefits or by encouraging the "richer" students to share their wealth.

Introduce the unit theme

- Explain that the purpose of this unit is to identify the basic rights of young people and consider what Canadians might do to secure these rights for youth around the world.

Explore quality of life

- Introduce the concept of quality of life by asking students if they have a good life and what their reasons are for holding this opinion. Record the reasons on poster paper and retain the list for use later in the session. Encourage students to go beyond superficial indicators (e.g., lots of money, nice clothes) to consider other important factors such as those suggested below:



Indicators of a good life

- nice place to live
- parents or other adults who care
- nutritious food to eat
- freedom to act on one's beliefs
- sense of purpose in life
- access to education
- feel safe
- affordable health care
- treated with respect
- clean water
- reasonable sanitation

Compare developed and developing countries

- Announce that students are about to read profiles of two young people who live in very different situations. One youth lives in a developing country and the other lives in a developed country. Explain that “developing” and “developed” refer to the state of economic advancement in a country. Ask students to speculate on how developing and developed countries might differ. Create a list of the likely conditions in each kind of country as suggested below.



knowledge of conditions in developing and developed countries

Comparing developing and developed countries

Developing countries are likely to	Developed countries are likely to
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have low income for average person • have few job opportunities • offer limited access to education • experience vast amounts of poverty • develop relatively little manufacturing and industries • depend heavily on farming and growing own food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have high average incomes • provide jobs for most people • make education widely available • meet most people's basic needs • develop lots of manufacturing and industries • be able to afford imported food from other countries

Link development to quality of life

- Draw attention to the connection between level of development and quality of life by discussing two questions:
- Is Canada a developing or a developed country?
 - Are developing or developed countries more likely to provide the various factors that contribute to a good life for its citizens? (Invite students to consult the previously-created list of indicators of a good life in supporting their answer.)

Read initial two profiles

- Distribute a copy of *José* (Blackline Master #2) and *Emma* (Blackline Master #3) to each student (or, perhaps, distribute one story to half the class and the other story to the other half of the class). Suggest that students read their assigned story (stories) and underline phrases in the text that may affect the quality of that person's life (e.g., the first sentence in José's story suggests that he doesn't have his own room or even his own bed).



underline key words

Record evidence of quality of life

- Distribute a copy of *Comparing quality of life* (Blackline Master #4) to each student (or pair of students if individual students read only one of the stories). Instruct students to use this chart to compile evidence related to factors that contribute to or diminish each young person's quality of life. Invite students to share their ideas with a partner and to contribute new suggestions to the previously-created list of indicators of a good life.



positive and negative factors

Introduce the first critical challenge

Identify most important factors

Introduce second set of profiles

- Introduce the following critical question:

Which person, José or Emma, has the better quality of life (or richer life)?

If using the term ‘richer life,’ explain that this does not refer to monetary wealth as much as it refers to other important aspects of a person’s existence. Ask students to review with a partner the evidence recorded on Blackline Master #4 and to consider which factors are more important than others. Based on this discussion, students are to decide which youth has the better quality of life. Students are to indicate their decision and offer a short written justification focussing on those factors deemed to be most important in determining quality of life.

- Invite students to share their decisions and supporting evidence. Ask students to explain why their evidence points to a richer life and the importance of the factors they cite. Discuss how being rich and having a good quality of life might be connected and how they need not be connected (e.g., Is quality of life determined by having the most up-to-date computer and brand-name clothes?). If necessary, revise the class list of “Indicators of a good life” and place a star beside those factors that students identify as most important. As a class, try to agree on the eight to ten most important factors.

- Explain that students will now consider the quality of life of other young people from around the world. We suggest choosing five stories from the seven true stories that are provided. The accounts from Liberia (Blackline Master #10) and Afghanistan (Blackline Master #11) deal with child soldiers and may be more suitable for secondary students.

- *Fernando* (Blackline Master #5): A boy who lives in a remote village in Ecuador sees education as the way to achieve his dream of becoming the pilot who flies the plane into his village each week.
- *Taposhi* (Blackline Master #6): A girl who lives with her unemployed mother and dying father in a slum in Bangladesh hopes to finish school and find work to help support her family.
- *Gopi* (Blackline Master #7): A Lebanese girl, crippled with polio at age two and thankful for the operations that enabled her to walk, hopes to become a teacher who tells children about the importance of polio vaccinations.



knowledge of young people’s conditions

Fernando Blackline Master #5

Fernando stood at the edge of the field gazing up at the sky. It was summer in Ecuador but Fernando didn't even notice the heat. He had just watched his plane take off.

Actually it was the small single-engine aircraft that landed every Wednesday just after noon. It was on its way to the capital and it stopped in his village to pick up or deliver the mail and other supplies. Sometimes a doctor or a government official was on board. Today the plane came early. He had heard the sound and without a thought he had run out of school towards the grass-covered airstrip...while the teacher was still talking! But Fernando couldn't miss the plane's landing. And with his bench at the very edge of the open-walled school, all he had to do was run across the road past a few buses to the landing strip.

Now Fernando had a good season for doing his best at school. He didn't mind walking half an hour each morning to catch the old school bus or spending an hour to do homework. Sometimes, when it became too hot and stuffy in his one-window house, he even did it outside!

