

Asmina's Story:

A Child Orphaned by AIDS in Africa



Introduction

Asmina's Story is appropriate for grades 7 to 9 as a text for independent or guided reading on the subject of children orphaned by AIDS. The pre- and post-reading questions are meant to assess literal comprehension, as well as extend thinking and encourage inference. The extension activities are designed to help students increase their understanding of and compassion for children affected by AIDS.

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Asmina's Story, Part 1

Pre-reading Discussion

Ask the class the following questions:

1. What do you want to be when you become an adult?
2. What things do you need in order to achieve this dream?

Asmina's Story, pages 3 to 6

1. Review the following vocabulary with the class: **kibibi** (Swahili for 'eldest daughter'); **Lorna Kiplagat** (Kenyan sprinter); **mpenzi** (Swahili for 'beloved')
2. Read Asmina's Story, pages 3 to 6.



Post-reading Discussion

Have the class discuss the following questions:

1. At the beginning of the story, Asmina was a child. Now what role does she play in the family?
2. What responsibilities does she now bear?
3. How does Asmina's teacher feel about her attending school? Why does he feel this way?
4. Do you think Asmina will be able to continue her education? Why or why not?
5. Without an education, do you think Asmina will be able to achieve any of her dreams? Why or why not?

Do Extension Activity #1 with the class.

Extension Activity #1

Description:

One of the most devastating aspects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic is the growing number of children the disease has orphaned. Unlike most diseases, HIV/AIDS generally kills not just one but both parents. Children who are left behind feel the economic impact. Girls, in particular, are often forced to drop out of school to go to work, look after their siblings, and put food on the table — often while being stigmatized and ostracized by their communities because their parents have died from AIDS. In this activity, students gain an awareness of the consequences children orphaned by AIDS face when they are forced to drop out of school.

Materials Required:

- Handout #1: Photocopy the Future's Wheel (one per pair of students)

Procedure:

Divide the students into pairs. Distribute one Future's Wheel to each pair. Have the students complete the Future's Wheel by predicting what consequences Asmina will face if she is forced to drop out of school.

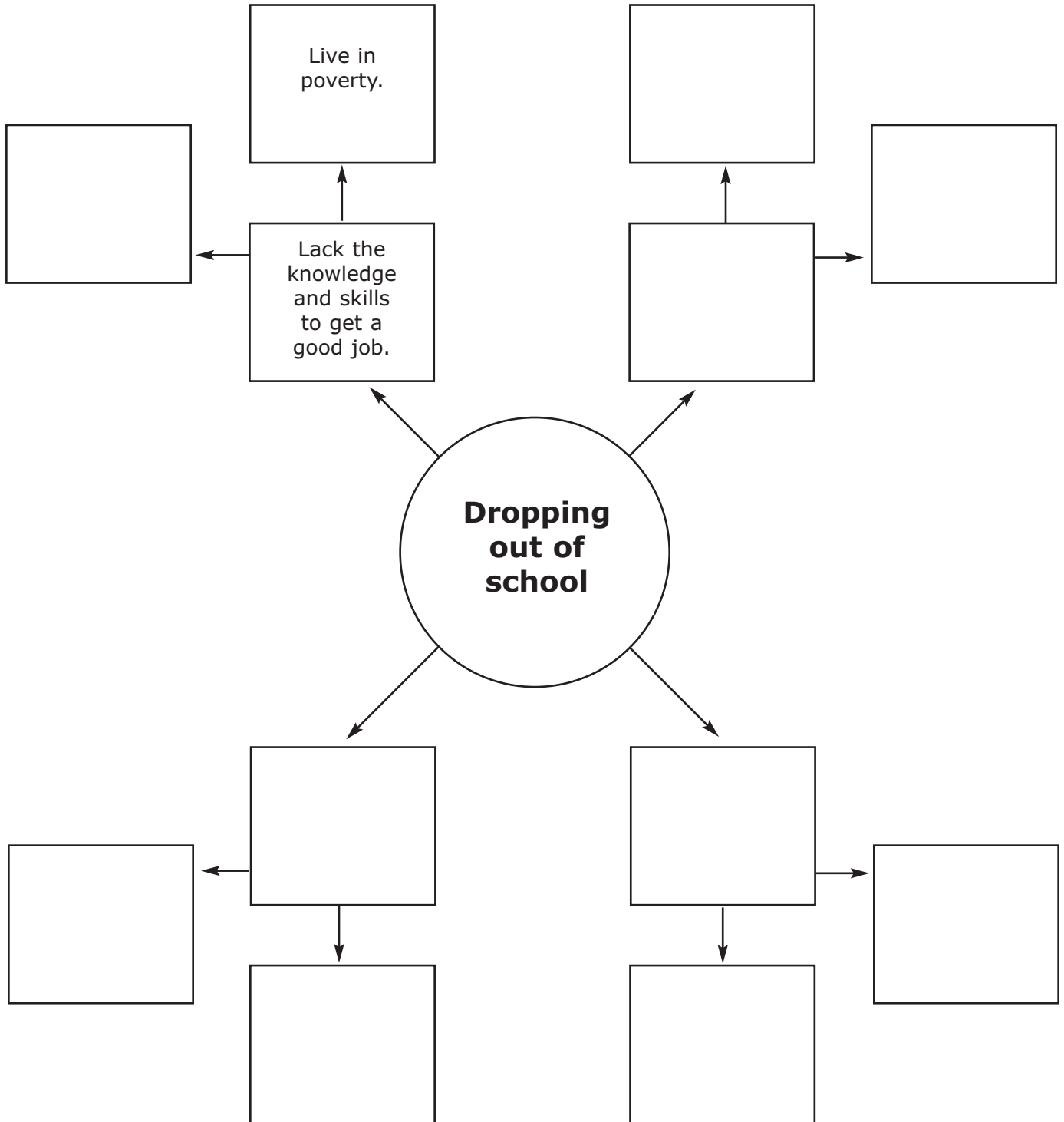
When each pair of students has completed their Future's Wheel, ask them to join another pair of students to form a group of four. Ask the students in their new groups to compare their Future's Wheels and share their ideas.

