

The Water Bearer **Lesson Plan**

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Objective

To help students understand rural community development.

Target audience

Students aged 10 to 12

Connections

Languages
Social sciences
Arts and culture

Film needed for lesson plan

- *The Water Bearer* (52 min), 2004

Summary

The lesson will enable students to grasp what development of their rural communities means. They will learn that a community has to mobilize and find joint solutions to common problems for development to take place. They will see in *The Water Bearer* how the inhabitants of villages on the Indonesian island of Flores—which include the Ngada, an ethnic tribe on the island—managed to achieve a sustainable solution to their drinking-water supply problem. They will also note that Catholics and Muslims were able to work together despite religious differences. Finally, they will realize that an essential element to development is the autonomy of the populations involved.

Start and preparatory activity: *The Water Bearer*

Approximate duration: 90 minutes

First, explain to your students that you want them to understand what is involved in the development of rural communities. *The Water Bearer* tells the story of a successful experiment on the Indonesian island of Flores, aimed at solving a problem with the inhabitants' supply of clean water. It shows the men and women who were the artisans of this success, particularly Gilles Raymond, a Quebecer whose compassion and equity guided the project.

Step 1: Before viewing the film, ask your students to say what the title *The Water Bearer* means to them. Explain the different meaning that it has for Quebecers and Indonesians.¹

Step 2: Watch the first few minutes of the film (from the beginning to 1 min 54 s), up to the point when Gilles Raymond wonders how he can help the Indonesians on the island

of Flores who do not have easy access to clean water. Ask the students to form small groups and take turns talking about how they feel about this situation.

Step 3: Put a world map up and ask your students what they know about Indonesia; ask them to find this archipelago on the map. Continue viewing the film until the point when the narrator shows the island of Flores on the map (2 min 35 s) and explains what makes it distinctive.

Step 4: Ask your students to pay close attention to images where water is present and to listen carefully to the narrator while they finish watching the film. Ask them what their first impressions are.

Step 5: Ask your students to estimate their water consumption over a one-week period, using the calculator provided for that purpose.² Ask them to estimate the time they spend on the activities mentioned and specify the frequency (daily, weekly or other).

ACTIVITY: SOS Water!

Approximate duration: two 75-minute periods

PERIOD 1: BLUE GOLD

In this period, students discover that water is not distributed equally over the planet and that access to it has to be provided through sustainable development.

Step 1: Start off with a discussion on water's accessibility and what it means to human life, using the following questions:

- Can you give examples of how water is essential to the survival of a human being and a community?
- What do you think is the distribution of water on planet?
- Why is it said that water is the blue gold of the 21st century?
- How is water distributed in your area (artesian wells, aqueduct system, etc.)? What do you know about the costs involved in the provision of water?
- How do the inhabitants of the island of Flores get their water? Is the situation the same in each village?

Step 2: Continue the discussion about the images the director used to emphasize the importance of water as a resource and to present the problems of water on Flores. Use the following questions as a guide:

- The film opens with an image of a river in Quebec followed by another where Gilles Raymond goes to get water from a village reservoir. What did the director want to show by choosing these images?
- What does the narrator's voice add to these images? To the documentary?
- What other images demonstrate that getting clean water is a veritable quest for the inhabitants of Flores?
- What images do you think best illustrate this reality? Which ones illustrate the fragile balance of water? Which ones touched you the most?

Step 3: Form small groups and ask your students to compare how they use water with how the inhabitants of Flores use it, using the following questions:

- What were you able to learn by calculating your water consumption?
- How many hours do you spend on activities requiring the use of water?
- Based on the calculations you did on your water consumption, how is it similar or different from that of an inhabitant of Flores?

With the whole class back in a group, ask some of the teams to summarize their discussions.

Step 4: Discuss with the students the reasons why Gilles Raymond says that international aid is a great lie. Finish the activity by asking them to assess the solution proposed by the Quebecer (territorial autonomy that enables the inhabitants to use their own resources to solve their water-supply problems).

PERIOD 2: CHANGING THE COURSE OF WATER

In this period, your students will see how Gilles Raymond encourages the autonomy of villages on Flores and thereby find out ways of supporting development for rural communities.

Step 1: Before starting the discussion, view with your students the passage in the film that shows how Gilles Raymond got involved in his village in Quebec, and then ask them the following questions:

- What is your definition of the word “development”?
- In your opinion, what challenges do Quebec villages have to meet so they can develop? How are these challenges similar or different from those on Flores?
- How are the development needs of a community different depending on whether it is in the city or the countryside?
- What was Gilles Raymond’s involvement in rural development in the past? What do you think he drew from this experience? Do you think this experience is applicable to other contexts?