It did not seem to matter that his school had a tin roof and no walls, and inside there were only a few benches. Or that Signor Benavides had to teach students of all ages in the same class. Many of them showed up only once in a while anyway. Some didn't come at all. No school was not a problem because it was a door to a new world. Fernando walked to the waiting bus. He knew there would be lots to do when he got home. It was harvest time, and his parents were busy with the harvest. Fernando was responsible for cooking supper, feeding the chickens and sheep, cleaning the stalls, and cultivating in the field. Only then could he begin his homework. Dreams would have to wait for now.

Now, with a sigh, Fernando turned around and slowly made his way back to school. His bare feet rained dust from the dry road and a few chickens dashed out of his way. But Fernando didn't notice a thing. All he could think of was that he was going to be a pilot!

He got back to his seat just as his teacher, Signor Benavides, was dismissing the class. He knew that the teacher was angry. But he loved that little plane. All his friends agreed that it was his plane. And one day he was going to be the "pilot of Posita," the mountain village where he lived with his parents, his

Adapted from "Ecuador: Fernando," (1993). *Kid around the corner: Global issues for grades 3 to 6*. World Vision Canada, Minneapolis, MN, pp. 5-6.

© CIDA Photo: Fernando Benavides

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Demonstrate evidence gathering procedure

- *Celine* (Blackline Master #8): A girl, sent from her home in rural Haiti at age ten to become an unpaid child servant, is finally able to receive the schooling that had been promised.
- *Aisha* (Blackline Master #9): A Rwandan girl returns to her village where soldiers have killed everyone and burned the houses and crops. She discovers her younger brother hiding in a clay pot and realizes she is now his sole caregiver.
- *James* (Blackline Master #10): During a short-lived peace, an eleven-year-old boy who was taken by Liberian rebels to become a child soldier has a brief opportunity to go to school.
- *Mustafa* (Blackline Master #11): After spending most of his life as a child soldier in Afghanistan, a young boy relinquishes the security he has known and resists the Afghan tradition of avenging family deaths.

- **OPTIONAL:** If students need help in using *Looking for evidence* (Blackline Master #12) to record information about their assigned young person’s quality of life, select one of the stories to use as a demonstration example. Using an overhead transparency of Blackline Master #12A-B, record the 8-10 “quality of life” factors in column one from the class-generated list. Distribute a copy of the sample demonstration profile to every student (selected from Blackline Masters #5-11). Ask students to read the story looking for evidence in the youth’s life of the absence or presence of each factor. Record student-generated evidence in the second and third columns on the transparency. After assembling all the evidence, as a class use the scale “+2 to -2” to assess the extent to which each factor is present.



rating chart

Looking for evidence Blackline Master #12A

Name(s): _____

Person profiled: _____ Country: _____

Factor	Evidence that factor is missing	Evidence that factor is present	Score
			-2
			-1
			0
			+1
			+2
			-2
			-1
			0
			+1
			+2
			-2
			-1
			0
			+1
			+2
			-2
			-1
			0
			+1
			+2

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Analyze other profiles

- If you completed a sample demonstration with one of the profiles, select four additional stories from Blackline Masters #5-11. If you did not complete a demonstration example, select five profiles. Divide the class into equal groups and distribute a copy of one story to each student. Distribute a copy of Blackline Master #12A-B to each student (or pair of students). Students are to work individually or in pairs to record evidence of the absence or presence of each factor, and then score each factor using the scale.

Prepare to share findings

Introduce the second critical challenge

- Organize students who read the same profile into groups. Allow each group time to discuss their findings, agree on common scores and decide how to report their results to the rest of the class. Arrange for students to display their results on the chalkboard, on chart paper or on an overhead transparency of Blackline Master #12A-B. Ask each group to describe the main details of their assigned youth’s story and explain the scoring for each quality of life factor.
- Before making the group presentations, distribute a copy of *Ranking the quality of life* (Blackline Master #13) to each student. Explain the critical task:

Rank order the quality of life of the young people profiled in the stories.

Ask students to listen carefully to the information presented by each group. They are to record evidence of the absence and presence of the most important factors. Afterwards they are to rank order the quality of life of the five young people profiled in the stories

(including, if applicable, the profile used as a demonstration example) and then discuss their decisions in small groups. Explain that the person judged to have the highest quality of life should be ranked as first, the next highest as second, and so on. Before students begin, you may want to share with them the rubric for assessing this activity found in *Assessing the ratings and rankings* (Blackline Master #15).

Person profiled	Evidence of quality of life from presentation	Ranking quality of life				
		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
		Main reasons for ranking				
		1st				
		2nd				
		3rd				
		4th				
		5th				
		1st				
		2nd				
		3rd				
		4th				
		5th				
		1st				
		2nd				
		3rd				
		4th				
		5th				

Reflect on personal quality of life

- Invite students to share their rankings and supporting evidence. Encourage discussion on the extent to which quality of life is determined by important needs versus material luxuries. Ask students to write a paragraph explaining what they have learned about the most important factors in determining the quality of their own lives.

Assess identification of factors

➤ Assess students’ ability to identify positive and negative factors affecting quality of life as recorded on *Comparing quality of life* (Blackline Master #4) using the rubric *Assessing the comparison* (Blackline Master #14). According to this rubric, the assignment is worth 15 marks and is assessed on three criteria:

- identifies important contributing factors;
- identifies important diminishing factors;
- justifies decision in light of importance of factors.