As a whole class, discuss the following question:

Without an education, what kind of future will Asima likely have in the following areas:

- Health
- Employment
- Family life
- Social life
- Political life

Future's Wheel



Asmina's Story, Part 2

Pre-reading Discussion

Review of Asmina's Story so far...

Ask the class the following questions:

1. How has Asmina's life changed since her parents died from AIDS?
2. At this point in the story, what does Asmina's future look like?
3. What do you think Asmina will do next?



Asmina's Story, pages 7 to 8

1. Review the following vocabulary with the class: **kombamwiko** (Swahili for 'cockroach')
2. Read Asmina's Story, pages 7 to 8.

Post-reading Discussion

Have the class discuss the following questions:

1. What kind of work does Asmina do? How is she treated by her employer? Why?
2. What kind of work does Asmina's co-worker, Monifa, suggest she try? Why?
3. Do you think Asmina will follow Monifa's advice? Why or why not?
4. What does Mr. Odero come to tell Asmina?
5. What choices does Asmina have left?

Do Extension Activity #2 with the class.

Extension Activity #2

Description:

Children who are orphaned by AIDS are much more at risk of becoming a victim of exploitative child labour, discrimination and sexual abuse. Unaccompanied girls are at especially high risk of sexual abuse — and because of this, they, too, are very likely to become HIV-positive. In this activity, students gain an awareness of the vulnerabilities children face after becoming orphaned by AIDS.

Materials Required:

- Handout #2: Photocopy the cartoon (one per pair of students).

Procedure:

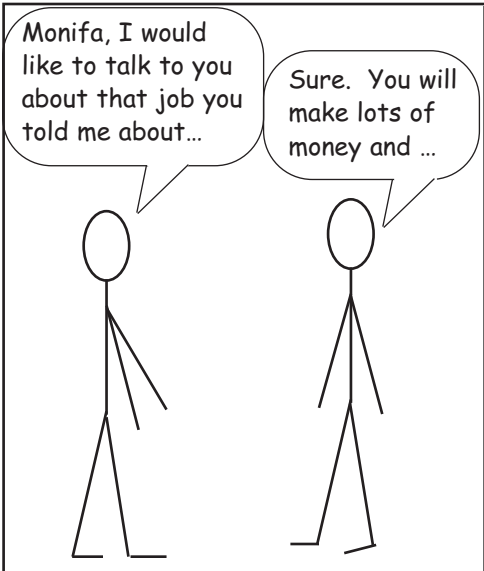
Divide the students into pairs. Distribute one cartoon to each pair. Have each pair read the first frame of the cartoon and then complete the rest of the cartoon by predicting what Asmina will do next. When each pair of students has completed their cartoon, ask them to join another pair of students to form a group of four. Ask the students in their new groups to compare their cartoons and share their ideas.

As a whole class, discuss the following questions:

- What choices did Asmina make in your cartoon?
- How did she end up?
- Would you make the same choices Asmina did, if you were in the same circumstances?
- Do you think Asmina really has any choices?

Variation: Students can be asked to write out their predictions in the form of a story or dramatization.

Cartoon

 <p>Monifa, I would like to talk to you about that job you told me about...</p> <p>Sure. You will make lots of money and ...</p>		

Asmina's Story, Part 3

Pre-reading Discussion

Review of Asmina's Story so far...

