

Under the Big Tree

Teaching Resources

About the Book:

Under the Big Tree is the first book written for a general audience about neglected tropical diseases (NTDs). It aims to explain these diseases and their complications, and to raise awareness for the growing movement to bring an end to NTDs. The book is written in the first-person and relies on personal history, research, and interviews with many--though not all--of the heroes working to bring an end to the suffering caused by NTDs.

About the Guide:

This guide offers **questions** for each chapter, **prompts** for a deeper dive into a specific subject, and **suggestions** for reading of primary sources. **Videos** about NTDs can be found through Google and YouTube, and on the websites of the END Fund, Sightsavers, The Carter Center, the Rockefeller Foundation, and others.

Chapter 1: Crisis and Collaboration

1. What is a coup d'état? Why do you think humanitarian aid is suspended and international sanctions are imposed followed coups?
2. Why do you think “disasters can be more compelling for fundraising”? Research and compare fundraising statistics of natural and man-made disasters v. long-term, non-emergency fundraising.

3. Agler sees an opportunity to “show value” of the END Fund. When have you had to “show value”?
4. What is the meaning of the expression “walk the walk”? Give some examples from your life of “walk the walk” and “talk the talk.”
5. One hundred people and organizations turned Agler down. Describe a time when you have worked hard for something despite a lot of rejection.
6. At the end of chapter 1, a mass drug administration (MDA) heralds the continuation of Mali’s NTD program.
 - a. How are the treatment and prevention of diseases handled in your community?
 - b. What does the griot do? Who performs these responsibilities in your community?
7. Define control, elimination, and eradication in terms of public health.
8. Look on the WHO website for current elimination milestones for LF, river blindness, and trachoma. Compare this information to the list in the footnote in chapter 1.
9. Research the story of smallpox eradication.
10. Research evidence of NTDs in ancient times.

Chapter 2: Modern Approaches to Ancient Diseases

1. What environmental and behavioral factors contribute to the spread of trachoma?
2. What is the source of the water that you use for bathing, drinking and cooking?
3. For 1 week, write down every time you use or consume water. Compare with others.
How would this change if you had to walk two miles every time you needed water?
4. List the steps Morocco took to eliminate trachoma as a public health problem.

5. Susan wears wraps with illustrations to educate people about trachoma. How are people in your community taught about various diseases?
6. What are the reasons people avoid TT surgery?
7. Helen Bokea shares the story about Joyce, who endures a difficult journey, twice, so that she can have TT surgery to restore her eyesight. Who are some people that you've known who have undertaken hard journeys or made great sacrifices for their health or the health of someone else?
8. Look at the Global Trachoma Mapping Project website.
9. Research the role of trachoma in immigration in the US in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. What other "tropes of exclusion" have been used to deny entry to immigrants?

Chapter 3: Big Consequences from Small Things

1. Lady Jean Wilson suggested calling onchocerciasis "river blindness." What difference do you think that name-change made for raising awareness of the disease?
2. Who was Robert McNamara? Do you think his experiences prior to becoming president of the World Bank influenced his decision to fight river blindness?
3. Watch the video of William C. Campbell's Nobel lecture. Why do you think Dr. Campbell says he is the "representative" of the people who worked on ivermectin? In what ways did the other people contribute to the drug's discovery and creation?
4. List the steps of how Community Directed Treatment with Ivermectin (CDTI) works. Why do you think this method has been so effective?

5. Create a timeline of ivermectin, starting with Dr. Satoshi Omura collecting a soil sample in Japan to present day milestones of eliminating river blindness.
6. What are the ways in which the ivermectin story is a story of innovation?
7. The title of this chapter is “Big Consequences from Small Things.” What are some big consequences that come from small things--with NTDs and elsewhere?

Chapter 4: Empowerment and Humility

1. What is stigma?
 - a. Why would there be a stigma with respect to NTDs such as LF?
 - b. What are the consequences of stigma?
 - c. What are stigmas in the society in which you live? How could these stigmas be dismantled?
2. What are some of the unanswered medical questions regarding LF?
3. What does morbidity mean? What is morbidity management?
4. How did Dr. Gerusa Dreyer change the way people with LF received care? What resistance did Dr. Dreyer encounter when she first presented her ideas to the LF medical community? What do you think explains this resistance?
5. Dr. Mwele Malecela says that “when you had a minister of health kneeling to wash these people’s feet, it was very powerful.” Why do you think this was very powerful?
6. List and describe the ways in which Dr. Malecela built a strong Tanzanian team.
7. Dr. Malecela recounts turning down large amounts of money so that her NGO could remain true to its values. What impact do you think that decision had on the organization?

Describe a time when you or someone you know turned down money, or something valuable, in order to keep your integrity.

8. The title of the chapter is “Empowerment and Humility.” Define these terms. How do you think empowerment and humility apply to the people who are profiled in this chapter?