Assess ratings and rankings

➤ Assess students’ rating of the quality of life for their assigned youth as recorded on *Looking for evidence* (Blackline Master #12A-B) and their ranking of the quality of life of the profiled youths as recorded on *Ranking quality of life* (Blackline Master #13) using the rubric *Assessing the ratings and rankings* (Blackline Master #15). According to this rubric, each assignment is worth 15 marks and is assessed on three criteria:

- identifies evidence of factors’ presence;
- identifies evidence of factors’ absence;
- justifies ratings/rankings in light of importance of factors.

Blackline Master #14

Use the following rubric to assess students’ appraisal of the better quality of life. Award intermediate marks for answers falling between the descriptors.

	Underdeveloped	Competent	Well developed
Identifies contributing factors	Identifies none of the important factors that contribute to each youth’s quality of life. 1	Identifies the obvious factors that contribute to each youth’s quality of life, but overlooks some important considerations. 3	Identifies many factors that contribute to each youth’s quality of life. 5
Identifies diminishing factors	Identifies none of the important factors that diminish each youth’s quality of life. 1	Identifies the obvious factors that diminish each youth’s quality of life, but overlooks some important considerations. 3	Identifies many factors including a significant range of important factors that diminish each youth’s quality of life. 5
Justifies decision	No plausible justification is given for the conclusion. 1	Justification merely touches upon some of the important quality of life. 3	Justification shows thoughtful consideration of most important factors in determining quality of life. 5
Total			15

Blackline Master #15

Use the following rubric to assess students’ ratings of individual factors and ranking of the young people’s quality of life. Award intermediate marks for answers falling between the descriptors.

	Underdeveloped	Competent	Well developed
Identifies evidence of factors’ presence	Identifies very little evidence of key factors that are present in each youth’s life. 1	Identifies obvious pieces of evidence of key factors that are present in each youth’s life, but overlooks some important considerations. 3	Identifies many pieces of evidence of the most important factors that are present in each youth’s life. 5
Identifies evidence of factors’ absence	Identifies very little evidence of key factors that are missing in each youth’s life. 1	Identifies the obvious pieces of evidence of key factors that are missing in each youth’s life, but overlooks some important considerations. 3	Identifies many pieces of evidence of the most important factors that are missing in each youth’s life. 5
Justifies ratings/rankings	No plausible justification is given for any of the assigned ratings/rankings. 1	Justification for each rating/ranking touches upon some quality of life. 3	Justification for each rating/ranking shows thoughtful consideration of the most important factors in determining quality of life. 5
TOTAL			15

References

Ellis, Deborah. (2000). *The Breadwinner*. Toronto: Groundwood Books. ISBN 0-88899-4168

Ellis, Deborah. (2002). *Parvana’s Journey*. Toronto: Groundwood Books. ISBN 0-88899-5199

Ellis, Deborah. (2003). *Mud City*. Toronto: Groundwood Books. ISBN 0-88899-5423

Views on human rights

Overall instructions: After each question, you will find two boxes labeled “Before” and “After.” When beginning the unit, use only the “Before” box to indicate your answers. At the end of the unit, these sheets will be returned to you and you will be asked to use only the “After” box to add to or change your earlier answers.

Part one: Indicate in the “Before” box the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement. Check one rating and explain your answer, giving supporting evidence. At the end of the unit, use the “After” box to indicate any changes in your rating for each question and to explain why your rating has or has not changed.

1. It doesn't matter who you are or where you live, all young people deserve to have the same basic rights.

Before

definitely agree
 agree somewhat
 not sure
 disagree somewhat
 definitely disagree

After

I haven't changed my rating
 I now have a different rating _____

2. Everyone shares equally in the world's resources.

Before

definitely agree
 agree somewhat
 not sure
 disagree somewhat
 definitely disagree

After

I haven't changed my rating
 I now have a different rating _____

3. It is everyone's responsibility to ensure that all people's rights are respected.

Before

- definitely agree agree somewhat not sure disagree somewhat definitely disagree

After

- I haven't changed my rating I now have a different rating _____

4. Your quality of life is determined by how many material goods you acquire.

Before

- definitely agree agree somewhat not sure disagree somewhat definitely disagree

After

- I haven't changed my rating I now have a different rating _____

5. Canadians' contributions help to secure the rights of young people in poorer countries.

Before

- definitely agree agree somewhat not sure disagree somewhat definitely disagree

After

- I haven't changed my rating I now have a different rating _____

6. Some young people's rights are more important than those of other young people.

Before

- definitely agree
 agree somewhat
 not sure
 disagree somewhat
 definitely disagree

After

- I haven't changed my rating
 I now have a different rating _____

7. Canada should do a lot more to protect the rights of young people in poorer countries.

Before

- definitely agree
 agree somewhat
 not sure
 disagree somewhat
 definitely disagree

After

- I haven't changed my rating
 I now have a different rating _____

Part two: Use the "Before" box to indicate your answer for each question. At the end of the unit, in the "After" box, add new ideas you have acquired as a result of studying about these issues.

1. Name three Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that help to improve life for people in need.

Before**After**

2. What does the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) do?

Before	After

3. List ways in which United Nations (UN) organizations provide support for poorer countries.

Before	After

4. List ways in which Canadian organizations help people in poorer countries.

Before	After

5. Describe situations where young people's rights are at risk in poorer countries.

Before	After

6. What can Canada do to protect the rights of young people in poorer countries?

Before	After

7. Identify key factors in a successful development aid project.

Before	After

José

Turning over on the woven sleeping mat, José bumped into his younger brother. He could see the early morning light through the cracks in the stick wall of his family's home. The sticks broke easily but were a type of wood that the termites wouldn't eat.

