

LESSONS FOR LIFE



People
and the
Planet

Lessons for a Sustainable Future

INTRODUCTION

Of the world's one billion poorest people, over 60 percent are women and girls and of the nearly one billion adults who cannot read, almost two-thirds are female. Globally, 129 million girls are not in school. Many societies do not allow girls to go to school for various reasons – some girls are needed at home, some may need to work and earn money, while for others it is a safety issue. But whatever the reason, uneducated girls have fewer opportunities for employment and economic freedom than their educated counterparts.

Studies show that women who can read have healthier children. They also tend to delay marriage and childbearing because they have other options like college and employment. There is a strong link between education and **fertility rate**; the more education women have, the more likely they are to have small families. Raising the status of women and making education equally available for girls and boys is key to breaking the complex cycle of poverty that traps so many women around the world.

MATERIALS

- Student Reading
- Student Worksheets 1 and 2
- Poem: Eunice's Dream: A Poem from Kibera School for Girls (provided, optional)
- Internet access

PART 1: EDUCATING ABEBA PROCEDURE

1. Prior to beginning the activity, ask students "How does going to school impact your future? How would not going to school impact your future?" Students can answer in a group discussion or brainstorm a list of answers.
2. Give students time to complete the Student Reading and answer the questions on Student Worksheet 1. Discuss the answers as a class.

CONCEPT

Equal education for girls is key to a country's development and a stable population.

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Name two barriers and two benefits to girls attending school.
- Examine the relationship between female education and population growth rate through text evidence and graphic data.
- Discuss and analyze two poems related to girls' education, examining various elements such as voice, meaning and mood.

SUBJECTS

Social Studies (geography), English language arts

SKILLS

Reading comprehension, interpreting bar graphs, comparing and evaluating, critical thinking, poetry analysis

METHOD

Students read and discuss a short conversation between two Ethiopian girls about attending school and read and analyze poems about girls' education.

PART 2: IN THEIR OWN WORDS

PROCEDURE


1. Explain to students that they will be hearing two poems related to girls education.
2. If time permits, share the following information about Eunice Akoth and the Kibera School for Girls:

The Kibera School for Girls is a school in Kibera – a slum in Nairobi, Kenya founded by Kennedy Odede. Kennedy grew up in Kibera and viewed education of girls and empowerment of women as the solution to poverty in his community. Only 8 percent of girls in Kibera have the opportunity to attend school, and Kennedy wanted to change that. Kibera School not only focuses on educating girls but provides robust social services and support for the girls in the Kibera community. Eunice was a student at Kibera School and was 10 years old at the time she wrote this poem. She plans to continue to pursue her education to university and beyond, with interest in becoming a journalist or a doctor. You can learn more about Eunice and her inspirations for the poem [here](#).



3. Play the video "[Eunice's Dream: A Poem from Kibera School for Girls](#)" on your computer/projector. If you'd like students to have a written copy, print the poem from page 10 and distribute copies to each student prior to showing the video.
4. If time allows, share the following information about Amanda Gorman with your students:

Amanda Gorman was the first-ever Youth Poet Laureate in the U.S. She grew up in Los Angeles and has been expressing herself through writing ever since she was a little girl. She is an award-winning writer and a cum laude graduate of Harvard University. She has performed her poems for Lin-Manuel Miranda, Al Gore, Secretary Hillary Clinton, Malala Yousafzai as well as at the inauguration of President Joe Biden in 2020. She is also the founder and executive director of One Pen, One Page, an organization that provides free creative writing programs for youth in underserved communities. She wrote the poem "Power of Firsts," when she was 19 – for the International Day of the Girl in 2017.
5. Read the poem "[The Power of Firsts](#)" by Amanda Gorman. Use your computer/projector to project the poem so students can follow along or take turns reading aloud to the class.
6. Discuss the questions below:
 - a. What are the similarities and differences between both poems?
 - b. Explore the following excerpt from the "The Power of Firsts" – "Power unfurls in a girl at school." What does this mean to you? What does "power" have to do with education?
 - c. After listening to Eunice recite her poem, how would you describe her dream? How can education help Eunice achieve her dream?

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- d. How have your circumstances impacted your ability to achieve a goal? What did you do? How might your experience be similar and different than the girls in the story?
7. After discussing the poems as a group, have students pick one poem to analyze. Distribute Student Worksheet 2 and ask students to complete a poem analysis on their chosen poem.
- Note:** If you'd like for students to complete a more detailed analysis of the literary elements in their poem, have them complete the back of the Student Worksheet.
8. Allow time for students to share their completed poem analysis with a partner and compare their results.

