

LET THEM EAT CAKE!



OVERVIEW

Through the cutting and distribution of a cake or other treat, students experience the inequitable distribution of resources around the world and see the interconnectedness of human economic and social activities.

KEY ISSUES/CONCEPTS

- Resource distribution
- Consumption patterns
- Environmental and structural scarcity

SUBJECT AREAS

- Social studies
- Geography
- Environmental studies
- Mathematics
- Economics

GRADE LEVEL: 5–12

INQUIRY/CRITICAL THINKING

QUESTIONS

- What are the results of unequal distribution of resources around the world?
- What feelings and behaviors result from such inequity?
- What can we do about inequity of resource distribution around the world to make it fair and just?

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- **Experience** an inequitable distribution of resources.
- **Consider, write about,** and **discuss** the connection of resource distribution to hunger issues, and the underlying connections to human economical, environmental, and social activities.

NATIONAL STANDARDS CONSISTENCY

- NCSS: 2, 3, 7, 9
- NSES: A, C, F
- NGS: 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 14, 18

TIME REQUIRED: 1 hour

MATERIALS

- A delicious cake, pie, or other baked item that can be cut into wedges
- Plates, napkins, and forks, 1 per student
- Spatula (or knife) to cut and serve the cake
- Overhead *Sharing the Cake Divided by World Population*
- Overhead *Sharing the Cake Divided by Per Capita GNI in PPP*

PREPARATION

1. Buy or make a cake or other baked item.
2. As a reference, read the chapters titled “Tracking the Trends” from our publication *Population, Poverty, Consumption, and the Environment*, and/or “Tracking the Trends: A Look at Key Indicators” from *Population: Issues, Impacts, and Solutions*.

ACTIVITY

1. Show the cake to the class and explain that you have brought it for them to share. (You might set the cake out in front of the class a while before you start the activity to pique the students’ interest.)
2. Ask the class if you should invite the class next door to join you in eating the cake. If the students say no, ask them why not. Explain that this represents the concept of environmental scarcity, in which there is just not enough of a resource for everyone who wants or needs it. In this case, if the class next door came over, there would be less cake per person.
3. Tell them that instead of inviting over the class next door, you will divide the cake for this class to share. Ask them to imagine that they represent all the people on the planet. Put up the overhead *Sharing the Cake—Divid-*

For a class of 30 form groups of	For a class of 20 form groups of	Representing	% of Earth's Population
4	3	Africa	13%
2	1	U.S. & Canada	5%
3	2	Latin America	9%
4	2	Europe	12%
17	12	Asia	61%

ed by *World Population*, showing how the cake would be cut if it were divided based on population. Physically separate the class into the groups as indicated in the table above.

- Ask each region how they feel about this distribution. (This distribution equally divides the cake among each region and represents the “fairest” distribution.)
- Tell the class that instead of dividing it by population, you will divide the cake to represent how resources are *actually* distributed in the world, based on per capita Gross National Income (GNI) adjusted for purchasing power parity (PPP). Put up the overhead *Sharing the Cake—Divided by Per Capita GNI in PPP*.
- Cut the cake into five unequal pieces, as indicated on the overhead, and distribute the pieces to each “region.” Be sure to hold up each piece so the class can see how much each region will get.
- Ask each region how they feel about their share of the cake. Ask Asia and Africa how they are going to divide the cake among their population. Will they try to divide their very small piece equally among the group or will one or two people decide to eat all of it? (Some students will likely begin eating the cake, while others may get agitated. Allow some stress to develop.)
- Ask each region what they are going to do about the situation. Some may choose to migrate to U.S./Canada and take their cake. You might see discrimination (only some people can have the cake), conflict (fighting over the cake), or “brain-drain” (only our “friends”—those with professional degrees or education—from another region can come over and share our piece of the cake). Make sure there is enough time for everyone to experience the feeling of having very little or of having more than everyone else.

REFLECTION

- Have the students do a free-write about the activity. Give them the following prompts: “How did it feel when you saw how much other groups got? How did you divide the cake within your group? Did you do anything to get more cake, or give any away?” Begin a discussion by asking the students to read or summarize some of their free-writes.
- Use the following prompts to lead a discussion of the causes of unequal distribution in the world:
 - How does this game relate to the real world?
 - How would this have been different if they were really hungry and hadn’t eaten much, or anything, for a couple of days?
 - What are real examples of people trying to “get more cake”? Point out that there is also unequal distribution within countries, and brainstorm ten cases of unequal distribution in your community, state, or country.
 - How could a comfortable and fulfilling lifestyle be provided for all the world’s people? If this does not seem possible, what are some of the potential consequences of continued and increasing inequity between individuals and nations?
 - What are some of the ethical, social, and security implications of this inequity? Do you see examples of that occurring today? If so, what consequences are evident, and where? What underlies them?
- Discuss the differences between emergency solutions and structural solutions (food aid vs. job creation).
- Have the students brainstorm ways they could personally address the inequitable distribution of resources. Examples include: reduce, reuse, and recycle resources; buy energy-efficient and sustainable products; volunteer at nonprofit organizations working toward social justice; and talk about this issue with friends and family.