José could hear his mother feeding the chickens in the yard outside. Gently raising the thin bedsheet that kept the bugs off at night, José sat up and climbed over Salvador and his tiny sister Rosita. Careful not to wake them, he replaced the sheet and stepped on to the dirt floor.

This was José's favourite time of the day and, as he stepped outside, he breathed deeply the clean morning air. When his mother saw him, she smiled. Her smile had not always been so sad. She had been troubled ever since his older brother Juan had been taken away by the police and his father left to work in the mountains. He tried not to think about it. He was nine years' old and the oldest child at home so his mother needed him to be strong.

He smiled at his mother and walked to the well on the other side of the yard that he had helped his father and Juan dig. Only four tugs on the rope brought up a bucket of water. He felt blessed not to have to walk the two kilometres for dirty creek water or the five kilometres to the river like most of the villagers. In twenty minutes he had enough water for the chickens, pigs, today's washing and for breakfast. Then he watered the chili pepper plants. The thin green peppers were getting longer.

"Mama, Mama," came the call from inside the hut as four year-old Rosita and seven year-old Salvador jumped up off the sleeping mat and ran out of the hut. Both wore the wonderful hats their father had given them for Christmas.

Mother made coffee and hot salted tortillas for breakfast. Eating silently, watching his family, José's chest filled with warmth. Thinking about the day, he

remembered they had a little cheese to put on the tortillas they would have for dinner that night. He could hardly wait. "It is another day and more good things are going to happen," he thought as he and Salvador picked up their machetes and headed off to the coffee plantation.

This week they were cutting down all the weeds to get ready for planting. It was harder than burning them, but it took longer and gave them more money. Maybe Mama could buy a coconut with the extra money they would earn.

After chores were done on the coffee plantation, José had an hour before dinner to work with the school teacher. José hoped he would hear more of the story about the girl in the city and practice his writing. It was fun to help the little ones and listen to them read. Hearing Salvador read aloud made him proud. But José knew that, as much as they all might want to go on in school, learning to read and write and do simple arithmetic was all the schooling that anyone in his family was going to have. It would not be long before he would have to leave home to find work to help support the family.

However, it was only three weeks until Holy Week when he could wear his new white cotton shirt and listen to the choir sing. Holy Week was always a special time in Brazil, especially Easter Sunday, the last day of the weeklong events. Maybe his father and uncle would come back and sing his favourite song after dinner that night. It was so exciting to see everyone dressed in their best shirts and dresses and singing and dancing.

Emma

“I hate you. You’re such an idiot!” The back door slammed loudly. Emma opened her eyes quickly and pulled up her soft comforter. Her heart was beating fast and she had a knot in her stomach. It was her older sister who had yelled and slammed the door.

“Lazy head, out of bed!” her father shouted from the bottom of the stairs. Heavy footsteps quickly moved through the house and then the front door opened and slammed shut. The car started and with a screech pulled away. Dad must be late for work. He often seemed angry now. Emma remembered happier times when he helped her with her homework and they would go to basketball games together. She wondered if it would ever be like that again.

Emma looked across the room and realized she had left her computer on all night. She squinted as the bedroom light glared into her eyes. Except for the noise of the computer, the house was quiet.

Sitting up on the edge of the bed she noticed that her hoody was all twisted around her neck. She pulled it loose and untangled her hair. Falling asleep late with all her clothes on was becoming a habit. Stepping across the room her foot caught some pants that were heaped with clothes across the floor. “When will Dad show me how to use the washing machine?” she thought to herself.

Walking past the family room, she saw the giant screen TV was on but the sound was off. The time blinked 12:00 on the DVD player. A pizza box was on the couch with a plate and glass on it. Turning up the sound, she sat down. “So, what can you tell us about being bullied everyday?” asked the host of the talk show.

“I could be on this show,” she said to herself. The knot came back into her stomach as she thought of the girls who were two grades ahead of her and who threatened her every day.

The growling in her stomach reminded her she

hadn’t eaten since those two Pizza Pops after school yesterday. She opened the big fridge. “No milk, no juice...!” She found the last Pizza Pop in the freezer and stuck it in the microwave. The cappuccino machine had coffee left from yesterday. Picking out a mug from the dirty dishes she poured the cold coffee into it. Removing the Pizza Pop from the microwave she replaced it with the coffee and after the beep took them both down the hall to the family room to watch television.

The house seemed empty now that Mom had moved back to Nana’s and Poppa’s. When was the last time she had seen her? Almost two months now. She hoped it wouldn’t be long before she could spend a weekend at Nana’s and Poppa’s.

“What time is it?” she wondered aloud. The clock on the stove said 8:35 a.m. “I’m late!” Quickly finishing breakfast she stuck her cell phone in her pocket and headed out the door. The older girls would already be at school so she wouldn’t have to worry about them until break time.

“My Social Studies assignment!” she thought and she grabbed it and ran down the stairs. Emma really liked her Social Studies teacher this term. Mrs. Cavendish was really helpful and treated her like she cared about her. “I really want to do better this term. If I can pull up my average then next year I might be able to change schools. Maybe more of the teachers will be like Mrs. Cavendish. Maybe then things will change.”

Comparing quality of life

	Positive factors	Negative factors
Emma's life		
José's life		

I conclude that José Emma has the better quality of life because

Fernando

Fernando stood at the edge of the field gazing up at the sky. It was summer in Ecuador but Fernando didn't even notice the heat. He had just watched his plane take off.

