

Civic Minds

Date: Friday, March 24, 2017

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Article Title: Who's happy: Norway tops list, U.S. falls

Section: MAIN, A2

Learning Objectives

- ✓ Students will examine factors that influence happiness
- ✓ Students will learn the rankings of happiest and unhappiest countries in the world
- ✓ Students will think about their own personal happiness

CCSS Standards

Social Studies EALR 1: Civics

The student understands and applies knowledge of government, law, politics, and the nation's fundamental documents to make decisions about local, national, and international issues and to demonstrate thoughtful, participatory citizenship.

Social Studies EALR 3: Geography

Understands the cultural universals of place, time, family life, economics, communication, arts, recreation, food, clothing, shelter, transportation, government, and education.

Social Studies EALR 4: History

- Analyzes the motives and interests behind an interpretation of a recent event.

Social Studies EALR 5: Social Studies

- Analyzes consequences of positions on an issue or event.
- Analyzes the short-term and long-term implications of decisions affecting the global community.

Vocabulary

Look up the definition for ***deteriorate***. Please write the definition and create a new sentence, using your own words.

Study co-author and economist Jeffrey Sachs of Columbia University said in a phone interview from Oslo that the sense of community, so strong in Norway, is ***deteriorating*** in the United States.

Deteriorate definition:

New Sentence:

Civic Minds Activity: Take a moment to review today's print replica of *The Seattle Times*. Can you find a story that stands out to you regarding a global issue or someone that was inspired to help others?

Pre-Reading Questions



- What do you see in this picture?
- What are the feelings/emotions in this photo?
- What country do you think they're from?
- What do you think the article will be about?

Comprehension Questions:

1. A new report shows Norway is the happiest country on Earth.
2. A new report shows Norway is the happiest country on Earth. What other two claims did the report make?
3. What makes Norway and other northern European countries top the happiness list?
4. The United States placed _____ in the latest ranking.
5. What are the top 5 happy countries in the world, according to this study?
6. What are the lowest 5 countries on the happiness list?
7. What are the rankings based on?
8. While most countries were either getting happier or at least treading water, America's happiness score dropped _____ percent over the past decade.
9. Study co-author and economist Jeffrey Sachs of Columbia University said in a phone interview from Oslo that the sense of community, so strong in Norway, is _____ in the United States.
10. Still, you have to have _____ to be happy, and it is no coincidence that Norway is one of the richest nations in the world. It's also why most of the bottom countries are in desperate poverty. But at a certain point extra money doesn't buy extra happiness, Helliwell and others said.

Class Discussion Questions or Journal/Essay Prompts:

- Did the study surprise you in any way?
- Were you surprised with The United States rankings? Why or why not?
- What makes you happy?
- Are you happy now?
- Do you have strong ties to other people? Friends and family? The report states relationships are key to happiness. Do you agree? Why or why not?

The United States was 14th in the latest ranking, down from No. 13 last year, and over the years Americans steadily have been rating themselves less happy.

“It’s the human things that matter. If the riches make it harder to have frequent and trustworthy relationships between people, is it worth it?” asked John Helliwell, the lead author of the report and an economist at the University of British Columbia in Canada (ranked No. 7). “The material can stand in the way of the human.”

Study co-author and economist Jeffrey Sachs of Columbia University said in a phone interview from Oslo that the sense of community, so strong in Norway, is deteriorating in the United States.

- Why do you think the United States, overall, is less happy than other countries?
- What do you think the contributing factors are?

Please give scores from 1 to 10 on the following questions (these are the same questions in the study):

- How much social support do you feel you have if something goes wrong? _____
- Your freedom to make your own life choices? _____
- Your sense of how corrupt our society is? _____
- How generous are you? _____

“We’re becoming more and more mean-spirited. And our government is becoming more and more corrupt. And inequality is rising,” Sachs said, citing research and analysis he conducted on America’s declining happiness for the report. “It’s a long-term trend and conditions are getting worse.”

- Do you agree or disagree with the above statement? Are these the things bringing unhappiness to our country? Why or why not?

Civic Minds in The Seattle Times is posted to the Web on Friday. Please share the NIE program with other teachers. To sign-up for the print replica version of the newspaper please call 206/652-6290 or toll-free at 1-888/775-2655.

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