CLASS PROJECTS/ACTION IDEAS

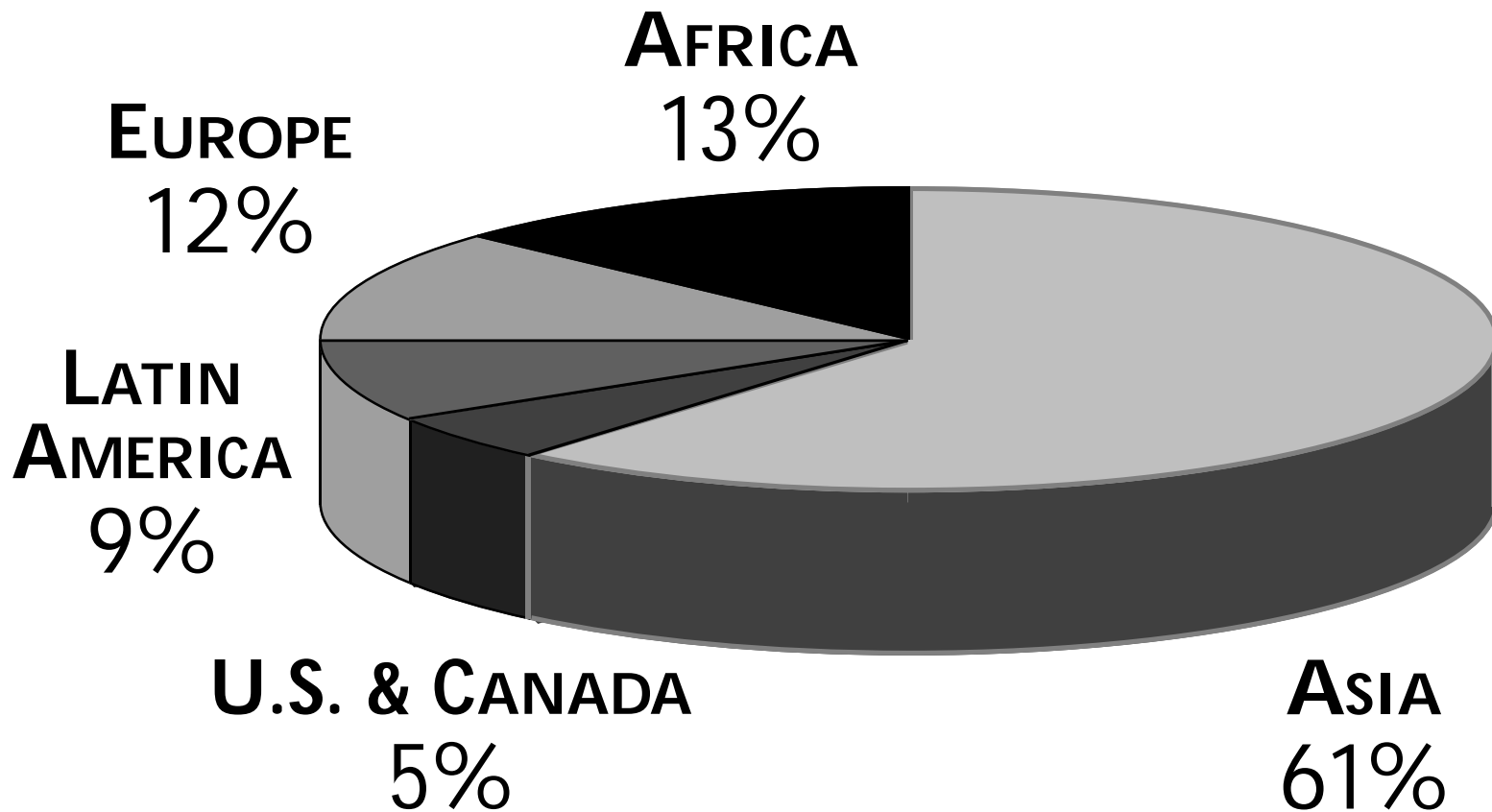
- Organize a “Hunger Banquet” in which a whole meal is served in proportion to the world’s food distribution. A Hunger Banquet can be done just in your class (for lunch one day), with parents, or as a school/community event. The Hunger Banquet is a project of Oxfam America. A complete manual on how to run a Hunger Banquet can be found at www.oxfamamerica.org.
- Visit our Creative Action website at www.creativeaction.org/create.html and click on the “help end poverty,” “end world hunger,” and “reduce consumption” links to learn more about poverty, hunger, consumption patterns around the world, and action projects to help solve global issues.
- Do a Heifer Project International Service Learning Project in which students raise

money to buy farm animals for poor families to help them become more self-sufficient. For a detailed description of this and other service learning projects, visit our Service Learning website at www.stickyteaching.org.



