

Horoscope of poverty

Can you see into the future? What will next year bring for Amina or to Misha?

Themes	Poverty, Globalisation, Social rights
Complexity	Level 3
Group size	15 - 21
Time	60 minutes
Overview	This activity combines knowledge and creative composition to explore issues about the consequences of poverty and the opportunities in life which are denied to the poor.
Related rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The right to food and housing ▪ The right to health ▪ The right to work
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To reflect on both the lack of opportunities poor people have, and the difficulties they face in taking those which are presented ▪ To understand the cycle of poverty ▪ To promote social justice, human dignity and responsibility
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 12 Horoscope cards ▪ 12 Life cards ▪ One sheet of paper and a pencil for each participant ▪ Large sheet of paper or flipchart or board ▪ Markers or chalk ▪ Tape
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Copy the Horoscope and Life cards and cut them out. ▪ Make up three sets of cards so there are four life cards with their corresponding horoscope cards in each set. Put each set in a separate envelope so that they don't get muddled up.

Instructions

1. Introduce the activity. Talk briefly about horoscopes in general. Do participants ever read them? Do they believe them? What sorts of information do they usually give?
2. Divide the participants into three small groups and give each one a set of Life cards together with the corresponding Horoscope cards.
3. Give the groups twenty minutes to write fantasy horoscopes for the four lives on their cards. They should use their imagination, intuition and general knowledge to foretell what will happen to the people in the coming year. Stress that there are no right or wrong answers, but that they should try to make the predictions within the scope of reality.
4. When they have finished, call people into plenary. In turn, ask each group to present their work. They should first read out the information on the life cards so everyone

THEMES



POVERTY



GLOBALISATION



SOCIAL RIGHTS

COMPLEXITY



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is introduced to the different characters, and then they should read out the horoscopes.

5. Finally tape the life cards and the predictions onto the large sheet of paper to make a wall chart.

Debriefing and evaluation

Start the discussion by asking each group to explain how they decided the futures of each of their characters. Then go on to try to define poverty and finally move on to discuss the consequences of poverty.

- What images do participants have of people who are poor? In their own country and in developing countries? Are these stereotypes? How well-founded are the images? Where do people get their information from?
- What do participants understand by the term poverty?
- Might someone be regarded as 'rich' if they lived in one country and 'poor' if they lived in another? In other words, is poverty relative?
- In your society, why are some people rich and others poor?
- What are the main passports out of poverty, both in your country and in Eritrea, one of the poorest countries in the world? Having a rich uncle? Winning the lottery? Having an education? Being healthy? Knowing the right people? Working hard? What else?
- How easy is it for people who are poor to break the circle of poverty? In other words, how hard is it for someone born into a poor family not to be poor as an adult?
- What kinds of opportunities do people have when they are rich?
- What kinds of opportunities do people have when they are poor?
- Is it people's own fault that they are poor? Is it their fate? Is it because of social, political and economic forces?
- Poverty often goes hand in hand with poor health, hunger and malnutrition, lack of education, poor work skills and unemployment. Is it a coincidence or are they connected? If so, what are the connections?
- In general how do people view/treat poor people?
- What sort of political and social policies lead to the best opportunities for life for all citizens?
- To what extent is education a key to reducing poverty in your country?
- In almost every country of the world, the gap between rich and poor is increasing. The gap is also increasing between countries. What are the consequences of this for Europe?
- Does it matter that the gap is widening? If people think it does matter, then whose responsibility is it to act to reduce the gap?
- What can individuals, groups, local communities and nations do to close the gap?

Tips for facilitators

Make it clear to participants that this is a fantasy horoscope and that it is not necessary to be an astrologer or know anything about the characteristics traditionally attributed to the signs of the zodiac. Rather, they should focus on the details given in the life stories on the cards and use their own general knowledge and knowledge of history, economics and sociology. The "love" item in the horoscope cards should be taken to refer not only to the love life of the individual, but also their relationships with family and friends.

Variations

You can adapt the life stories or replace all or some of them with others you find more interesting or appropriate. You can also replace these stories by real cases you know of, or have heard of, in your own community or country.

Suggestions for follow-up

Women are frequently the sole breadwinners in the family, either because they are single parents, or because their partners are out of work. However, women are often discriminated against in the workplace and, if social support is lacking, it is often extremely hard to both work and bring up a family. If the group are interested in exploring some of these issues, they could do the activity “Work and babies”, on page 260.

Ideas for action

Offer your support to an NGO or association that is working with people who are poor and trying to create opportunities for them. You could identify a local group and find out what their needs are, then develop a project to raise funds.

Key date

17 October

International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

HANDOUTS

Life cards

Maria, a single mother with three children, lives in a very poor suburb in Madeira, Portugal. Her latest companion has just left her. She works as a maid for a wealthy family, but for how much longer? Someone recently stole an expensive ring from the lady of the house, who suspects one of the maids. They can't find out who is guilty, so all the maids are going to be sacked and replaced. Maria is **Capricorn**.

Amina is from Turkey. She lives in a small village in one of the poorest region of the country. She is 12 years old and her parents - very poor peasants - are talking about looking for a husband for her. But she does not want to get married; instead she decides to run away from home and travel to the capital where she hopes to have a brighter future. Amina is **Gemini**.

