

Unit Rationale

In the past century or so, our world has become a vastly different place. Advancement and innovations in medicine and technology have allowed us to live longer than ever before, be more connected than ever before, and develop technologies that never seemed imaginable. Yet all of these innovations have brought on all kinds of problems: pollution, global warming, extinction of animals, bloody disputes over resources and territories, and all the while our population is growing rapidly. At the dawn of hitting the 7 billion mark, we must ask ourselves, do we have enough land and resources to sustain our population in the years to come? Unfortunately, many students are unaware of these issues, even though they will be the ones solving the problems tomorrow. In this unit, I want to raise awareness of population dynamics around the globe in order to begin equipping students with the tools they need to know how to be responsible, aware citizens in the future. I want them to have a fundamental understanding of the consequences the earth and society will suffer if the population keeps growing and if we continue to use resources in unsustainable ways, and start thinking of solutions to these problems. By focusing on areas such as China, India and the countries of Africa, we will examine population growth through looking at population pyramids and choropleth maps.

Since these issues seem huge and out of the focus of a 7th grader, I want to connect them to the content with activities like measuring their ecological footprint and participating in the village of 100 activity. I want students to be aware of their role in the world, as Americans, as citizens of Canby and how their actions will affect the world. Through measuring their footprint, they will become aware of their impact on an earth with a finite amount of resources. This way they can connect *themselves* to the greater problem of population growth and an over dependence on limited resources. I want students to

understand that the issues they are learning about in this unit will be the issues that affect them tomorrow, and that they have the power to do something. Think global, act local.

The geography standards in the 7th grade focus heavily on analyzing, interpreting, collecting data and creating maps: “7.8. Use and evaluate maps, graphs, charts, models, and databases to analyze geographic distributions in the Eastern Hemisphere. 7.9. Collect and analyze data to make geographic inferences and predictions regarding the Eastern Hemisphere. 7.10. Interpret maps and other geographic tools to find patterns in human and physical systems in the Eastern Hemisphere.” Maps are an incredible tool for understanding spatial data and human patterns. In this unit, the students will collect data and create maps and charts in order to analyze data. Standard 7.12, “ Compare and analyze human characteristics (e.g., population, land use, language, and religion) of places and regions in the Eastern Hemisphere,” applies because students will be comparing population characteristics between different countries, and also comparing factors within countries (economy, religion, culture) that influence population growth or decline. Standard 7.14, “Explain how technological developments, societal decisions, and personal practices influence sustainability in the Eastern Hemisphere” will apply to the first set of lessons, where students explore the concept of sustainability and how their actions can improve sustainability. All of the standards are focused on the Eastern hemisphere, which is why the unit will focus on Africa, Asia, and possibly Europe and the Middle East.