# Poverty in Appalachia: *The Glass Castle*

1. Question & Research Task

Part III of *The Glass Castle* takes place in Welch, a small mining town in West Virginia. In the memoir, Jeanette Walls describes the town:

"Welch was surrounded on all sides by such steep mountains that you felt like you were looking up from the bottom of a bowl. Dad said the hills around Welch were too steep for cultivating much of anything... So this part of the world was left pretty much alone until the turn of the century, when robber barons from the North laid a track into the area and brought in cheap labor to dig out the huge fields of coal" (131).

The Walls family lives in Welch in the 1970s, shortly after the Appalachia region was targeted by President Johnson's 1964 War on Poverty. However, poverty is still an issue in the Appalachia region today. Watch the 2016 video "We are the forgotten tribe." According to the video, McDowell County, where Welch is located, is "one of the poorest in America." What were some of the causes of poverty in this area in the 1970s? What are some of the causes today?
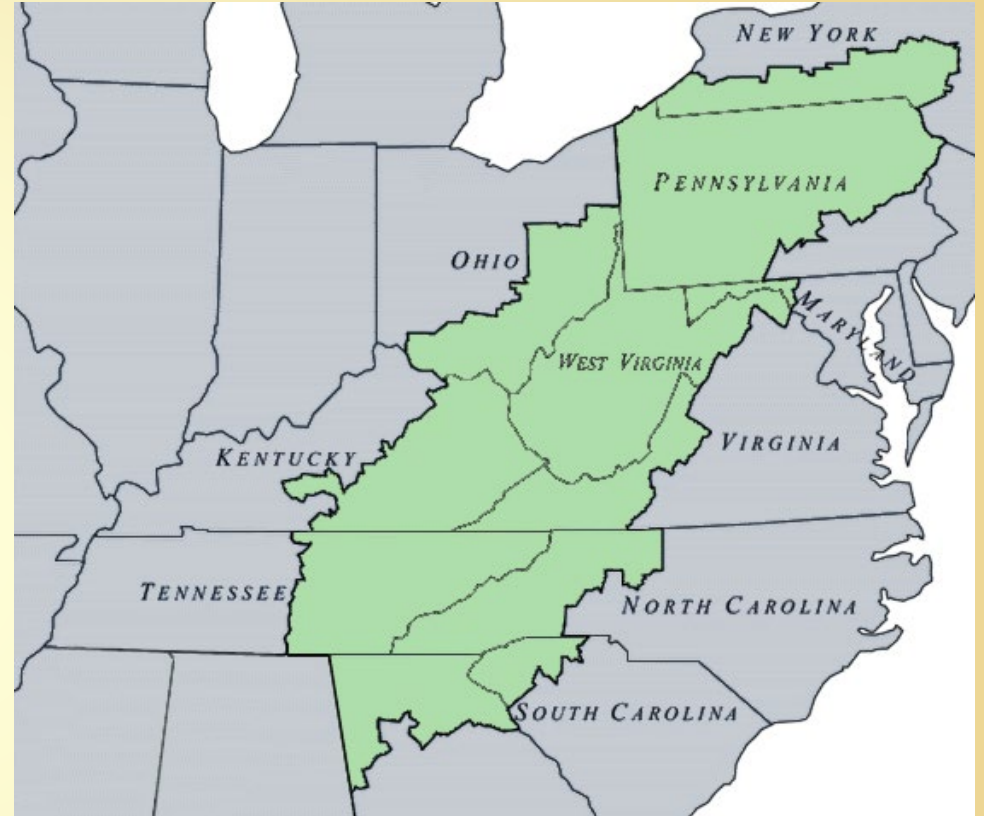
The Appalachia Region follows the Appalachian Mountains, stretching from southern New York to northern Mississippi.

