

THE STORY OF BIRTH

SECONDARY LEVEL

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOAL #5: Improve maternal health

Activity Snapshot:

Each student will discover the story of a birth in North America by talking to a woman who has had a baby in North America (or another developed region) to complete the attached worksheet. The women they interview can be their own mothers, aunts, neighbours, and so on. They will partner with other students to identify similarities and differences between birth stories. They will understand these experiences in contrast to the experience of birth in a developing country.

Rationale:

Every year, more than 500,000 women die in childbirth, most of them in developing countries. While this is not an issue of concern in wealthier nations—where fewer than 10 women die for every 100,000 child births—the rate of deaths among women in the developing world can be as high as 1,000 for every 100,000 births. Poverty is the biggest reason for this disparity. The women in the developing world are dying during childbirth because they are malnourished and weakened by other illnesses and disease. They are also more likely to have numerous births and they lack access to trained health care workers and medical facilities.

Objective:

- Students will discover the range of experiences and health care services provided for pregnant women.
- Through discussion, both at home and at school, they will see the different experiences a pregnant woman can have based on where she lives or the poverty with which she must live.

NOTE TO EDUCATORS

Please keep in mind that not all students will have been born in a hospital or in a developed country. You may also have students in your class who are adopted children, and may not necessarily know or have access to the story of their birth. Be sensitive to any discomfort or anxiety expressed about this assignment and consider talking with students about the exercise one-on-one if you sense they are uncomfortable.

Time: Two 30-minute periods (or more time, based on level of discussion)

Materials: Handout/worksheet S17: The Story of a Birth

Steps:

1. To assess prior knowledge, hold a brief discussion about the range of services that women have to choose from when they are pregnant—hospital care, midwives, family doctor, etc. Ask students if they know about the types of tests/services that pregnant women typically get—ultrasounds, blood tests, etc.
2. Ask students to consider the assumptions held by North Americans regarding healthcare experiences for pre/post natal care (i.e., doctors, not midwives deliver babies, babies are delivered in hospitals not homes, medicine for pain is preferable).
3. Talk to your students about their experiences with childbirth (e.g. younger siblings, neighbours,

cousins, etc.). What do they remember? What do they remember about the mother? Hold a discussion about the things a mother may need when she is about to give birth (doctor, medicines like vitamins, help from family, etc.) as well as the prenatal care to which we are accustomed in North America.

4. Distribute handout/worksheet S17: The Story of a Birth and ask students to speak to a woman who has given birth about her experiences during pregnancy and childbirth.
5. The next day, hold a discussion about some of the information they gathered.
 - a. What are some of the similarities between all of their experiences?
 - b. What are some of the differences?
 - c. What did they learn that surprised them?
 - d. Share their ideas about how things would be different for new mothers in the developing world.
 - e. How might extreme poverty make these birth stories different?
6. Explain to students that the United Nations came up with the fifth Millennium Development Goal (improve maternal health) to help make things more fair for all mothers so that they have access to life-saving health care during pregnancy and child birth.
7. As a class, identify five measures that could be implemented to improve maternal health in the developing world, based on the findings from the worksheet.

Handout/worksheet S17

THE STORY OF A BIRTH

My interviewee was pregnant from (month/year) _____ to (month/year) _____

During this time, she visited the doctor _____ times.

She took the following health measures while she was pregnant:

-
-
-
-

She took these medicines and/or vitamins while she was pregnant:

-
-
-

She bought the medicines from: _____. Did she pay for the medicines herself, or were they covered by insurance or public health programs? _____

She took a childbirth class: Yes or No (Circle one)

The class was provided for free through public health or a hospital: Yes or No (Circle one)

How did the childbirth class help her?

My interviewee was mostly comfortable/uncomfortable while she was pregnant.

She had the following people help her while she was in the hospital: (list doctors, nurses, family members, etc.)

-
-
-
-

She took some medicine to lessen the pain when she began delivery: Yes or No (Circle one)

My interviewee stayed at the hospital for _____ days.

With your interviewee's help, write a paragraph on the following:

Mothers in the developing world sometimes have a harder time when having a baby because they don't have easy access to doctors, hospitals and other services. My interviewee believes that if she had been a mother in a developing country, maybe things would have been different. This is how (write a paragraph on the back of this page):