ASSESSMENT

Students write a reflection (3-5 sentences) that includes at least two barriers and two benefits to girls attending school.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. Students write a poem about the importance of educating girls and take turns sharing it with a partner. Alternatively, students could write poems collaboratively with a partner or small group. After all students or groups have written their poems, they can be displayed and visited by students in a gallery wall style display or compiled as a student magazine.
2. Art and Activism: Students create a piece of visual art that promotes the education of girls and women based on what they learned through the activity. Students can choose what medium of visual art they would like to create. Some examples could be a poster, infographic, comic, sculpture or a short film.
3. Vision Board: After learning about the current barriers that many individuals face to getting educated and the importance of education, what do students envision for the future? Students draw and write to create a "vision board" about the future of education. Students can use the vision board template [linked here](#).
4. [Newsela Daily Deck: The Gender Gap in Global Education](#): Students read a leveled article about the gender gap in education. Using the interactive tools in the Peardeck/Newsela integrated platform, they annotate the article and identify the claims and arguments made by the author. To access the article, you will need to sign up for a free Educator account at [Newsela](#) at and [Peardeck](#).

WHY HAS ABEBA DROPPED OUT OF SCHOOL?

As Rediet lowered her pail into the sun-dappled stream from which she fetched her family's water each morning, she heard a pure, high voice singing the old song about the maize flowers blooming all over Ethiopia. It was Abeba; the voice was unmistakable – and much missed in class now that her parents had pulled her out of school to help her mother at home after the birth of her latest brother. Rediet didn't quite understand why they had done that; her own mother had just as much work as Abeba's. And it made her uncomfortable that she was still in school when Abeba wasn't. She set her pail down and ran up the path to greet her former classmate; she didn't want Abeba to feel that they weren't close friends just because they no longer saw each other daily.



"We got a new goat to go with my new brother," said Abeba as Rediet took her hand.

"Which one is more troubling?" asked Rediet, smiling.

"It's hard to tell. The goat, I guess. Yesterday it ate the sleeve of my red blouse."

They laughed together and, at the stream's edge, kicked off their sandals to cool their feet in the water.

"It's my little sister who's exciting," said Abeba. "She's beginning to talk. She still stumbles when she walks, but she chatters away. Just like me at her age, Mamma says."

Rediet wondered if Abeba's baby sister would ever go to school. She tried to remember the proverb her mother had learned at the dressmaking centre where she had also learned to read a few years before. All the eight-year-old girl could recall, though, was that when she had asked if she should stay at home like Abeba, to help with the younger children and the other household chores, her mother had pulled her ears gently and said, "Not you, honeypot. With that head of yours, you're going to write the kind of books that taught me how to read."

"And your father thinks the same," his voice had boomed suddenly in the doorway, "so don't go asking him such foolish things." He had entered the house, smiling, and threatened to tickle her to death if she raised the question again. That had closed the matter – for her at least. The problem, thought Rediet, as she looked at her friend's rippled reflection in the water, was that Abeba's head was just as good as hers. Different, but just as good. One of the reasons she missed Abeba so much in class was that her friend's answers to their teacher's questions often set off new thoughts in her own head. Had each made the other's head better?

And now Abeba was asking just the question Rediet had been dreading: "What's going on at school?"

"We're learning division," she replied. "It's easy," she added, remembering how good Abeba had been

at math. "I could teach it to you if you like." Suddenly she realized that she'd said something wrong. "Of course it's easy," Abeba retorted. "Just the opposite of the times tables we were doing when I left. If five times two is ten, then two goes into ten five times." She stood up and filled her pail. "You know," she said, "I bet I can get my older brother to teach me everything he's learned in school. I don't really need to go myself."

Rediet wondered, but she said nothing. That brother wasn't very interested in school – and he never seemed to have time for anyone but his friends. Then her mother's proverb came back to her: "Educate a boy and you educate one person; educate a girl and you educate a nation."

Adapted with permission from *Girls: Challenging the World*, United Nations, 1995.

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STUDENT WORKSHEET 1

Name: _____ Date: _____

Part 1: Reading Comprehension

1. How old is Abeba? _____
2. Why did Abeba's parents take her out of school? _____

3. Why did Rediet's mother decide to keep her in school? _____

4. What might the mother's proverb mean? "Educate a boy and you educate one person; educate a girl and you educate a nation." Do you agree with the mother? Why or why not?

