

## Lesson 4

### Social justice

#### How should we cope with inequalities?

Learning objective	The students become aware of problems related to social justice.
Student tasks	The students discuss issues of distributive justice. The students rethink the whole unit.
Resources	(optional) Copies of student handout 2.3 and the questions.
Method	Text-based discussion, pair work, critical thinking.

#### Information box

In our society, there is no consensus about what social justice really means. The story used in this lesson is intended to help the students to reflect on the basic principles in which social justice should be rooted, while at the same time showing the complexity of the issue.

## The lesson

The teacher explains to the students that he/she will give them a story in four parts and after reading each part there will be a discussion. Alternatively, the teacher could read the story aloud.

The teacher then divides the class into pairs and gives each pair part one of student handout 2.3. The teacher can either read it aloud, ask another student to read it, or the students can read it in silence.

### Teacher's copy: part one

*“More than an hour elapsed between the first alarm and the sinking of the cruise ship ‘The Queen Maddy’. Thus the passengers were able to organise themselves a little before entering the rescue vessels. A heavy storm had caused the ship to crash into an oil tanker, resulting in the shipwreck.*

*About half a day later, some of the rescue vessels landed on a small rocky island. It was oval-shaped, about 1.5 km long and half as wide and partly covered by lush woods. There was no other island within reasonable distance. This rather sunny island was not inhabited, apart from the family Richalone, who lived in a luxurious villa on the top of the hill and owned the whole island.*

*Years ago, this family had settled on the island, hardly keeping contact with the outside world; they merely arranged the monthly delivery of fresh food, petrol and all sorts of other goods that they needed. Their life was well organised: they produced their own electricity, could afford to buy enough food and drink, and had all the modern comforts they wished for. In the past, the owner had been a very successful businessman. After a conflict with the authorities over a tax issue, he had become disillusioned with life and decided from then on to avoid all contact with the outside world.*

*The owner of the villa had observed the rescue vessels landing on his pretty island and approached the shipwrecked people.”*

The teacher then explains that the first question the students need to consider is whether, in their opinion, the owner of the island is morally obliged to allow these people to stay on his island. In order to help the students reach a conclusion, the teacher will read out a number of statements (listed below) and each pair will have to decide which statement(s) they agree with and why. The students discuss in pairs and note down their answers.

- A. The owner may refuse to allow the shipwrecked people to stay on his island.
- B. The owner may refuse to allow the shipwrecked people to stay on his island as long as he provides them with the necessary food and drink.
- C. The owner may refuse to allow all those who are not able to pay (with money, jewels or through labour) to stay on his island.
- D. The owner has to allow the people to stay on his island as long as necessary. The shipwrecked people have the moral obligation to respect the owner’s privacy and belongings.
- E. The owner has to allow the shipwrecked people unconditional access to the island and has to consider them as co-owners.

The teacher can get feedback from the class, for example by asking such questions as, “How many of you have chosen statement A?” “How many have chosen statement B?” “Why?”

Then the teacher distributes part two of the story.

## Teacher's copy: part two

*"The owner of the island decided to allow the shipwrecked people to stay for some time. He expected them to pay for services and food from his reserves. As long as there was food left from the ship, he refused to sell them anything at all.*

*There were 13 shipwrecked people. There was Victor, his pregnant wife Josepha, and their two children (3 and 7 years old). Abramovitch, 64, was a rich jewel merchant. He was the oldest member in the group and had no relatives or friends. He had a collection of golden rings, diamonds and other precious jewels with him. John, Kate, Leo and Alfred were four young friends, who were strong, healthy and very skilful. They had lived together in an alternative community house and had refurbished the house they lived in themselves.*

*Maria, a lawyer working part-time at a university, could only walk very slowly due to problems with her left leg and hip (the result of an accident). She was accompanied by Max, her assistant at university, as they were travelling to the US in order to give a lecture at a conference and to discuss the publication of a book with a publisher. Both were specialists in penal law, but not gifted with their hands. Last but not least, there was Marko and his girlfriend Vicky, both members of the boat crew who, at the last moment, had taken as much as they could carry from the ship's storeroom: cans of food, biscuits, oil and some cooking pans. All those shipwrecked had some money with them, but the boatswain Marko carried a large amount, which he had stolen from an apartment in the last port they had called at.*

*On the island there was a small, old shed on the hillside quite near the sea. It had only one room that could serve as a primitive shelter for two or three people."*

The teacher then explains that each pair needs to decide who, in their opinion, should be allowed to use the shelter. The teacher reads out the following statements and asks the students to discuss in pairs which statement(s) they agree with, why and whether they have another solution:

- A. The pregnant woman and the children.
- B. The four young friends, who are the only ones able to refurbish it.
- C. The jewel merchant, who pays for it (therefore allowing the others to buy some food).
- D. The boatswain and his girlfriend, on condition that they share their food with the rest of the people.
- E. The lawyer, who is able to act as mediator and settle quarrels among the shipwrecked people.

After reporting back, the next part of the story is handed out.

## Teacher's copy: part three

*"The shipwrecked people also had to decide what to do with the food reserves the boatswain had taken with him, and which he did not intend to share. In fact, sharing would have meant diminishing his and his girlfriend's chances of survival."*

Now the pairs are asked to consider who should receive the food from the ship's supplies. The teacher again reads the statements and asks the pairs to discuss and decide which of the statement(s) they agree with, why and whether they see another solution.

- A. The boatswain has to be allowed to keep the food for himself and his girlfriend.
- B. The food available should be distributed equally among all the shipwrecked people.
- C. The food available could be bought by the highest bidder (be it with money, goods or services).

After reporting back, the last part of the story is handed out.

## Teacher's copy: part four

In pairs, the students discuss who should ask the owner for food and how this should be done.

*“The shipwrecked people decided that the food should be shared, without any compensation. They forced Marko to hand over his provisions by appealing to his sense of moral obligation. After about a week there was no food left and the only solution was to try to get some food from the owner of the villa.”*

Then the teacher reads the following statements and asks which of the statement(s) they agree with, why and whether they see another solution.

- A. Each person should individually negotiate trade conditions with the owner (paying with money, jewels or labour). In this case, the family with children and the lawyer and her assistant, in particular, will have problems.
- B. All available resources (jewels, money) should be shared by all the people, irrespective of the original owner. The food bought this way should be distributed equally. Additional food could then be bought individually, in exchange for labour.
- C. The same as B, but everyone is expected to work to the extent he or she is able, and to share the food he or she earned in this way.
- D. The jewel merchant is allowed to buy everything the owner is ready to sell, and to “help” the others with food packages.

After reporting back, the teacher can lead a class discussion in order to help the students apply the story to the real world:

Do you recognise similar situations in our society?

- A. ... in your neighbourhood or family?
- B. ... in your country?
- C. ... on global scale?

What actual situations that you know about strike you as being unjust as far as distribution of food, water, housing, etc. is concerned?

- A. ... in your neighbourhood or family?
- B. ... in your country?
- C. ... on global scale?

Why?

At the end of this lesson, there must be a discussion about the basic concept of this unit. The teacher might decide to add an extra lesson. To start with, the teacher gives a short lecture using the basic information on equality and diversity from this unit. He/she might even prepare a handout on the different definitions. The students will then reflect on the four lessons in small groups: What have they discussed? What have they learned? Which new questions have they become aware of? They come up with suggestions on how to react to situations of inequality in their own lives.