Chapter 5: Worms, Maps, and Money

1. “Soil-transmitted helminths” (STH) refers to three parasitic worms: hookworm, roundworm, and whipworm. Describe the worms, transmission cycle, pathology, treatment, and prevention of each of these worms.
2. Read Norman Stoll’s lecture “This Wormy World” (which can be found online).
3. List the ways in which the Rockefeller Sanitary Commission worked to “eradicate” hookworm. What finally contributed to the end of hookworm in the American South? Why has there been a resurgence of hookworm in parts of the South?
4. Why are schools an effective platform for deworming?
5. What is the economic argument for deworming schoolchildren?
6. What does “open access” mean? What can be open access?
7. The philosophy behind Effective Altruism, GiveWell, and the Copenhagen Consensus is that giving money to a good cause is not enough: money should be given in a way that maximizes its effect. Do you agree with this, or do you think that the act of giving is enough, regardless of how the donation is spent?
8. Analyze brochures and/or websites for any three charities.

- a. How is the organization trying to capture your attention?
 - b. What pictures do they use?
 - c. How do they describe their mission and their work?
 - d. What kind of data do they provide?
 - e. Would you give them money? Why or why not?
9. How is treating NTDs a “best buy” for global health?

Chapter 6: A New Normal

1. Many people accept symptoms of NTDs, such as hematuria, as normal. Why does this happen?
2. Is there something in your life that you accepted as normal, only to realize later that it was not normal for everyone?
3. In some communities, hematuria in teenage men is regarded as “male menstruation.” What are other examples of myths that have evolved to explain medical mysteries?
4. Research the ways in which schistosomiasis has played a role in ancient and more recent military campaigns.
5. Examine and compare the link between politics and disease prevention in the cases of China and Egypt described in this chapter.
6. How does schistosomiasis make a person more vulnerable to other diseases, such as HIV/AIDS?
7. Research Ethiopia’s efforts to combat NTDs.

Chapter 7: Stone Soup

1. List all of the players at the London Declaration.
2. Why was it revolutionary for the pharmaceutical companies to unite against NTDs?
3. What is meant by the chapter's title, "Stone Soup"? What is an example from your life of stone soup?
4. Write the timeline of NTD milestones from 2006 to the present day.
5. In 2006, a group of scientists came up with the term "neglected tropical diseases." Do you think this was a good name for these diseases? What other name might you have given them, as a group?
6. What was the cause of the crisis in Rwanda that Dr. Julie Jacobson responded to?
7. Dr. Nana-Kwadwo Biritwum asks Bill Gates to swallow several large pills, to demonstrate the importance of trust. How have (or do) you establish trust with someone you've just met? How would you earn people's trust if you were going door-to-door, distributing medicine?
8. Watch the video of the London Declaration in 2012 or more recently.
9. Read the World Development Report from 1993.

Chapter 8: Unfrozen Moment

1. What does the chapter title, "Unfrozen Moment," refer to? What are some other unfrozen moments in history?
2. What is a fund model for financing?

3. How did the four Legatum partners apply the fund model to the problem of NTDs? Why does Tope Lawani think the fund model is right for addressing NTDs in Africa?
4. Research the history of USAID. When was it created? What other programs does it fund? What is its budget as a percentage of the total US budget?
5. What is PEPFAR? How did it originate? What are some its achievements?
6. At the end of the chapter, Dr. Bill Foege says, “We don’t do anything alone as individuals. Everything we do involves a coalition of some kind.” What are some examples of coalitions in your life?
7. Read Andrew Jack’s articles on NTDs in the *Financial Times*.

Chapter 9: Strengthening Health Systems

1. Define vertical programs and horizontal systems. What are some examples of these in your life?
2. List the steps taken by the END Fund and Amani Global Works to map and treat Idjwi.
3. The kings from the north and south of Idjwi came together for the first MDA. What is the significance of this? What are other examples of estranged people or opposing organizations coming together for a medical program?
4. Dr. Jacques Sebisaho and Amani Global Works built Idjwi’s healthcare system from scratch. What have you seen or been part of that was built entirely from scratch?

Chapter 10: The Last Twenty Centimeters

1. Define “capacity” as a public health term.

2. What were the causes and results of the Zimbabwe War of Liberation?
3. Research the Higherlife Foundation. Why was it created and what is its mission?
4. Research Global Shapers. Is there a Global Shapers hub near you and, if so, what is its focus?
5. List the steps for applying to ITI.
6. The ITI application encourages people to “speak frankly.” What issues are hard for you to speak frankly about? Why? What could make it easier?

Chapter 11: Homegrown Philanthropy

1. Define ubuntu. What are examples of ubuntu in your life?
2. Define and discuss the simple, complicated, and complex arguments for ending NTDs.
3. Watch speeches by Queen Sylvia and Tsitsi Masiyiwa at the 2017 African Philanthropy Forum.
4. Read John Donne’s poem, “No Man Is an Island.”