



POWELL CENTER FOR
ECONOMIC LITERACY

Lesson Plan

WRITTEN BY Beth Vander Kolk
The Potter's House School
Grand Rapids, MI
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Boxes for Katje

Time Required

15 Minutes

Grade Level and Subject

Elementary; English/Children's Literature

Keystone Principles

Principle #1 – We All Make Choices

Voluntary National Content Standards in Economics

Standard #1 – [Scarcity](#)

Economic Concepts

Choice – *Not being able to have all of the goods, services, time or space that you want. Scarcity forces people to make choices.*

Cost/Benefit Analysis - *A process of examining the advantages (benefits) and disadvantages (costs) of each alternative in arriving at a decision.*

Need - *An economic good or service that is general considered required for everyday life, such as food, clothing and shelter.*

Scarcity - *The lack of enough resources to satisfy human wants. Because scarcity is ever-present, individuals face an ever-present need to make choices.*

Wants - *The goods and services people desire but are not necessary for their survival. There is a hierarchy of wants, and some wants such as education or medicine are more necessary than others.*

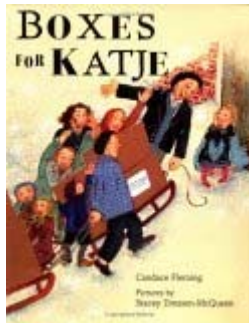
Overview

This is a true story about a family in Holland trying to survive in the harsh winter after World War II. Poverty had spread and food was scarce. One family in America began sending care packages to meet the pressing needs of this family and their neighbors. Often the boundaries between students' wants, and needs, blur. This touching story offers students an excellent opportunity to identify the true needs of a family along with some surprise extras that can be classified as wants.

Objectives

- Students will understand the difference between needs and wants.
- Students will practice framing decisions in terms of asking whether the marginal benefit outweighs the marginal cost and then proceeding appropriately.

Materials and Handouts



- *Boxes for Katje* by Candace Fleming, Melanie Kroupa Books, Farrar, Straus and Grioux, New York.
- **Handout:** Content lists of the four care packages sent to Katje

Teaching Activity

1. Teach/review the definitions above.
2. Introduce the story *Boxes for Katje* by reading the back flap called “A True Story About Boxes” to give your students an understanding of the geography and history of this story. You may want to point out the locations on a map or globe and show the date on a time line.
3. Explain to your students that we tend to define needs and wants in a relative manner. Sometimes we think we *need* those things our friends have but we do not. Much less often, we recognize needs as those things essential to our very survival. Explain how the war left the town of Olst in Holland with bridges and roads damaged and businesses destroyed. Explain that when the businesses were destroyed, many of the people no longer had jobs, so it was difficult for people to satisfy their needs and wants. The people were living on cabbages and seed potatoes and they needed to patch and repair their thin clothing because they couldn't buy new ones.
4. As you read the story have the students mentally note what was in the care packages and if the items were a need or a want for the people in the town of Olst.
5. Hand out two small cards to each student. One card will be labeled **Wants**, and the other card labeled **Needs**. Explain that you are going to go through the different items that Katje received in the care packages and that each student will get to vote to identify if the item was a want or a need.
6. Use the four handouts to indicate the contents of the four care packages that were sent to Katje. These can be distributed to the student or displayed for the entire class to view.
7. Ask the students what Katje sent back to Rosie? Was that a need or a want? How do you

- think Rosie's family felt about receiving the tulip bulbs – the specialty of the town of Olst?
8. Ask the students to think about what they would send to Katje and her family if they were the ones who knew about her situation. Ask them what they might be willing to give up in order to share with someone who has less. Have each student draw a box on each side of a white paper. Label one box **Wants** and the other side **Needs**. Have each student draw the wants they could send inside of the want box and draw some needs they could send on the need side.
 9. Why would students want to help someone less fortunate? Marginal thinking tells us that we do something when we believe the benefits of doing it outweigh the costs. Ask the students to articulate the benefits to be gained from helping others. Do they outweigh the cost?

Follow-Up Activity

Have your class plan a care package for someone – a friend of the school who has moved away or is in the hospital. There are many charitable organizations that serve desperately impoverished people throughout the world. Get involved with an organization like Operation Christmas Child (www.samaritanspurse.org), World Vision (www.WorldVision.org), or Catholic Relief Services (www.crs.org), so your class can send a care package to a child in a different country. You can brainstorm a list of items to include and categorize the items as needs or wants. You can set a budget and then ask the children to collect funds or have a small classroom business to raise money for the items.

Handout - Boxes for Katje

Package # 1		
Item	Need	Want
Soap		
Wool Socks		
Chocolate		
A letter		

Package #2		
Item	Need	Want
Four bags of sugar		
A letter		

Boxes for Katje

Package #3		
Item	Need	Want
Cans of meat		
Boxes of powdered milk		
Bags of sugar		
A letter		

Package #4		
Item	Need	Want
Coats		
Mittens		
Socks		
Shoes		
Scarves		
Hats		
Sweaters		
Soap		
Chocolate bars		
Cans of food		
A letter		