

Vegan Education in Schools

Ethics course

Years 7 to 12

Lesson 5: The intersection of veganism and social justice: Food deserts, accessibility, and global inequality

Overview:

This lesson explores the intersection of veganism and social justice, with a focus on food deserts, accessibility, and global inequality. Students will investigate how structural oppression limits access to nutritious vegan food in marginalised communities and examine how veganism can be both an ethical and systemic response to food injustice. Through case studies, multimedia, and critical discussion, students will evaluate the causes of vegan food inaccessibility and propose meaningful, justice-oriented solutions.

Objectives:

- Understand the concepts of food deserts, food apartheid, food insecurity, and food justice.
 - Analyse how socioeconomic inequality impacts access to vegan food.
 - Evaluate global disparities in access to vegan nutrition through case studies and data.
 - Explore veganism as an ethical and political response to food injustice.
 - Develop informed proposals to address barriers to vegan food access in marginalised communities.

Outcomes:

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Define key concepts and identify structural barriers to vegan food access.
 - Analyse local and global case studies of food injustice.
 - Explain the ethical and abolitionist basis of veganism in relation to social justice.
 - Use evidence from media, readings, and discussions to support ideas.
 - Propose actionable, justice-based solutions that reflect vegan principles.

Materials:

- Whiteboard and markers
 - Projector and speakers
 - Internet-enabled computer or smartboard
 - Printed handouts of case studies, reflection questions, and discussion prompts
 - Student notebooks or digital journaling tools
 - Access to the following digital resources:
 - Video: [Social Justice + Veganism Ep. 3: Food Deserts](#)
 - Case study pack: [Food Justice: Planting the Seeds of Change \(Pulitzer Center\)](#)
 - Lesson guide: [Food Deserts: Causes, Consequences and Solutions \(Learning for Justice\)](#)
 - Article: [From Food Justice to Veganism \(Intersected Project\)](#)

Lesson steps:

1. Introduction to food injustice and its terminology (5 minutes):

- Begin with a class brainstorm on the whiteboard: “What does food justice mean in a vegan context?”
- Define key terms with student input:
 - Food desert
 - Food apartheid
 - Food insecurity
 - Food justice
- Facilitate a brief discussion using the Learning for Justice lesson as support

2. Video exploration – community impact and systemic barriers (8 minutes):

- Play [Social Justice + Veganism Ep. 3: Food Deserts](#)
- Ask students to take notes on:
 - Root causes of vegan food inaccessibility

- Voices and experiences featured
- Community-based responses
- Brief pair-share or group recap at the end of the video

3. Case study analysis – real-world struggles and solutions (12 minutes):

- Divide the class into groups and assign a different case from the Pulitzer Center’s [Planting the Seeds of Change](#) pack
- Each group analyses:
 - What injustice the community faced
 - What solution was used
 - How veganism is relevant to the context
- Groups create and present a short poster, visual map, or 1-minute oral summary

4. Systems thinking – mapping food injustice (5 minutes):

- As a class, co-construct a diagram of intersecting systems that create food injustice
 - Urban planning
 - Racism and class
 - Economic policy
 - Speciesism and animal exploitation
- Use the Learning for Justice resource to help students identify root causes

5. Reading and discussion – veganism as a justice solution (10 minutes):

- Hand out excerpts or read aloud key points from [From Food Justice to Veganism](#)
- Facilitate a guided discussion using these questions:
 - Why is veganism a justice issue, not just a personal choice?
 - How does it resist both animal and human oppression?
 - How is veganism different from charity or reform-based approaches?

Build a flowchart on the board: *“How veganism challenges food injustice”*

6. Exit activity – action plan brainstorm (5 minutes):

- Ask students to write or sketch a quick idea:
 - “What is one thing that could improve access to vegan food in your community?”
 - Ideas might include community gardens, free vegan cooking classes, school vegan meals
- Collect or share as exit tickets

Homework:

- Reflective writing task: “How is access to vegan food a justice issue?”
 - 400–500 words, citing at least two sources from the lesson

Extension:

- Create a campaign resource (poster, social media post, or video) raising awareness of vegan food deserts and justice-based solutions

Differentiation:

- Provide scaffolded templates for definitions, diagrams, and written responses
 - Offer alternative options (audio/video responses)
 - Tier discussion questions and case study tasks for mixed learning levels
 - Vocabulary lists and visual prompts for EAL/D learners

Assessment criteria:

- Demonstrates understanding of food justice, food apartheid, and vegan ethics
 - Participates actively in case study work and discussion
 - Uses evidence from resources to support responses
 - Reflects critically on the relationship between veganism and justice
 - Proposes clear, realistic actions grounded in abolitionist vegan values