Ask the class the following questions:

1. Read the Convention on the Rights of the Child (www.unicef.org/crc). What rights has Asmina been denied since her parents died from AIDS?
2. What choices does Asmina have left?
3. What do you think Asmina will do next? Why?



Asmina's Story, pages 9 to 10

1. Read Asmina's Story, pages 9 to 10.

Post-reading Discussion

Have the class discuss the following questions:

1. What does Saada tell Asmina? Why?
2. How has UNICEF helped Saada?
3. How has UNICEF helped Asmina?
4. Imagine this story is about a boy instead of a girl. Would this story end differently? Why or why not?

Do Extension Activity #3 with the class.

Extension Activity #3

Description:

UNICEF works with governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and UN partners to care for, support, and protect children orphaned by AIDS. UNICEF works with NGOs and community groups to help ensure that families have the resources they need to care adequately for orphaned children. This support ranges from providing psychological counseling and helping parents with succession planning to job training, paying school fees, and providing basic health care. UNICEF also helps ensure that communities maintain regular contact with orphaned children heading households to make sure that they have adequate nutrition, are in school, and are safe from exploitation and abuse. In this activity, students gain an awareness of how they can help improve the lives of children orphaned by AIDS.

Materials Required:

- Handout #3: Photocopy the Evaluation Quadrant (one per pair of students).
- Handout #4: Photocopy the Responsive Actions (one per pair of students), and then cut them into strips.

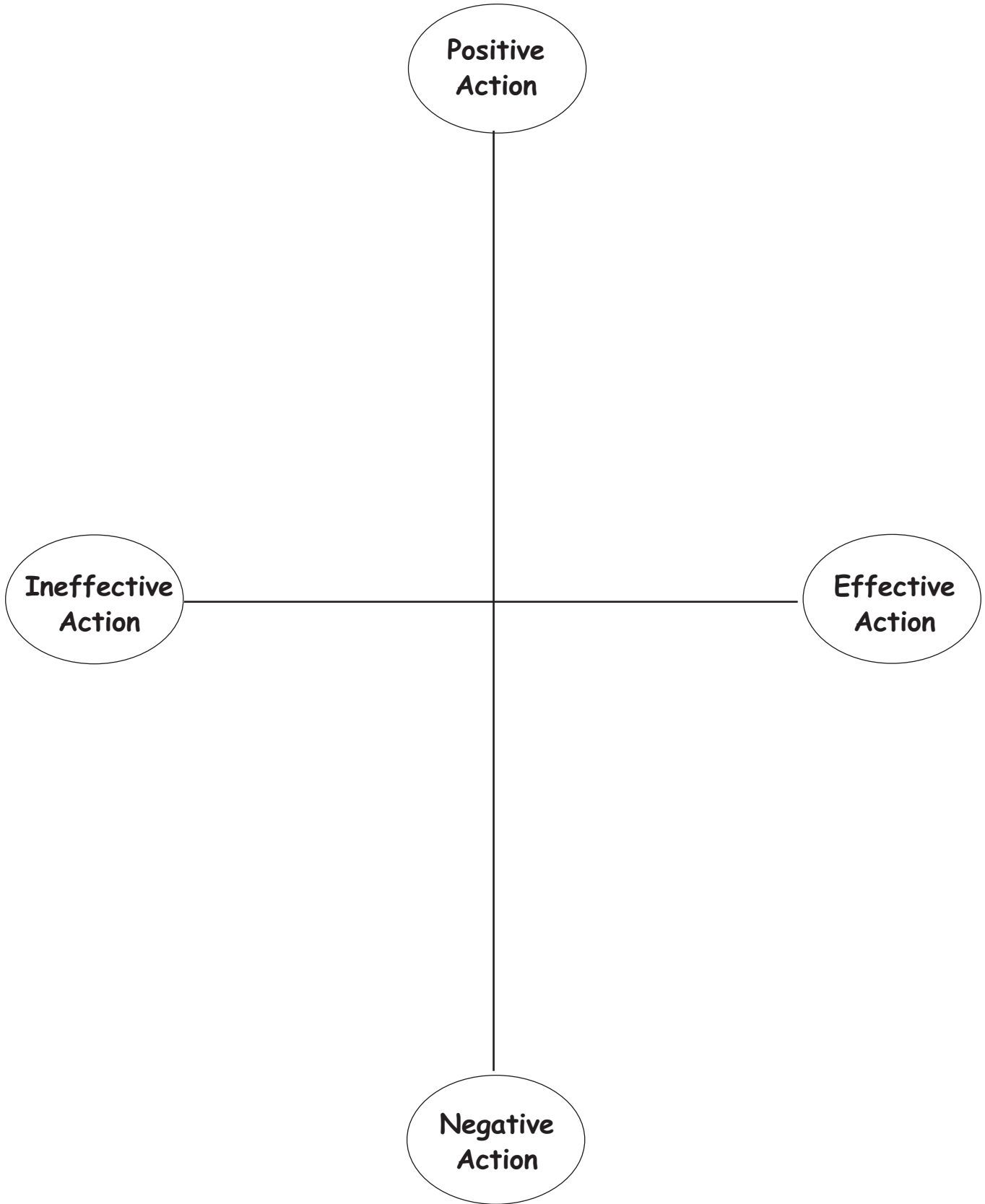
Procedure:

Divide the students into pairs. Give each pair an Evaluation Quadrant and a set of Responsive Actions. Have the pairs evaluate each Responsive Action according to the appropriateness and effectiveness of the action as a means for them to help children orphaned by AIDS. Then ask them to place each Responsive Action in the corresponding quadrant on the Evaluation Quadrant.

Once each pair has placed all the Responsive Actions into the Evaluation Quadrant, have them present their ideas to the class and discuss them.

By consensus, choose the Responsive Actions which have been deemed the most positive and effective. Then draw up plans for class engagement in support of children orphaned by AIDS.

Evaluation Quadrant



Responsive Actions



Participate in public demonstrations.



Plan to study International Development at the post-secondary level.



Get a subscription to a magazine that focuses on global events and HIV/AIDS.
Share it with your friends and family.



Donate to UNICEF, or a similar organization.



Create a UNICEF club at your school.



Join a political party.



Write a letter to a politician, newspaper or international agency.



Volunteer at UNICEF, or a similar organization.



Attend a conference, film, or lecture about global issues and HIV/AIDS.



Engage in non-violent civil disobedience.



Submit an article to the local school newspaper about HIV/AIDS.



Fundraise for UNICEF, or a similar organization.



Work on a short-term international development project focusing on HIV/AIDS.



Boycott products from a pharmaceutical company that does not
lower its prices for anti-retroviral drugs.



Facts About Orphans and Families Affected by HIV/AIDS

Globally, 14 million children under the age of 15 have lost one or both parents to AIDS. By 2010, this number is expected to exceed 25 million. Without urgent collective action, millions more children will face enormous risks in their struggle to stay alive.

THE FACTS

When parents or caregivers fall sick and die, a child's life often falls apart. With HIV and AIDS, the hardship hits well before children are orphaned. First, a parent or caregiver becomes ill and is unable to work. The entire family feels the economic impact. Children, especially girls, often must drop out of school to go to work, care for their parents, look after their siblings, and put food on the table.

On top of the psychological impact of losing parents, children who lose their parents to AIDS are often stigmatized or ostracized by their communities. These children are much more at risk of becoming a victim of violence, exploitative child labour, discrimination, or other abuses. Surviving children face malnutrition, illness, physical and psychosocial trauma, and impaired cognitive and emotional development. Unaccompanied girls are at especially high risk of sexual abuse. And because of all this, they, too, are very likely to become HIV-positive.

UNICEF'S ROLE

Building effective partnerships

UNICEF is working with governments to help them create national policies, laws, and action plans to meet the goals they have committed to. UNICEF is collaborating with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and UN partners to help communities strengthen the traditional safety nets to care for, support, and protect children orphaned or made vulnerable by the disease.

Helping parents live longer

An obvious way to prevent children from becoming orphaned is to help their parents live longer. UNICEF is part of an international effort to give people living with HIV/AIDS expanded access to treatment with anti-retroviral drugs, which can slow or halt the immune suppression caused by HIV. If parents can maintain their health, they are better able to care for their children. Although UNICEF does not have the resources to purchase the drugs, it is directly lobbying drug companies to reduce their prices or donate their drugs, and helping governments strengthen their healthcare systems so that the drugs may be administered successfully. UNICEF also promotes and supports strengthening health care systems to provide drugs for the treatment of opportunistic infections (i.e., tuberculosis, pneumonia, thrush, etc.), which often become fatal for people living with AIDS.

Supporting communities

UNICEF believes that, whenever possible, children who are orphaned should remain in their communities to be raised by their extended families because family care is far better for children and far less costly than institutionalized care. Children who grow up in families develop better social skills and are psychologically better adjusted than those who grow up in institutions because they receive more affection and attention and develop a better sense of personal identity.

This is why UNICEF is working with NGOs and community groups to help ensure that families have the resources they need to care adequately for orphaned children. This support ranges from providing psychological counseling and helping parents with succession planning to job training, paying school fees, and providing basic health care.

Finally, UNICEF helps ensure that communities maintain regular contact with orphaned children heading households to make sure that they have adequate nutrition, are in school, and are safe from exploitation and abuse.

How you can help

For information on how you and your students can participate in UNICEF's global campaign to stop HIV/AIDS, log on to www.unicef.ca or contact your nearest UNICEF office for details.



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