Actually it was the small single-engine aircraft that landed every Wednesday just after noon. It was on its way to the capital and it stopped in his village to pick up or deliver the mail and other supplies. Sometimes a doctor or a government official was on board. Today the plane came early. He had heard the sound and without a thought he had run out of school towards the grass-covered airstrip—while the teacher was still talking! But Fernando couldn't miss the plane's landing. And with his bench at the very edge of the open-walled school, all he had to do was run across the road past a few huts to the landing strip.



© CIDA Photo: Patricio Baeza

Now, with a sigh, Fernando turned around and slowly made his way back to school. His bare feet raised dust from the dry road and a few chickens darted out of his way. But Fernando didn't notice a thing. All he could think of was that he was going to be a pilot.

He got back to his seat just as his teacher, Signor Benavides, was dismissing the class. He knew that the teacher was angry. But he loved that little plane. All his friends agreed that it was his plane. And one day he was going to be the "pilot of Pusir," the mountain village where he lived with his parents, his

brother and his little sisters. He understood that it would not be easy to become a pilot, but in his heart he knew that he could do it. He would do it and he had to do it.

With the help of his teacher, Fernando read about different kinds of airplanes, about how high and how far they could fly and how much each could carry. Planes could take him to a new world which seemed far more interesting than his own. But his plane could also bring new things to his village. He imagined an exciting future. And he was going to make it happen.

Now Fernando had a good reason for doing his best at school. He didn't mind walking half an hour each morning to catch the old school bus or spending an hour to do homework. Sometimes, when it became too hot and stuffy in his one-window house, he even did it outside!

It did not seem to matter that his school had a tin roof and no walls, and inside there were only a few benches. Or that Signor Benavides had to teach students of all ages in the same class. Many of them showed up only once in a while anyway. Some didn't come at all. No, school was not a problem because it was a door to a new world. Fernando walked to the waiting bus. He knew there would be lots to do when he got home. It was harvest time, and his parents would be working late on the big farm. While they were busy with the harvest, Fernando was responsible for cooking supper, feeding the chickens and sheep, cleaning the stalls, and cultivating in the field. Only then could he begin his homework. Dreams would have to wait for now.

Adapted from "Ecuador: Fernando." (1993). *Kids around the corner: Global issues for grades 3 to 6*. World Vision Canada, Mississauga, ON, pp. 5–6.

Taposhi

The small bamboo shack was quiet as Taposhi felt her way across the still, dark room. Her father was finally asleep and her mother had already gone to the city for the day. All night long she had heard him struggle for breath as his asthma was slowly clogging his chest. Last night was really bad because of the smoke. But what else could she do? Because it rained yesterday she had to cook over the open fire inside the hut, and it had filled with smoke. Taposhi picked up the last few sticks of firewood and some rice. Today she could cook the morning rice outdoors.

They had always been poor, and it seemed that her father had never been able to breathe normally. But three years ago, he got worse and had to quit his carpenter's job. That's when they moved closer to the city in the hope that Taposhi's mother could find work and better health care would be available.

A few days ago her mother had lost her job cooking for university students. It hadn't paid much but at least it had allowed them to buy food. Now her mother was in the city every day looking for a new job.

Taposhi thought about all this as she hurried to the government clinic. Fortunately, it wasn't far. Hurrying back, she stopped at a food stall to get flat bread for lunch. When she got home she gave her father his medicine and left him bread for his lunch. As she was about to leave for school her father said, as he had many times before, "Why don't you just stay home with me today?" Taposhi knew that he didn't think that she needed to go to school! "Girls don't need an education," he had often said. But her mother said that, because they couldn't afford to pay a dowry for her marriage, Taposhi needed an education. Only then could she find a good job.

At school a friend said that the river would flood this year and there might be a typhoon. Taposhi shuddered. There had been floods and horrible storms in Bangladesh before. Her family didn't have much, but losing the little they had would be a disaster.

Some people had been forced to pick through the city's garbage dump, hoping to find something to sell or eat.

Maybe if she did well in school, she could find a job. Then she might be able to move her family to an apartment and get all the medicine her father needed. And her mother wouldn't have to worry so much.



© CIDA Photo: David Barbour

"As long as I don't have to go to work before I finish school," Taposhi thought. Her chest suddenly felt tight and there were tears in her eyes.

Adapted from "Bangladesh: Taposhi." (1993). *Kids around the corner: Global issues for grades 3 to 6*. World Vision Canada, Mississauga, ON, pp. 5-6.

Gopi

Gopamma, whose friends call her Gopi, feels very lucky. “When you see me now I may seem like any other normal girl my age, except that I have crutches.” Gopi feels lucky because less than a year ago she was walking on all fours. “I was dragging my eight-year-old body like a sack of potatoes,” she said.



© Peter Langer

When Gopi was two years old, she got sick with polio. She was sick for a long time and her parents were afraid that she would die. She survived but could no longer walk.

Gopi’s parents were very poor. The little money they had saved was spent on Gopi’s treatment but there was nothing more they could do. There are few doctors in Lebanon and even fewer hospitals. Relatives often wondered what would happen to her in the future. “Who will marry her?” they asked.

Gopi was lonely and very unhappy. She couldn’t go to school and couldn’t play like other kids. The children ignored her and often made fun of her. She would sit by the side of the road and watch the others play. She had no friends.