Step 2: Ask your students to form teams to discuss how Gilles Raymond supports the villagers’ autonomy. Ask them to think about the following:

- How does Gilles Raymond explain the villagers’ apathy? What does he do to counter it?
- Which people work on solving the problem of clean water? If the person was an “important person” (an official), what was their title?
- What resources do the villagers have at their disposal to solve this problem?
- How do the local government and inhabitants work together?
- What do you think about the fact that Muslims and Christians worked together to bring water to the villages?

With the whole class, ask your students to give the results of their discussions and then view the segment which illustrates how the villagers get past their religious differences to work together (from 31 min 23 s to 45 min 19 s).

Step 3: The Ngada tribe, an ethnic group whose culture is ancestral, occupies a special place in this film. Ask your students to form teams again to discuss the following points:

- How is this tribe represented in film? Which cultural beliefs and elements are highlighted?
- How do the Ngada of the village of Bena see Gilles Raymond? What honour do they bestow on him? What does this recognition mean to Gilles?

Continue viewing from the point where Gilles is visiting the Ngada village of Bena (45 min 19 s to 50 min).

Step 4: Finish watching the film. Ask your students why the director chose the symbol of knives to end his film.

Step 5: To conclude, ask your students to comment on the sentence: "Water is more than mere water. It is a vessel that leads to the heart of men."

Recap

Suggested duration: 60 minutes

Ask your students to discuss the issues involved in the blue algae problem in Quebec lakes and find possible solutions from a sustainable-development perspective.

Reflective sharing

After the activities in this lesson plan, the students should be able to:

- Describe the difficulties that the inhabitants of Flores had to face in their villages' development, including supplying clean water.
- Say how the villages took responsibility for their own development.
- Show how the approach suggested by Gilles Raymond encouraged the rebuilding of the villages' autonomy, in a sorry state after years of dictatorship.
- Describe the winning conditions on which this autonomy is based.

Notes

1. For a long time, the expression "water bearer" or "drawer of water" (from "hewers of wood and drawers of water" in the Bible) had a meaning of submission for the Québécois. Today, it is used by members of *SOS Water COALITION Eau Secours*, a Quebec organization working for the responsible management of water.

Web site: <http://www.eausecours.org/>

Drawers of Water

<http://www.eausecours.org/anglophone/Drawers/listedesporteursdeau.htm>

In Indonesia, the expression takes on a very different meaning. Adam Novak explains the meaning in the article he wrote on this documentary in the *Alternatives* newspaper: "The water bearer is seen as the person who makes it possible for life to continue, keeping hope alive."

Source: "Le porteur d'eau," *Alternatives*, April 26, 2007 (article available in French only)

<http://www.alternatives.ca/article2867.html>

2. The Water Use Calculator is available on the Government of Canada site at the following address:

http://www.on.ec.gc.ca/reseau/waterCalculator/login_e.html

Web sites

• You will find a series of links on the Government of Canada Web site to sites containing information on water management and consumption in Canada and the world.

<http://www.environmentandresources.ca/proj-h2o/default.asp?lang=En&n=0A9E7E36-1>

Centre d'information sur l'eau (water information site in France) (French only)

<http://www.cieau.com/accueil.htm>

How does the water that we use in our home get there?

http://www.ec.gc.ca/water/en/info/pubs/primer/e_prim03.htm#a8

Daily consumption (Water Use Calculator)

http://www.on.ec.gc.ca/reseau/waterCalculator/login_e.html

Environment Canada: Water

<http://www.ec.gc.ca/education/default.asp?lang=En&n=AB816A56-1>

The Story of Water in Indonesia, CIDA site

<http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/CIDAWEB/acdicida.nsf/En/STE-320162235-T7L?OpenDocument>

Municipal water use index

http://www.ec.gc.ca/soer-ree/English/indicator_series/techs.cfm?tech_id=26&issue_id=7

Water management in Quebec

http://www.menv.gouv.qc.ca/eau/inter_en.htm

UNESCO water portal

<http://www.unesco.org/water/>

Projet MST du RÉCIT sur la consommation d'eau

MST (Mathématique, Science et Technologie) of RECIT on water consumption (French only)

<http://recitmst.qc.ca/docmst/wakka.php?wiki=SAEGaspillage>