SHARING THE CAKE

DIVIDED BY WORLD POPULATION

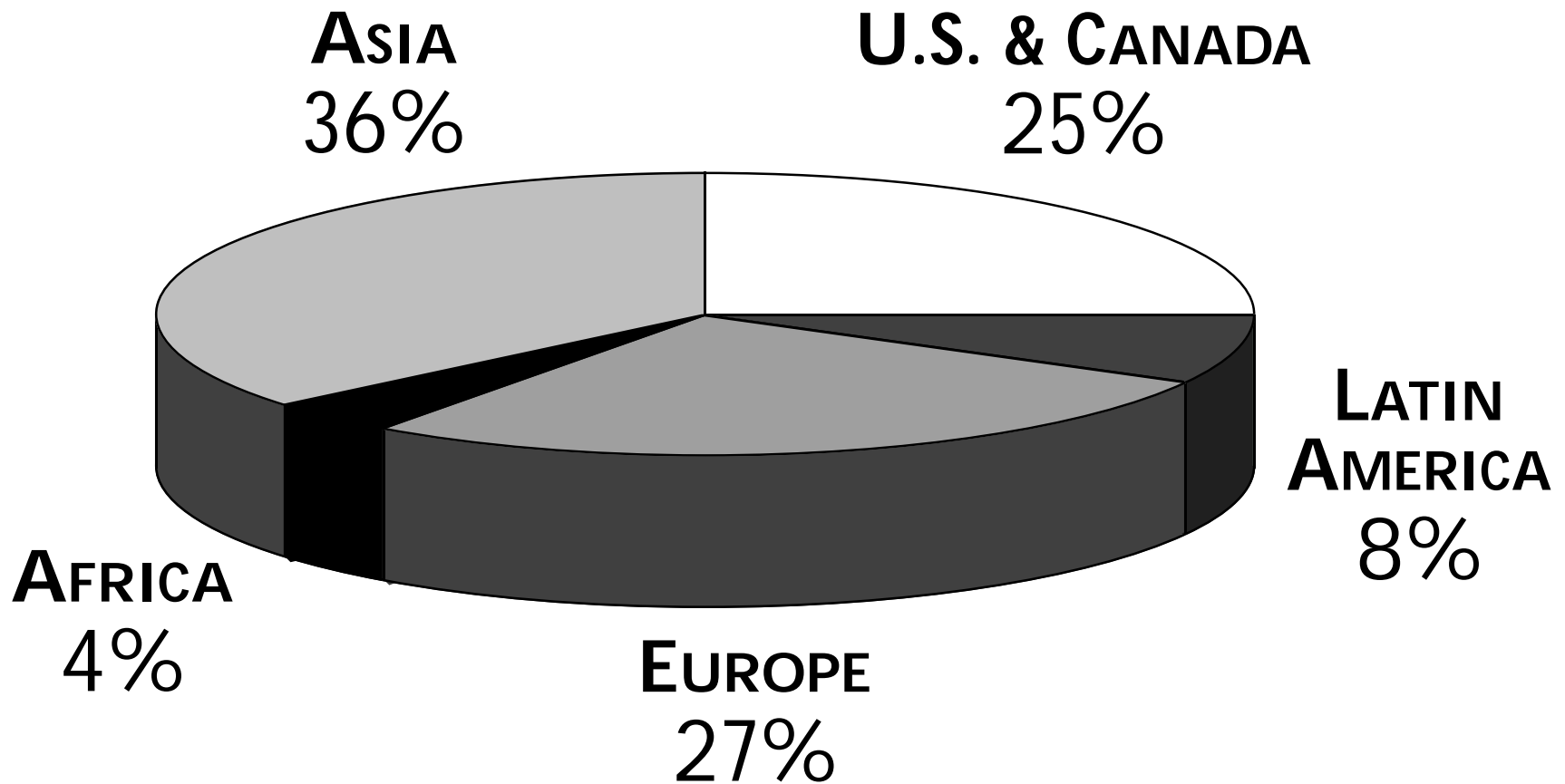


DATA FROM 2001 WORLD POPULATION DATA SHEET OF THE POPULATION REFERENCE BUREAU



SHARING THE CAKE

DIVIDED BY PER CAPITA GROSS NATIONAL INCOME, PURCHASING POWER PARITY ADJUSTED



DATA FROM 2001 WORLD POPULATION DATA SHEET OF THE POPULATION REFERENCE BUREAU