Then a miracle happened. One day members of a voluntary organization came to Gopi’s village. They were looking for children who needed medical help

and they found Gopi. Soon after they took her to a hospital where doctors did corrective surgery on her legs. Later she had another operation. Soon she was able to walk with the help of two wooden crutches. Imagine how excited she was to be able to walk and not have to drag her body around.

The doctors told Gopi’s parents that if she had been given a polio vaccine in time, she would not have had to suffer such pain. Just think, such vaccines cost less than a bottle of pop! When Gopi’s mother heard about the vaccine she took Gopi’s three-year-old sister to be vaccinated. Gopi was glad that her little sister would never have to go through the same suffering and sadness that she had.

Now Gopi goes to school. Her elder brother, who is ten, takes her there every day. Because it’s too hard for Gopi to walk that far on her crutches, her brother carries her on his back. Sometimes the other kids joke about Gopi but she knows that they are really friendly jokes. She knows that her friends are not being mean.

Gopi’s life has changed. She still is very poor but she has plans for the future. “I hope one day to grow up to be a teacher,” she says, “then I shall tell everyone how important it is to give children polio vaccinations.”

Adapted from “Almost a miracle.” (2000). *United Nations Publications*, cyberschoolbus@un.org

Celine

Celine and her family live in Haiti. When Celine was four something happened that changed her childhood forever. One day a local businessman offered her family a deal. If her parents would agree, he would arrange for Celine to work as a live-in servant in the far-off capital. She would not be paid but could go to school.

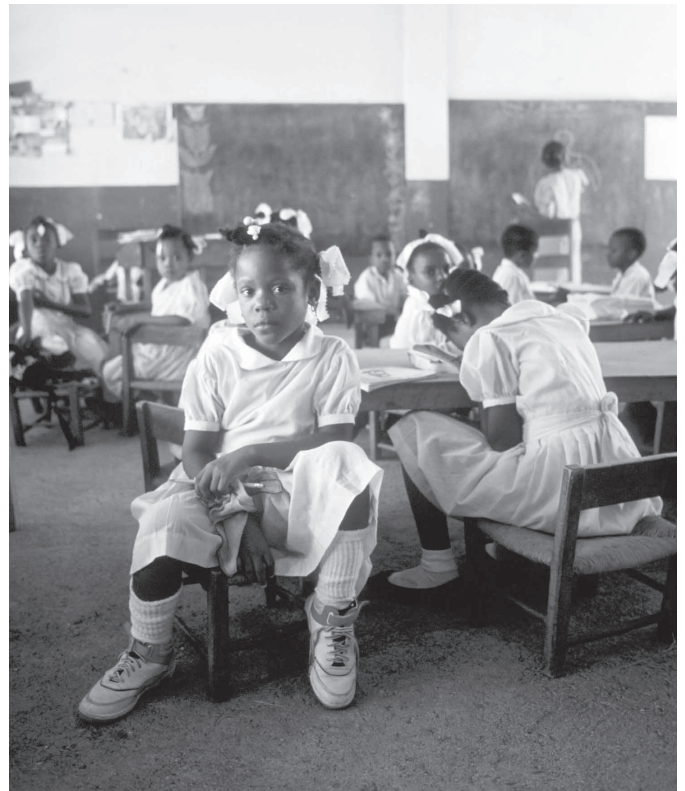
Like thousands of other poor Haitian parents, they agreed to the offer. With Celine away, her family would have one less child to feed. Her family hoped that by letting her go she could get an education and might have a chance for a better life. Like most Haitian parents, they knew they would never be able to send Celine to school.

Celine has been working as a *restavik*, an unpaid child servant who lives apart from her family, for the past three years. There may be as many as 250,000 *restaviks* in Haiti. People who arrange for children to become *restaviks* usually promise families that their children will go to school but the promise is seldom kept. Often, the children are put to work instead. Some of the children, like Celine, are as young as four years old. Employers want to hire children as young as possible so they can be easily frightened and trained to be particularly meek and mild.

The family that Celine works for did not send her to school until a parish priest, Father Jean-Baptiste, persuaded them to do so. She now goes to a school started by the priest for three or four hours each afternoon. The school tries to create a family-like atmosphere. They teach the children to read and write and to create arts and crafts. Father Jean-Baptiste said, “We try to give them an opportunity for tomorrow.”

Celine’s day is long. She gets up at five in the morning and begins her day by fetching water from a nearby well, balancing the heavy jug on her head as she returns. She prepares breakfast and serves it to the members of the household. Then she walks the family’s five-year-old to school; at noon she brings

him home and helps him change his clothes. Next, she helps prepare and serve the family’s lunch before returning the boy to school. In between meal times she must buy food in the market and run errands, tend the charcoal fire, sweep the yard, wash clothes and dishes, clean the kitchen and, at least once a day, wash her female boss’ feet. She eats leftovers or cornmeal, has ragged clothes, no shoes and sleeps outdoors or on the floor. She is not allowed to bathe in the water she brings to the household. She is beaten with a leather strap if she is slow to respond or is considered disrespectful.



© Marc French/World Council of Churches

Despite the hardships, Celine hopes to find in school the opportunity that her family imagined when they sent her off with the businessman. “I like this school because I like to learn,” said Celine whose favourite courses are reading and writing.