Misha is from Tomsk in Siberia. He has been unemployed for many months and he does not know what to do. His wife is very ill and has to stay in bed all day. He has four children aged 20, 18, 10 and 8 and the two youngest are disabled. Misha is **Virgo**.

Yuriy lives with his parents and three younger brothers in Tomsk in Siberia. He is twenty years old and a very promising ice-hockey player. His uncle in America has offered to try to find him a scholarship to study in an American college. Yuriy's father, Misha, has been unemployed for many months and at the moment, the only source of family income is from odd jobs that Yuriy does. Yuriy does not know what to do. His mother is ill, two of his younger brothers are disabled and the family relies on him. Yuriy is **Cancer**.

Bengt is a young Swedish skinhead. He has been arrested twice this year for violent behaviour. He has been out of work for two years now and despite this, refuses all the offers that have been made to him. He prefers to spend his time training his dog, a pit bull terrier, doing body-building and being in the streets with his mates, who have been linked to several recent racist incidents. Bengt is **Aries**.

Ricardo lives on his own in Barcelona, Spain, in a tiny apartment he can hardly afford. He has been ill for many months and lives off social security payments from the government. He used to work doing odd jobs. His wife took the children away and abandoned him when she heard that he has AIDS. He is **Libra**.

Abdoul came from Mauritania many years ago to look for work in the French capital, Paris. He spent the first years alone but was later able to bring over his wife and four sons as well as his grandparents. They all live in one apartment in a poor area of Paris. For a while things went well, especially when Abdoul's wife gave birth to twins, but it has proved a struggle to bring the children up to keep the Mauritanian traditions. The twins are now 12 years old. They are having lots of problems at school and often refuse to obey their parents. Recently, Abdoul lost his job because of the general economic downturn. Abdoul is **Leo**.

The twins, **Moktar** and **Ould**, were born in Paris in France. They are the children of Abdoul, a migrant worker, originally from Mauritania. The whole family, their parents, four older brothers as well as their grandparents all live in one apartment in a poor area of Paris. The twins are now 12 years old and have lots of problems at school. They refuse to study, skip classes very often to hang around with their friends in the suburbs of Paris and refuse to obey their parents, with whom they fight a lot, sometimes violently. Reports from school show that they are becoming increasingly aggressive. Moktar and Ould are **Aquarius**.

Krista, 20 years old, rents a tiny flat in a very poor suburb of Prague and dreams of living in Germany. She has read an advertisement offering jobs in Berlin. She called the number and met a man who promised to get her out of poverty saying that she will easily find a job in Berlin. She decides to trust the man and to take the chance to go to Germany. Krista is **Sagittarius**.

Jane is an elderly widow who lives in Scotland. Her husband was an alcoholic and hardly ever worked. She survives on the very small state pension but now needs extra care as her health is worsening. Jane is **Pisces**.

Bella lives together with her sister, Angelica, in Palermo in Italy. Their parents died when the girls were sixteen and seventeen, which meant that they had to leave school and work to support themselves. They are now twenty-two and twenty-three. Bella has two jobs; she works as a maid during the day and as a cleaning lady in a hospital at night. She also looks after Angelica, who is a drug addict. Bella refuses to let her sister down because she knows how much her sister suffered from their violent father. Bella has problems with her own hot temper, that she finds hard to control and which has caused her to lose her job on two recent occasions. Bella is **Taurus**.

Angelica lives together with her sister Bella in Palermo in Italy. Their parents died when the girls were sixteen and seventeen, which meant that they had to leave school and work to support themselves. They are now twenty-two and twenty-three. Bella has two jobs and she also looks after Angelica, who is a drug addict. Angelica often steals her sister's wages to buy drugs. She has been on and off drugs for many years but finds it very difficult to control her addiction. Angelica is **Scorpio**.

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Horoscope cards for the year

<p>Aries (Bengt) (21 March-21 April)</p> <p>Love</p> <p>Work</p> <p>Health</p>	<p>Libra (Ricardo) (23 Sept-22 Oct)</p> <p>Love</p> <p>Work</p> <p>Health</p>
<p>Taurus (Bella) (22 April-21 May)</p> <p>Love</p> <p>Work</p> <p>Health</p>	<p>Scorpio (Angelica) (23 Oct-22 Nov)</p> <p>Love</p> <p>Work</p> <p>Health</p>
<p>Gemini (Amina) (22 May-21 June)</p> <p>Love</p> <p>Work</p> <p>Health</p>	<p>Sagittarius (Krista) (23 Nov-21 Dec)</p> <p>Love</p> <p>Work</p> <p>Health</p>
<p>Cancer (Yuriy) (22 June-22 July)</p> <p>Love</p> <p>Work</p> <p>Health</p>	<p>Capricorn (Maria) (22 Dec-20 Jan)</p> <p>Love</p> <p>Work</p> <p>Health</p>
<p>Leo (Abdoul) (23 July-22 August)</p> <p>Love</p> <p>Work</p> <p>Health</p>	<p>Aquarius (Moktar and Ould) (21 Jan-19 Feb)</p> <p>Love</p> <p>Work</p> <p>Health</p>
<p>Virgo (Misha) (23 August-22 Sept)</p> <p>Love</p> <p>Work</p> <p>Health</p>	<p>Pisces (Jane) (20 Feb-20 March)</p> <p>Love</p> <p>Work</p> <p>Health</p>