



POWELL CENTER FOR
ECONOMIC LITERACY

Lesson Plan

WRITTEN BY Powell Center Staff

Last Modified: April 28, 2008

A Scarcity Activity

Time Required

Approximately 25 Minutes

Grade Level and Subject

Elementary School; Economics

Keystone Principle

Principle #1 – We All Make Choices

Voluntary National Content Standards in Economics

[Standard #1 - Scarcity](#)

Economic Concepts

Choice - *A selection among alternatives. Scarcity requires individuals, businesses and nations to make choices.*

Scarcity – *the condition that results because people’s wants are relatively unlimited and the resources available to satisfy those wants are relatively limited. This condition forces people to make choices.*

Trade – *exchanging goods and services with people for other goods and services or for money. When people trade voluntarily, they expect to be better off as a result.*

Overview

The activity in this lesson will help students understand the economic concept of scarcity. Students will divide into four groups, representing the four countries of Hasalot, Hassome, Hasalittle, and Needsalot. Each group will be given certain materials and assigned a task list. Each group will face a different scarcity issue. At its conclusion, students are encouraged to consider the possibility of trade with other groups to improve their scarcity issues. For the complementary simulation on the potential benefits of trade, see the 15 minute lesson, “*Trade Away Your Scarcity.*”

Materials and Handouts

- Four 10 X 13 inch envelopes (Contents Described in the Teacher Preparation section)
- Task Sheets (1 copy of each)
- 4 sheets each of red, green, blue, brown, and yellow construction paper.
- 2 pencils
- 2 markers
- 3 rulers
- 2 pairs of scissors
- 1 glue stick
- 15 paper clips

Teacher Preparation

Print off the task sheet for this simulation and divide it into the four separate tasks required. Glue each one on the front of each of the 10 X 13 envelopes; then laminate the envelopes. Put the following resources in each envelope.

- Hasalot Envelope: 1 each of red, green, blue, and brown construction paper; 1 pencil; 1 marker; 2 rulers; 1 pair of scissors; 1 glue stick
- Hassome Envelope: 1 each of red, yellow, green, and brown construction paper; 1 marker; 1 ruler; 1 pair of scissors; 8 paper clips
- Hasalittle Envelope: ½ sheet each of red, brown and green construction paper; 1 pencil; 4 paper clips
- Needsalot Envelope: ½ sheet each red, green, blue, brown, and yellow; 3 paper clips

Teaching Activity

1. Divide the class into four groups, representing the four countries described. Give each group a task sheet envelope which you have prepared (see materials). Explain that each group will need to complete the tasks listed on the task sheet, using only the resources provided in the envelope.
2. Give the students about 20 minutes to complete as many tasks as they can. Not every country will be able to complete the tasks.
3. Discuss what happened:
 - a. Was everyone able to complete the tasks? (*No.*)
 - b. What tasks were you unable to complete? Why were you unable to complete the tasks? (Answers will vary.)
 - c. How did you choose which tasks to complete? (Answers will vary.)
 - d. If your country didn't finish the tasks, how did you feel? (*Sad, angry that other countries had more than yours, frustrated.*)
 - e. Did anything happen that made the tasks more difficult to complete? (*Group not cooperating, no leadership, etc.*)
 - f. Did anyone experience scarcity? (*Yes.*)
 - g. Is there anything that can be done to help each country complete all the tasks? (*Trade, international assistance, war.*)
 - h. What activity would make all the countries happy? (*Trade.*)
4. Have the students return the resource cards to the envelope.

5. Assessment. Assign the students to write an entry in their journals, responding to one of the following questions:
- In the simulation, were any of the countries unable to complete their tasks? How did that make you feel?
 - Is there a good way to solve the problems the countries encountered?
- Answers should mention that some of the countries had resource scarcities and that trade between the countries would be the best way to help each country complete the tasks.

Task Sheets for Simulations

1 Country of Hasalot Task Sheet	3 Country of Hasalittle Task Sheet
<i>The country of Hasalot has many resources. Use these resources to complete the tasks listed below:</i>	<i>The country of Hasalittle has several different resources. Use these resources to complete the tasks listed below:</i>
FOOD: Make a four-link paper chain using four different colors.	FOOD: Make a four-link paper chain using two different colors of paper
SHELTER: Make a 6 x 9 inch shelter with windows and a door that opens and closes.	SHELTER: Make a 2 x 4 inch shelter with a door that opens and closes.
CLOTHING: Make four articles of clothing for each member of the group.	CLOTHING: Make two articles of clothing for each member of the group.
EDUCATION: Make an 8-page book using three colors of paper.	EDUCATION: Make a 4-page book using two colors of paper.
2 Country of Hassome Task Sheet	4 Country of Needsalot Task Sheet
<i>The country of Hassome has some different resources. Use these resources to complete the tasks listed below:</i>	<i>The country of Needsalot has few resources. Use these resources to complete the tasks listed below:</i>
FOOD: Make a four-link paper chain using three different colors.	FOOD: Make a four-link paper chain using one color.
SHELTER: Make a 4 x6 inch shelter with one window and a door that opens and closes.	SHELTER: Make a 2 x 2 inch shelter with a door that opens and closes.
CLOTHING: Make three articles of clothing for each member of the group.	CLOTHING: Make one article of clothing for each member of the group.
EDUCATION: Make a 6-page book using two colors of paper.	EDUCATION: Make a 2-page book using one color of paper.