

# POWER, PRIVILEGE, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

## SUMMARY:

Students will analyze the story of a group of Brazilian nut breakers in organizing to protect their right to harvest and care for Babassu forests. Through this case study, students will study how power and privilege can affect both individual lives as well as the environment.

## SUGGESTED AGE LEVELS:

Ages 16-19

## SUGGESTED SUBJECTS:

Social Studies, Geography, Civics, General Science, Earth and Space Science, Life Science

## TIME:

120 minutes (2 class periods)

## APPLICABLE STANDARDS:

1. Social Studies Standards through US C3 Framework:
  - a. D2.Geo.10.9-12. Evaluate how changes in the environmental and cultural characteristics of a place or region influence spatial patterns of trade and land use.
  - b. D2.Geo.11.9-12. Evaluate how economic globalization and the expanding use of scarce resources contribute to conflict and cooperation within and among countries.

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- c. D4.3.9-12. Present adaptations of arguments and explanations that feature evocative ideas and perspectives on issues and topics to reach a range of audiences and venues outside the classroom using print and oral technologies (e.g., posters, essays, letters, debates, speeches, reports, and maps) and digital technologies (e.g., Internet, social media, and digital documentary).
  - d. D4.6.9-12. Use disciplinary and interdisciplinary lenses to understand the characteristics and causes of local, regional, and global problems; instances of such problems in multiple contexts; and challenges and opportunities faced by those trying to address these problems over time and place.
2. Common Core State Standards:
    - a. English Language Arts:
      - i. CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.7: Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.
3. Social Justice:
    - a. Students will recognize that power and privilege influence relationships on interpersonal, intergroup and institutional levels and consider how they have been affected by those dynamics. (*Standard 14 in Teaching Tolerance's Social Justice standard framework*)
    - b. Students will recognize unfairness on the individual level (e.g., biased speech) and injustice at the institutional or systemic level (e.g., discrimination). (*Standard 12 in Teaching Tolerance's Social Justice standard framework*)
  4. Environmental Justice:
    - a. Students will describe historical and contemporary Environmental Justice events. (*Standard 2 in Groundwork USA's Environmental Justice Standards*)

## OBJECTIVES

1. Students will describe how social and political power can affect both the environment and individual lives.

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. How can power and privilege affect the environment?
2. How can power and privilege affect individual lives?

## MATERIALS AND SET-UP

1. Class copies of “Brazil’s Warrior Women:’ A Video Guide”: Have them ready on students’ desks (or available online)
2. Class copies of [Brazil’s Warrior Woman Educational Pack](#): Pages 10-24 (or have available to students online)
3. Enough posters/paper to distribute one per group of 3 students.
4. Optional: Pre-assign students to groups of 3

## PROTOCOL

### Day 1

1. 5:00 minutes total: Initial Question:
  - a. 2 min: Instruct students to complete number one on their video guide:
    - i. Quick-write: How can power and privilege affect the environment?
  - b. 1 min: Have students turn to each other and share what they wrote down.
  - c. 2 min: Have several students volunteer their answers to the class
2. 2:00 min: Introduce Documentary:
  - a. Explain a summary of the documentary:
    - i. Summary: The documentary is about a group of women in Brazil that have harvested freely from babassu palm for generations in order to produce bread, charcoal, oil, soap, and a livelihood for their families. The documentary details the struggle they’ve had as landless gatherers to maintain their traditions and rights to land, even against violent intimidation from farmers. Through banding together and organizing a grassroots movement, they were able to establish a “Free Babassu Law” in several states, granting protection not just to their businesses and families, but

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- to “their forests and the Amazon as a whole” (*If Not Us Then Who*).
- b. Instruct students to answer questions 2-4 during the documentary. Note for students: Some may be explicitly mentioned in the documentary; others may require inference. You will pause the film at several moments for students to record, and there will be time at the end to reflect and record more information.
  3. 10:00 min: Watch documentary.
    - a. Pause for several seconds at 2:15, 3:55, 4:45, and 6:56 (or as necessary) for students to record thoughts and answers.
      - i. Optional: Have different groups of students work on different categories in number 3, since there are so many.
  4. 3:00 min: Debrief documentary:
    - a. Give students a minute to finish writing their answers to the questions.
    - b. Ask students for their initial reactions to the movie: what did they notice about power and the environment in the movie? Whose voices and interests were heard, and when? What is the importance of Babassu production on Brazil and the world and environment?
  5. 10:00 min: Watch documentary again
    - a. Instruct students to focus on taking notes about different stakeholders this time.
  6. 3:00 min: Second debrief:
    - a. Ask students additional thoughts after watching a second time?
  7. 20:00 min: Gather Data:
    - a. Ask students to get into groups of 3 (could be pre-assigned or choice groups).
    - b. 3:00 min: Ask them to share their answers to their questions on the video guide--they should add any answers to their guide that they didn't already have.
    - c. 12:00 min: Ask students to jigsaw-read pages 10-24, during which students should add to their notes in their video guide. (Note: Several pages have images, so an even split would be: Person A: 10-16; Person B: 16-22; Person C: 22-24).
    - d. 3:00 min: Tell students to stop taking notes and share what they found with their group.

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8. 5:00 min: Quick-write (bottom of their video guides for today) - How can power and privilege affect the environment?
9. 3:00 min: Preview tomorrow's assignment.

## Day 2

1. 5:00: Explain -
  - a. Today we're going to synthesize what we've learned, and then decide how to take action.
  - b. Have students discuss in groups: How would you like to share what you've found? Video? Posting posters in public space in school? Posting posters in public space outside of school?
  - c. Vote as a class - how to share visual representations outside of school.
2. 20:00: Create graphic representation:
  - a. In their group, students should create a visual representation of how the many different powers at play affect both the environment and the lives of the nut breakers. Encourage students to get creative with what they choose to focus on--hopefully every group will approach it with a different angle.
    - i. Ideas for elements to include: the relative strength of different groups' powers, power dynamics before and after the nut breakers organized, the cyclical nature of power and its effects, specific environmental effects, etc.
3. 15:00 min: Synthesize information:
  - a. 8:00 min: Bring students back together and have them present their posters to the class (if students opted to film themselves to share, you may wish to film as they present).
4. 10:00 min: Extension Write - Pair - Share: What parallels can you draw between the babassu forest and nut breakers' situation and our own community?
  - a. 2 minutes for students to write
  - b. 2 minutes for students to share with a partner.
  - c. 6 minutes for students to discuss as a class.
5. 10:00 min: Share posters through agreed-upon medium (i.e. putting up around the school, making plans to place outside of school, filming to post on social media, etc.)

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6. Collect their video guides and assess for growth.

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## CREDIT:

Special thanks to Jeanne Wolz from [Teacher Off Duty](#) for lesson design.

## SOURCES:

Groundwork USA. 2018. Learners to Leaders: Environmental Justice Literacy Curriculum. Retrieved from Groundworks USA website: [www.groundworkusa.org](http://www.groundworkusa.org).

If Not Us Then Who? 2014. Educational Resource Pack: Brazil's Warrior Women. Retrieved from If Not Us Then Who?'s website: [www.IfNotUsThenWho.me](http://www.IfNotUsThenWho.me).

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