Adapted from “Haitian children in servitude.” (1997). <http://www.unicefusa.org/issues97/jan97/haiti.html>

Aisha

Aisha was excited as she started home. Her mother would be so pleased. She had spent the day at the market in the nearby town of Byumba, Rwanda. Not only had Aisha sold all the baskets they had made together, the basket she had woven all by herself had fetched a very good price. Aisha liked the afternoons spent weaving with her mother in the shade of the big tree that grew behind their house. The baby would sleep cuddled next to Mother. Two-year-old Jalil would sleep nearby. It was Aisha and Mother's time together.

Perhaps Mother would not need her help this afternoon. Then she remembered that the large clay pot for storing water was nearly empty. Aisha would need to take a long walk today to fetch water in plastic buckets. "And take Jalil with you," Mother would probably say.

Before long Aisha met people from her village hurrying past in the other direction. She saw her aunt and her cousins. "Don't go back, Aisha," her aunt cried, "it's horrible!" Aisha's blood turned to ice and her breath stopped. "More soldiers?" she asked. Aisha's aunt gripped her arm. "You mustn't go. There's no one left. There's nothing left." Aisha shook herself and started to run. She had to find Mother and the baby and her little brother, Jalil.

Aisha met more people on the road. When the soldiers came they killed whoever was too slow to run away. They burned houses and crops and killed

all the animals. It wasn't the first time soldiers had come to Aisha's village. The first time they took away her father. The family still doesn't know where he is.

It was hard to find her house in the smoke. Aisha looked up for the branches of the tree that grew behind her house to guide her to what was left of her home. "Mother!" she cried, "where are you? Jalil, it's me, Aisha!" She looked around. Everything that couldn't burn was smashed. The rooster that awakened the family every morning was dead in the yard. Aisha wondered where Jalil's hen was. He loved that hen.

Aisha started to shake. Her mouth was dry. "Oh Mother, oh Jalil," Aisha murmured, "where are you?" Then Aisha heard a sound and froze. What was it? Soldiers returning? "Sha-sha," a voice whispered. Her heart pounded. "Sha-sha," she heard again like an echo. Aisha peered slowly into the clay pot. It was dark but in a moment Aisha's fear melted and she shouted with joy. Laughing, she reached in and pulled out her little brother who sat in the bottom holding his hen on his lap. "Sha-sha," he said again with wide eyes. Tears ran down her cheeks. "Jalil," Aisha asked, "where are Mother and the baby?" Jalil just looked at Aisha and held on to his hen. As they sat watching the village burn Aisha started to plan. They had the money she had earned that morning and they had their hen. They would go to the market town and find their Mother.

"I am old enough to take care of Jalil," Aisha thought, "Mother knew that too. That's why she put him in the clay pot. She knew I would find him and take care of him." Aisha felt proud that her mother believed in her like that. Her tears started to flow once again. "Oh Mother, where are you?" she whispered. Then she wiped her tears and got up. "Come on, Jalil" she said, "climb on my back and hold on. We have a long journey ahead."

Adapted from "The Clay Pot." *Global Report*. Canadian Red Cross Society.



© CIDA Photo: Roger LeMoyné

James

James is a tall, neatly dressed teenager with a gentle smile. He doesn't look like a killer, but for much of his life, that was what this young man from Liberia was. "My name was Captain War Boss," James said. "I feel bad when I think about it now. About what I did."

James's story began when the rebels came to his family's village. They beat up James's father and put him in jail. James was only six years old when the rebels asked him to join them. He feared that the rebels would kill his father if he did not do as they asked.



© Jonas Ekströmer/World Council of Churches

The rebels took James into the bush with about 175 other children, most of whom were older than he was. There the children were taught how to be soldiers. They learned to crawl on the ground underneath barbed wire while carrying weapons, how to clean weapons, and, finally, how to fire rifles and

machine guns. The rebels drugged James and the other children, which better enabled them to carry out their orders.

For the next five years, James fought at the frontlines with the rebels, eventually reaching the rank of deputy squad commander. He was known as "Captain War Boss."

"Sometimes we would go on missions called 'Capture and Destroy,' where we were ordered not to leave anyone alive or anything left. Other times, we would go on 'Operation Grasshopper,' where we would have to attack a position from many angles at the same time," James said.

James said that he probably wouldn't have been able to do the things he did were it not for the drugs. "I was on opium a lot of the time. The drugs made me feel no pain and even made me feel like it was someone else doing all these bad things," he said.

When James was eleven, a peace agreement was established and James was able to escape his life as a soldier. A volunteer organization helped James and other child soldiers to reintegrate into their communities. James resettled in the capital where he received counseling.

Most importantly, James was able to re-enroll in school. But fighting started again. At the time James was in grade eight and hoped to become a doctor. The fighting spread to the capital and the schools were shut down. It is uncertain what has happened to James.

The capital and the surrounding area in Liberia are now full of child soldiers proudly carrying their automatic rifles, both among the rebels and the government forces. Aid organizations hope that when the fighting stops, they might be able to help other children like James.

Adapted from "Liberian child soldiers face desperation, exploitation and terror." At a glance: Liberia. (2003). http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/liberia_13403.html

Mustafa

For all of fourteen-year-old Mustafa's life there has been war in Afghanistan. When his parents were children there was war. In fact, few people remember when there was no war because it has gone on for decades. During that time almost 400,000 children have been killed. Now the fighting seems to be over. But what will happen to Mustafa and other child soldiers like him? They would like to do something else, perhaps become teachers or doctors, but right now all they have is their weapons.