Image Source: Appalachian Regional Commission

In this Slam Dunk, you will conduct brief, focused research to respond to the inquiry question:

What factors contributed to poverty in Appalachia and how can this be addressed?
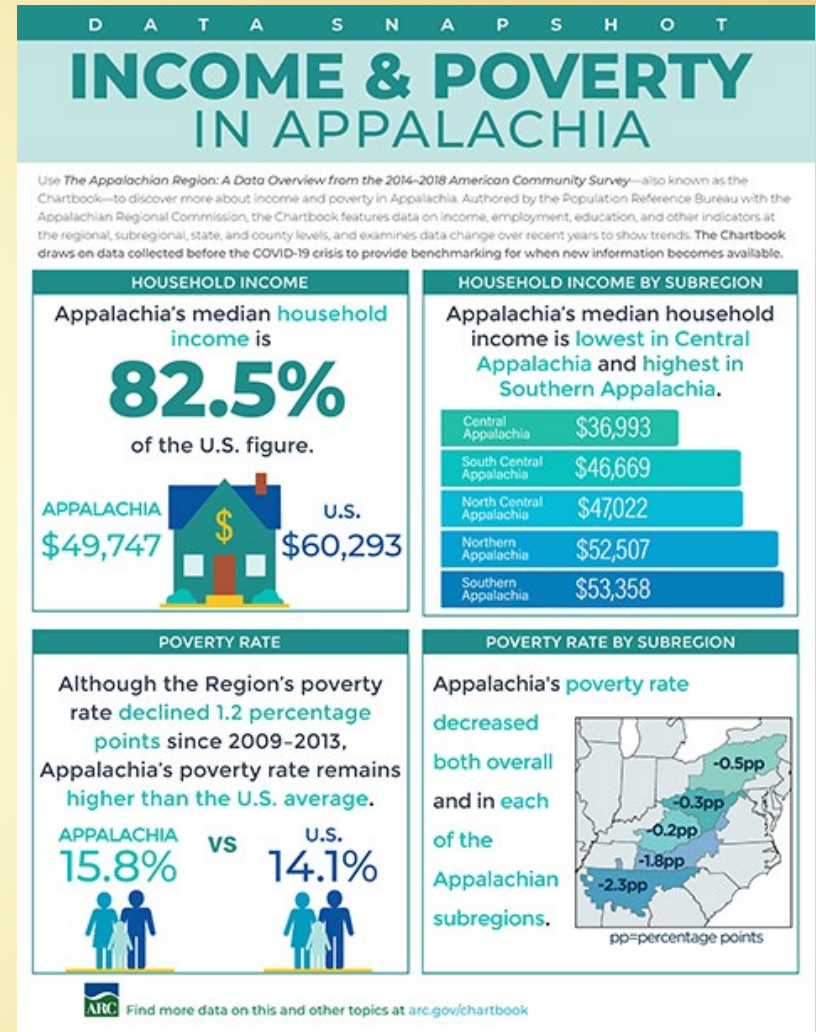
2. Information Sources

Choose several of the information sources linked here to complete the Student Activity on Slide 3.

Use the 1964 Report by the President's Appalachian Regional Commission to explore initial causes of poverty in Appalachia. You can also view portraits of poverty in Appalachia during this time; below the displayed photo, click Full Screen and use the arrows to view the photo collection (35 images).*

Explore causes and effects of persistent poverty in Appalachia today:

- Why Poverty Persists in Appalachia
- Is Poverty Fixable?
- America's Coal Country Plans for Life Beyond the Mine
- Coal's demise batters companies in Appalachia
- Appalachia's Digital Gap in Rural Areas Leaves Some Communities Behind
- Opioid Misuse in Appalachia

* It is important to note that inhabitants of the Appalachia region are diverse and more than stereotypes of poverty. To improve your understanding of the region, please read at least one of the sources linked here.

*NOTE: If you are prompted to log in to access a database or digital content links, your teacher/librarian can provide login information.

This infographic illustrates income and poverty in Appalachia. Select the image for a larger version.

Image Source: ARC.gov

3. Student Activity

Step 1: Use the information sources on Slide 2 to explore factors that have contributed to poverty in Appalachia. Take notes on three factors of your choice.

How did the combination of these factors help create poverty in the Appalachia region?

Step 2: Then either conduct your own search or use the links provided to research government and non-government programs and organizations that are attempting to alleviate the factors you have chosen. You may use NoodleTools note cards or this graphic organizer to compile your notes.

