



What is happening in Haiti and what can we do about it?

By Marieke van Woerkom <http://www.teachablemoment.org/elementary/haiti.html> (adapted)

Objectives

Students will:

- Share what they know about the earthquake in Haiti
- Practice their active listening skills
- Learn some of Haiti's history--its suffering, the resilience of its people, its rich cultural heritage
- Learn about proverbs and their cultural relevance
- Consider quotes from the news and watch a short video clip about the earthquake in Haiti
- Brainstorm about what students might do to help the people of Haiti
- Take a moment of silence for the victims of the quake

Social and Emotional Skills:

- Active listening skills and sharing feelings
- Empathy
- Becoming aware of and going beyond stereotypes
- Taking action on behalf of those who need our help

Materials needed:

- Today's agenda on chart paper or on the board
- Worksheet of Quotes from the News
- Video clip at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HgQd0K5W0vI&feature=player_embedded
- Blog posts at: <http://www.oursoil.org/>



Gathering (10-30 minutes)

Ask your students to share what they've heard about the earthquake in Haiti. Gather information: Find out what your students know, what they don't know and get a gauge on how they're dealing with the news of this disaster. Ask them how they're feeling about it.

If you have students in your classroom who might have family or loved ones in Haiti, give them an opportunity to share what they know and what they've been going through this past week. Of course this requires a safe class environment where community practices/group agreements have been established and students are able to listen actively to each other with empathy and compassion.

Keep in mind that students with a personal connection to Haiti may need individual attention and support . But simply being able to share their story, their concerns, and their feelings in a safe environment where others pay attention and listen can be important for students going through a difficult time like this. Sharing like this also promotes empathy, understanding and support from classmates, who may have been afraid to broach the subject by themselves.

(Note to teachers: For additional background information, see the TeachableMoment lesson on the for high school students, [Devastation in Haiti](#). For tips on how to address difficult subjects in your classroom (though it focuses on the financial crisis), visit <http://www.teachablemoment.org/middle/crisis.html>.

Agenda and Overview (5-10 minutes)

Explain that in today's lesson you'll be talking about what happened in Haiti this past week. Haiti is a country on an island in the Caribbean. If you have a map in your classroom, point out Haiti's location, showing how close it is to the United States. The island is shared with another country called the Dominican Republic. Haiti is a poor country economically. But it has a very rich cultural history.



Short history for the older grades: Like the Americans, the Haitians fought for their independence against European colonizers. The U.S. declared independence from Britain in 1776. Shortly afterwards, Haiti declared its independence from France. Haiti officially became independent in 1804--making it the first independent country in Latin America and the first post-colonial country in the world led by people of African descent. Haiti is also the only country ever whose independence was gained through a successful slave rebellion.

And though these are things to celebrate, the fight for independence left the country in ruins. Haiti's farmland was destroyed and there was little to no trade. Most of Haiti's people were uneducated and unskilled, so building up this newly independent country was extremely difficult.

Haiti has faced many other challenges in its 206-year history, including many natural and manmade disasters.

Even before this latest earthquake struck on January 12, 2010, life in Haiti was very hard for most people. While the media and the cameras are likely to move on from this disaster zone in the coming weeks, it will take years, if not decades, for Haiti to recover from this devastation.

Mountains beyond Mountains (10 minutes)

Haiti is a country of great beauty with a strong cultural history that includes French, African, native Taino, and some Spanish influences. Haitians have many proverbs that reflect their country's diverse culture and its many hardships. One famous proverb is: "Beyond the mountain is another mountain."

Ask students: What do you think this means?

Help students understand that this proverb may refer to obstacles and challenges that have faced Haiti throughout its long history.

Ask students: What challenges do you think the proverb is referring to?



Some of your students may remember the series of hurricanes that hit Haiti in the fall of 2008. The country had not yet recovered from these storms when a massive earthquake hit on January 12, 2010. And though the earthquake was enormous (the most powerful to have hit the country in its 206-year existence), it is important for your students to realize that much of the damage that resulted was due to the country's extreme poverty.

Even before the earthquake, 75% of the buildings in Haiti were considered to be unsafe. It is in large part because of the poor construction that so many buildings fell down in the quake.

Haiti's already poorly equipped port and airport have been further damaged in the quake. So they have not been able to deal with all the people trying to come into the country from abroad to help out. It has also been hard for the country to receive the shipments of food, water, medicine, and medical machinery intended to help quake victims. The roads have been blocked and the communications networks are down.

Many of these problems are the result of Haiti's longstanding poverty. As a result the number of dead and injured will be much higher than if a similar earthquake had hit the United States.

Microlab:

Quotes from the News (19 minutes)

Read some or all of the quotes from the worksheet below or ask some volunteers to read them to the class.

If you have the equipment available in your classroom play the following 1 minute clip in the background or show it before reading the quotes:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HgQd0K5W0vl&feature=player_embedded

This clip was chosen for younger students: It shows material damage and chaos resulting from the earthquake, not images of people who were injured or killed.



Have students break into groups of four. Ask the groups to discuss the quotes and the clip by responding to some or all of the following questions:

- What stood out for you?
- What surprised you in these quotes?
- What did you learn?
- How did it make you feel?

After about 8 minutes, have students come back together as a full group and ask for volunteers from each group to share something they discussed in their small group.

See further resources on <http://staidenshomeschool.com/calendars/lessons/january/haiti-earthquake.html>

Brainstorm (5 minutes)

Brainstorm ways your students think they might be able to help the people of Haiti.