Several years ago, Mustafa went to fetch water from a nearby stream. When he returned his parents, three brothers, two sisters and the family camel were dead. Taliban rockets had killed them. A badly injured dog was the only creature left in the village. Mustafa used his father's rifle to put the dog out of its misery. It was the first time he had used a firearm. Three months later, the ten-year-old joined the rebel Northern Alliance army to learn how to use a military rifle. He dedicated his life to killing the Taliban. He vowed to spend the rest of his life finding the people who killed his family.

Like most armies that use child soldiers, the Northern Alliance insists that it has no soldiers under 18 years of age but there are many child soldiers like Mustafa. Armed groups hire child soldiers because children are cheaper to employ, slow to question authority and often quick to prove themselves in Afghanistan's gun-dominated society.

The Taliban also uses child soldiers. They take very young children from their homes to teach them battle tactics. They especially want young war orphans because they have no home to which they can escape. As they grow up, the leaders and commanders of the Taliban become their family.

Some boys become soldiers because they are promised education and proper jobs. Most join because there is little else to do and they will be fed. In a country with almost no electricity or running water and few roads, few can attend school. They

must make money in any way they can—even if that means following cows with upturned palms to catch excrement to sell as fuel. The army guarantees free food, clothes and cigarettes and the chance to feel grown up. Young boys feel like men when they walk around with loaded rifles. It does not matter that they are seldom paid their \$25 a month. Life is good when you eat good rice, play chess with your friends and fire weapons.



© CIDA Photo: Pedram Pirnia

Other young boys Mustafa's age do not join the army but know how to fire military rifles from daily target practice with the family firearm. They dream of firing such things as rocket-propelled grenades when they are older. Like Mustafa, all they think about is growing up so that they can kill the Taliban who killed members of their family. By avenging their deaths, they are carrying on a family custom. Their fathers tracked down and killed Soviet soldiers who killed their relatives in the 1980s. Young men know that if they are killed by the Taliban, their sons will honour their name by killing the enemy. Despite the possibility of peace, some customs are difficult to break.

Farkhar, Hannah Beech. (2001, November 12). "The child soldiers: War and revenge is all the young recruits of the Northern Alliance and Taliban know." *Time Asia*, 58:19.

Afghanistan: eight thousand children under arms look for a future. UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. <http://www.irinnews.org/webspecials/childsoldiers/Afghanistan032303.asp>, February 2, 2004.

Looking for evidence

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Factor is almost completely missing	Factor is missing to some extent	No indication either way/factor seems irrelevant	Factor is present to some extent	Factor is fully present

Person profiled: _____ Country: _____

Factor	Evidence that factor is <i>missing</i>	Evidence that factor is <i>present</i>	Score
			-2 -1 0 +1 +2
			-2 -1 0 +1 +2
			-2 -1 0 +1 +2
			-2 -1 0 +1 +2
			-2 -1 0 +1 +2

Factor	Evidence that factor is <i>missing</i>	Evidence that factor is <i>present</i>	Score
			-2 -1 0 +1 +2
			-2 -1 0 +1 +2
			-2 -1 0 +1 +2
			-2 -1 0 +1 +2
			-2 -1 0 +1 +2
			-2 -1 0 +1 +2
			-2 -1 0 +1 +2

Ranking quality of life

Person profiled	Evidence of quality of life from presentation	Main reasons for ranking
		1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th
		1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th
		1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th
		1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th
		1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th

Assessing the comparison

Use the following rubric to assess students' appraisal of the better quality of life. Award intermediate marks for answers falling between the descriptors.

	Underdeveloped	Competent	Well developed
Identifies contributing factors	Identifies none of the important factors that contribute to each youth's quality of life. 1	Identifies the obvious factors that contribute to each youth's quality of life, but overlooks some important considerations. 3	Identifies many factors including a significant range of important factors that contribute to each youth's quality of life. 5
Identifies diminishing factors	Identifies none of the important factors that diminish each youth's quality of life. 1	Identifies the obvious factors that diminish each youth's quality of life, but overlooks some important considerations. 3	Identifies many factors including a significant range of important factors that diminish each youth's quality of life. 5
Justifies decision	No plausible justification is given for the conclusion reached. 1	Justification merely touches upon some of the important factors in determining quality of life. 3	Justification shows thoughtful consideration of most important factors in determining quality of life. 5

Total /15

Comments:

Assessing the ratings and rankings

Use the following rubric to assess students' ratings of individual factors and ranking of the young people's quality of life. Award intermediate marks for answers falling between the descriptors.

	Underdeveloped	Competent	Well developed
Identifies evidence of factors' presence	Identifies very little evidence of key factors that are present in each youth's life. 1	Identifies obvious pieces of evidence of key factors that are present in each youth's life but overlooks some important considerations. 3	Identifies many pieces of evidence of the most important factors that are present in each youth's life. 5
Identifies evidence of factors' absence	Identifies very little evidence of key factors that are missing in each youth's life. 1	Identifies the obvious pieces of evidence of key factors that are missing in each youth's life, but overlooks some important considerations. 3	Identifies many pieces of evidence of the most important factors that are missing in each youth's life. 5
Justifies ratings/ rankings	No plausible justification is given for any of the assigned ratings/rankings. 1	Justification for each rating/ ranking touches upon some key factors in determining quality of life. 3	Justification for each rating/ ranking shows thoughtful consideration of the most important factors in determining quality of life. 5

TOTAL**/ 15**

Comments:

