

Teacher's Guide**FOCUS: Problem and Solution****Lesson Overview**

Students will analyze the way the author of "Countdown to Day Zero" introduces the key problems of the water crisis in Cape Town, South Africa, and how he creates a narrative describing the city's possible solutions. Students will use the article's narrative strategy as a model for writing a persuasive essay that identifies a problem in their community and proposes ways leaders and citizens might work to address the problem.

Engage the Reader

Before students read the article, start a discussion by asking: What is the responsibility of government? When should the government have a say in the choices that individuals make?

Read the Text

Have students read the article's first paragraph aloud. Ask: What problem is Cape Town facing? (*In a month's time, Cape Town's residents may be allowed only half of the current 13 gallons of water; there's a water shortage; people have to line up for water.*) Then have students write down a question the paragraph seems to be asking (*Why are Cape Town residents lining up to fill water bottles? Why will their water supply be cut in half?*) As students read the article, have them note details that answer the question and details that tell them how Cape Town might solve the problem.

Respond to the Text (Persuasive Writing)

Challenge students to write a persuasive essay that identifies a problem affecting their school or community and proposes ways leaders might address the problem. First, have students identify the problem and answer these questions: Which members of the community are most affected by the problem, and why? How should the community's leaders address the problem? What would be the most effective way for leaders to convince people to work toward solving the problem? Will the government's solutions affect everyone fairly? Then have students write up their ideas in the form of an essay, using strategies they discovered in "Countdown to Day Zero" for making problems and solutions visible through description.

Questions for Close Reading and Discussion

- While the water will be turned off in many of Cape Town’s homes and businesses, it might stay on in poor settlements and in areas popular with tourists. Why have Cape Town’s leaders made these decisions? Who will feel the water restrictions the most? Explain. Do you think the city’s leaders are making the right decisions? Why or why not?
- The author writes, “Other regions of South Africa are helping out by donating some 2.6 billion gallons of water, but Cape Town will have to find a long-term solution to its crisis.” Would you say the author’s statement that Cape Town “will have to find a long-term solution” is an opinion or a fact? Explain. What evidence does the author provide to support the claim? Do you think donations from other regions could solve the water shortage problem? Why or why not?
- Cape Town’s mayor has said, “We can no longer ask people to stop wasting water. We must force them.” Do you think it is government’s responsibility to force people to behave in certain ways? Why or why not? In what ways can government force people to act?
- Cape Town resident Kelson da Cruz says, “I think South Africa is, for the first time, really catching up with the rest of the world. They have to change their habits. You can’t just take for granted something so precious.” How would you describe da Cruz’s point of view of Cape Town’s water crisis? Explain. How does the quote help answer the question you asked at the beginning of the article?

Standards

- Common Core State Standards: RI.6–8.1, RI.6–8.3, RI.6–8.4, RI.6–8.8
- National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: Power, Authority, and Governance

Quiz

To view quiz questions and answers, please click [here](#).

Power Words

- spigot *noun*: faucet or spout
- drought *noun*: a long period of dry weather
- regulation *noun*: a rule or order having the force of law
- allot *verb*: to assign as a share or portion
- desalinate *verb*: to remove salt from