Remind students that even though there is an urgent need right now, the people of Haiti will need our help for some time to come. Beyond the large first responder organizations like the Red Cross, Doctors Without Borders, Partners in Health and CARE, some smaller organizations are working in Haiti long-term, not only helping with disaster relief but also helping to rebuild the country. When the first responders leave and Haiti is out of the public eye again, these organizations will carry on. Among them:

MADRE concentrates on meeting the needs of those who are made most vulnerable by disaster--namely, women and their children. Learn more about MADRE's work in Haiti and donate at:

<http://www.madre.org/index.php?s=4&news=266>



Zanmi Lasante, a project of Partners in Health (co-founded by Dr. Paul Farmer) has worked in Haiti for nearly 25 years. It is now among the largest non-governmental healthcare providers in the country. "We are unique in what we have to offer, but our ability to continue to be effective depends on you," states the organization's website. Learn more about Partners in Health's work in Haiti and donate at: <http://www.pih.org/where/Haiti/Haiti.html>

Plan Haiti is an international organization that works to end child poverty. Plan has been working in Haiti for 36 years and has more than 140 staff on the ground, including in remote parts of Haiti few other organizations can reach. Learn more about Plan Haiti and donate at: <http://plan-international.org/where-we-work/americas/haiti>

Global Fund for Women has supported 18 women and children's organizations in Haiti over the years. After the earthquake, this organization will help rebuild women's organizations and communities in Haiti. Learn more about the Global Fund for Women and donate at: <http://www.globalfundforwomen.org/cms/>

Lambi Fund of Haiti - The Lambi Fund's mission is to "assist the popular, democratic movement in Haiti" by supporting community-based organizations. Learn more about the Lambi Fund of Haiti and donate at: <http://www.lambifund.org/>

SOIL (Sustainable Organic Integrated Livelihoods) is a "non-profit organization dedicated to protecting soil resources, empowering communities and transforming wastes into resources in Haiti.... we strive to help individuals to realize their innate talents and to become a part of creating social change in their communities." Learn more about SOIL and donate at: <http://www.oursoil.org/>

Closing (1 minute)

Ask your students to observe a minute of silence for the victims of the earthquake in Haiti this past week.



Additional activities

To further educate your students about Haiti and to humanize the disaster, use some of the recent posts about the quake on the SOIL website at: <http://www.oursoil.org/> . The posts describe life in Haiti in a very personal non-sensationalistic way, promoting empathy and concern for the victims of the quake.

Worksheet:

Quotes from the News

Ruth Caudle, who was born in Haiti and now lives in Illinois, is worried about the fate of children at a Haitian school she helped found::

"The hard part is not knowing what's going on," said Ruth Caudle. "I pray there are no casualties [wounded and dead] and just keep trying to call. I'm sad and anxious at the same time." Caudle also said she was concerned with portrayals of Haiti as a violent country. She said Haitians are working together. "People are out there digging with their hands, they want to help," she said. "Haitians are helping out each other, not hurting each other."

Daily Herald website: <http://www.dailyherald.com/story/?id=35067>

Up to 200,000 people may have died in the Haiti earthquake, the Pan American Health Organization has said, as the UN launches an appeal for more than \$550 million in aid.



"A variety of sources are estimating the numbers [at] between 50,000 and 100,000," said Jon Andrus of PAHO, the Americas arm of the World Health Organization.

Barack Obama said the U.S. would do everything it could to get the country back on its feet. "The scale of the devastation is extraordinary ... and the losses are heartbreaking," he said at the White House.

The UK *Guardian* website: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jan/14/haiti-earthquake-rescue-operation>

We share the pain and sorrow felt by millions of people in Haiti as they deal with this tragedy and the unimaginable destruction of their country. And in this time of crisis, we also want to salute the citizens of this resilient nation - a nation that has worked to rebuild itself many times throughout a history of turmoil. We stand with the people and government of Haiti and we join the international community in the commitment to doing everything possible to help them overcome this disaster.

International Fund for Agricultural Development website: <http://www.ifad.org/>

Mike Godfrey, an American contractor working for the U.S. Agency for International Development, said that within minutes of the quake, "a huge plume [cloud] of dust and smoke rose up over the city - a blanket that completely covered the city and obscured it for about 20 minutes."

CNN website: <http://www.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/americas/01/12/haiti.earthquake/index.html>

[Haitian President] Preval, unsure of where he would sleep after his home and the presidential palace were destroyed, painted a scene of utter devastation. "Parliament has collapsed. The tax office has collapsed. Schools have collapsed. Hospitals have collapsed," he told the Miami Herald.

Times of India website: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/rest-of-world/Over-100000-feared-dead-in-horrific-Haiti-quake/articleshow/5442981.cms>



"The Haitian people are a really courageous people, and in the past, when we have been hit hard, we come back fighting," Raymond Joseph, Haitian ambassador in Washington, told *The Boston Globe*. "We'll live through this."

Earth Times website: <http://www.earthtimes.org/articles/show/303644.sidebar-impoverished-haiti-again-hit-by-natural-disaster.html>

Milero Cedamou, the 33-year-old owner of a small water delivery company, twice drove his small tanker truck to a tent camp where thousands of homeless people are living. Hundreds clustered around to fill their plastic buckets. "This is a crisis of unspeakable magnitude; it's normal for every Haitian to help," Cedamou said. "This is not charity."

Yahoo News website: http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/cb_haiti_earthquake

Despite the death and destruction, hundreds of people, mostly women, took to the streets in an area of the capital on Friday, singing and chanting as they marched down the street - a sign of resilience amid huge mounds of rubble. It is not the first time such a display has been observed. Singing and clapping has been heard well into the night in a large square that thousands of people have made home after the earthquake, a CNN crew reported.

CNN website: http://cnn.mlogic.mobi/cnn/lt_ne/lt_ne/detail/431357/full;jsessionid=4A38EB71C36439118DA72272E04A5072.live4

How did this activity work in your class? Please share your stories and other feedback! Email: info@morningsidecenter.org.