- Revitalizing Appalachia
- Imagining a Post-Coal Appalachia
- Appalachia Already Has a Plan to Get Past Coal
- Appalachian Outreach, Inc.
- Appalachia Service Project
- Appalachian Community Fund
- Why West Virginians in coal country are turning to beekeeping
- EPA Establishes Plan on Climate Friendly to Coal
- Trump power plan keeps coal stoked
- In Coal Country, a Promise of Computer Careers Dissolves in Dust

REBUILDING APPALACHIA FROM THE GROUND UP

visit **coalfield-development.org** to find out more

03:09   vimeo

This video by coal-field development explains their programs to help Appalachian people and places with "challenging moments of economic transition."

Image Source: Coalfield-development

*NOTE: If you are prompted to log in to access a database or digital content links, your teacher/librarian can provide login information.

4. Assessment Activity

What factors contributed to poverty in Appalachia and how can this be addressed?

Your teacher or librarian will show you the video "How to Write a Mission Statement for Your Nonprofit."

For your assessment, imagine a non-profit organization that could address at least one factor causing poverty in the Appalachia region OR in your own community. Create a name and mission statement for your organization. Select a picture (be sure to either create your own or use copyright friendly/fair use images) to represent your organization. Refer to these success criteria as you work.

You will post your title, mission statement, picture, and a brief explanation of your choice in the Media Album created by your teacher on Schoology.

Be prepared to discuss your non-profit organization with the class.

Poverty is not a problem with an easy solution. What is your vision to help address factors that cause poverty?

Image Source: Pixaby.com

5. Enrichment Activities

Click on the picture to watch the preview for "The Meaning of Vanlife." How do the life philosophies of van life compare to the philosophies of the Walls family?

Image Source: Vimeo

"Mom and Dad… had options. They could move back to West Virginia or Phoenix. Mom could work. And she was not destitute… There was the two-carat diamond ring… she still owned property in Phoenix. And she had the land in Texas, the source of her oil-lease royalties" (258).

When Rose Mary and Rex Walls come to New York City, they choose to live homeless, despite having many other financial opportunities. Why do you think they do this? How does this represent their personal beliefs?

Examine the stories below about people who <u>choose</u> to live outside of traditional housing situations. Then in a well-developed paragraph, explain how these modern philosophies relate to those of Jeanette Walls' parents.

- #VANLIFE
- Homeless by Choice: How to Live for Free in America
- Going off the grid: why more people are choosing to live life unplugged

6. Teacher Resources

Learning Standards Alignment

Content Learning Standards

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy

Reading: 1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Writing: 7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2
Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.7
Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.8
Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.

AASL Standards Framework for Learners Inquire: Build new knowledge by inquiring, thinking critically, identifying problems, and developing strategies for solving problems.
  Think: Learners display curiosity and initiative by:
    I.A.2 Recalling prior and background knowledge as context for new meaning.
  Create: Learners engage with new knowledge by following a process that includes:
    I.B.1 Using evidence to investigate questions. I.B.3 Generating products that illustrate learning.
  Share: Learners adapt, communicate, and exchange learning products with others in a cycle that includes:
    I.C.1 Interacting with content presented by others.
  Grow: Learners participate in an ongoing inquiry-based process by:
    I.D.2 Engaging in sustained inquiry.

English Grade 12: Unit 1

Objective: Students will analyze information from multiple sources in order to evaluate factors that contributed to poverty in Appalachia and develop possible solutions.

Time Frame: 1-2 90 minute class periods

Differentiation strategies for this lesson:

- Have students use learning supports provided in any BCPS Digital Content in the Apps Portal included in this lesson.
- Refer to Digital Content Snapshot/Support pages on BCPS Innovation Hub if needed.

Notes to the teacher:

- Collaborate with your school library media specialist to plan and implement this lesson.
- For the discussion on Slide 1, you may also want to consider the description of hard life in Welch on p.164.
- If this Slam Dunk Lesson includes links to YouTube videos, the teacher/librarian may screen videos for the class.