5. How might Rediet's future differ from Abeba's as a result of her having gone to school?

6. What kinds of choices will Abeba have when she is older if she never returns to school?

7. Which girl might get married first? Why? _____

8. Which girl might have children first? Why? _____

9. List two possible results of societies denying girls an education.

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STUDENT WORKSHEET 1 – PAGE 2

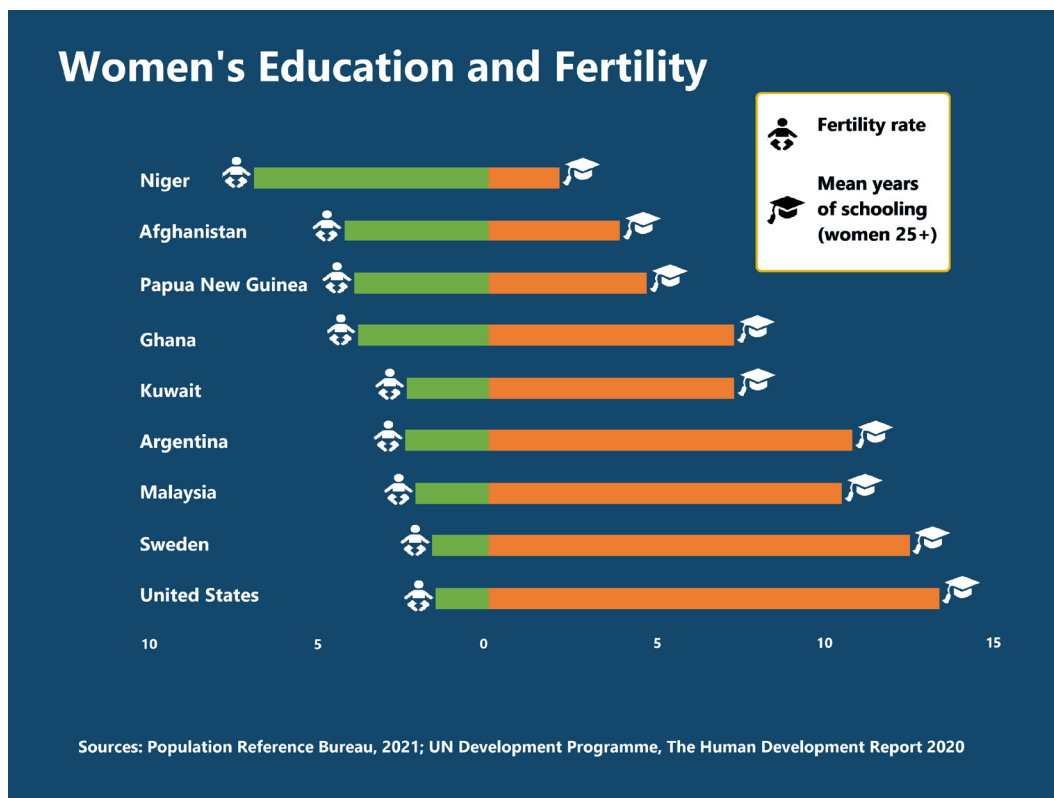
Part 2: Graph Interpretation

1. On the graph below, which country has the highest average years of schooling?

2. Which country has the highest fertility rate? _____

3. What is the relationship between women's education and fertility rate? Why? _____

4. How does a country's fertility rate impact its population growth? _____



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STUDENT WORKSHEET 2 – POEM ANALYSIS

Name: _____ Date: _____

Title of Poem: _____ Author: _____

POINT OF VIEW

Whose point of view is the poem written from?

How would you describe the voice of the author?

MEANING

This poem is about...

VISUALIZATION

What images came to mind when you read this poem? Draw them here!

MOOD

This poem made me feel...

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STUDENT WORKSHEET 2 – PAGE 2



Detecting Literary Devices You are a close-reading detective! Use your detective skills to find examples of each literary device in the poem and record each in the boxes below.

Simile

comparing 2 unlike things using the words **like** or **as**

Example:

Metaphor

a direct comparison of two unlike things that does NOT use the words **like** or **as**

Example:

Personification

giving human characteristics to something non-human

Example:

Imagery

words that appeal to the five senses – taste, smell, touch, sight, and sound

Example:

EUNICE'S DREAM: A POEM FROM KIBERA SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

MY DREAM

By Eunice Akoth

I have a dream. A dream that will never fail.
Every mighty king was once a crying baby.
Every great tree was once a tiny seed.
And so is my dream.
This journey seems so long. Yet, I will not waiver.
The path has stones all over but, I will not give up.
Every day of my life is a page of my history.
Every step that I take is a move to my glorious destiny.
It's not where I am but where I'm going that matters.
Now listen, listen carefully to the words of wisdom.
Stop watching your dreams go down the drain!
Fight! Fight! Fearlessly! Like a wounded lion.
For it's not about who you are but how you see yourself.
So dream!