



Limited Resources

Lesson Description:

This lesson reviews a basic definition of scarcity, and then uses the *Blackbeard Learns a Lesson* video to flesh out the consequences of decision-making in a scarcity situation.

Suggested Grade Level:

2nd – 3rd

Economic Concepts:

Productive resources

Scarcity

Making choices

Voluntary National Content Standards in Economics:

Content Standard 1: Scarcity

Students will understand that productive resources are limited. Therefore, people cannot have all the goods and services they want; as a result, they must choose some things and give up others.

Content Standard 2: Decision Making

Students will understand that effective decision making requires comparing the additional costs of alternatives with the additional benefits. Many choices involve doing a little more or a little less of something: few choices are “all or nothing” decisions.

National Standards for Financial Literacy:

Standard II: Buying Goods and Services

People cannot buy or make all the goods and services they want; as a result, people choose to buy some goods and services and not buy others. People can improve their economic well-being by making informed spending decisions, which entails collecting information, planning, and budgeting.

Standard III: Saving

Saving is the part of income that people choose to set aside for future uses. People save for different reasons during the course of their lives. People make different choices about how they save and how much they save. Time, interest rates, and inflation affect the value of savings.

Jump Start National Standards in Personal Finance Education:

Spending and Saving – Standard 1:

Develop a plan for spending and saving.

Financial Decision Making – Standard 1:

Recognize the responsibilities associated with personal financial decisions.

Financial Decision Making – Standard 4:

Make criterion-based financial decisions by systematically considering alternatives and consequences.

Time Suggested:

30-45 minutes (if completed in a single teaching period)

Supplies:

- *Blackbeard Learns a Lesson* video, and means to project it
- ‘Blackbeard’s Limited Resources’ graphic organizer with writing utensil, one per student
- ‘Flip-Up Organizer’ handout with writing utensil, one per student
- Scissors, one pair per student

Classroom Procedures:

1. To begin the lesson, work with students to define scarcity. For teacher reference, an official definition is that scarcity is the condition that exists because human wants exceed the capacity of available resources to satisfy those wants. In order to be scarce, a resource must be limited in a given situation and desirable. (This video explains scarcity more fully in about three minutes, if you need additional background: <https://vimeo.com/331311542>.)
2. Explain to the class that they will be learning a new economics word: scarcity. Share that the word can mean any sort of shortage in everyday conversation, but that in economics it has a specific meaning.
3. Tell the class that for something to be “scarce,” in economic terms, it must be limited and desirable. Help students grasp the meaning of these two words using examples and a short discussion, guiding students as needed with any unfamiliar vocabulary:
 - a. “What does it mean for a resource to be desirable?” **(It means that many people want it. The resource is useful or helpful.)**
 - b. “What does it mean for a resource to be limited?” **(It means that there is not enough of it for everyone who wants it.)**
 - c. Give students some examples and non-examples of scarce resources:
 - i. Clean air and clean water are scarce, because while there is a virtually unlimited amount of air and water on earth, much of it is not clean enough for humans to use.
 - ii. Petroleum, the oil we use to make gasoline for cars and many plastics, is scarce because there is a limited supply of it on the planet, and we have no way to make more.
 - iii. Garbage is not scarce, because it is not desirable, even though there is a great deal of it and humans constantly produce more.
4. Show the class the “Blackbeard Learns a Lesson” video. As students watch, encourage them to pay attention to what the characters say about resources, and to watch for one resource that is especially limited.
5. After watching, begin a discussion about the resources on Blackbeard’s ship.
 - a. “Thinking about what you saw in the video, what resources does Blackbeard have on his ship?” **(The ship itself, sails, cannonballs, cannons, crew members and their skills, etc.)**
 - b. Continue by asking, “using what you know about pirates and sailing ships, what resources can you infer were on the ship?” If students have not yet learned “infer” in reading instruction, ask “what do you think must have been on the ship even though you couldn’t see it? Imagine a pirate ship sailing across the ocean – what must Blackbeard and his crew have had to survive?” **(Food, water, clothing, bedding, medicine.)**
6. Distribute a copy of the Blackbeard’s Limited Resources pirate ship organizer to each student. Help students record the resources they discussed – both those shown in the video and those they inferred to be there – on the ship’s sails. If students have already

learned about the types of productive resources, then they can record each type on a specific sail (natural, human, capital). If not, then any resource can go on any sail.

7. Once students have recorded their answers, help students consider which of these resources were limited/scarcely:
 - a. Ask, “which resources were easy for the pirates to keep on their ship?”
(Assuming everyone was healthy, the crew had nowhere to go, so they and their skills stayed on the ship. They probably brought a set amount of clothing and other reusable supplies, like the tools and instruments used to keep the ship on course.)
 - b. If necessary, follow up by pointing out that the pirates might have been able to dock in port and obtain some resources, or they might have gotten them by attacking other ships.
 - c. Continue by asking, “which resources were more limited? Which ones did the pirates have trouble keeping on their ship or finding while they were on a voyage?” **(Water, fresh food, and other supplies that would not survive a long voyage. In addition, his weapons and other pirating tools require things like ammunition – cannonballs, in this case – that cannot be made on board the ship.)**
8. Ask, “Which resource seemed most limited and also most important to Blackbeard?” **(Cannonballs)** “Do you think cannonballs would be considered scarce, in economics terms?” **(Yes.)** “Why or why not?” **(Scarce resources must be limited and desirable. The cannonballs are limited because there are only a few left on the ship, and by the end of the video, there are none. Cannonballs are desirable because Blackbeard and his crew need them to fight the British Royal Navy.)**
9. Have students consider Blackbeard’s situation at the end of the video. Once he realizes that he is completely out of cannonballs, Blackbeard must make a serious choice that will affect both him and his crew. Scarcity requires people to make choices, since the resources they want are limited. Choosing one thing means you cannot choose another. In this case, Blackbeard finds himself in a situation where one resource is suddenly more important than all others. Simultaneously, it is also his most limited resource.
 - a. As a class, brainstorm the choices that Blackbeard has available. Ask, “what can Blackbeard do now that he has run out of cannonballs?” **(Try to sail away, surrender to the British Royal Navy, find an alternative to cannonballs to keep fighting, try to get cannonballs from another pirate ship, invent a way to make more cannonballs, etc.)**
 - b. Give each student a copy of the Flip-Up Organizer, and make sure s/he has scissors to use. Have students cut out the exterior shape of the organizer. They should have a rectangle when finished. Then, have them cut ONLY on the dotted lines. The result is a graphic organizer with three flaps.
 - c. On each flap, have students record one of the choices that Blackbeard has once he runs out of cannonballs. If students are not yet independent enough to do this, have the class determine three choices, and model writing each one so that students can copy it on the flaps on their copies.

- d. Then, give students a set amount of time (5-6 minutes can be plenty) to turn and talk with a conversation partner or partners about the consequences of the choices they have listed. As an example, if a student has written that Blackbeard can try to sail away, s/he can discuss whether or not the weather will allow the pirates to sail fast enough to escape the Navy ships or whether or not the ship has been damaged too much by the Navy's cannonballs to sail.
- e. At the end of the set time, have students record one or two consequences of each choice under the flap listing that choice. Encourage them to think through the conversations they had with their partner(s) and choose the most important consequences before they start writing. As before, if students are not yet ready to do this independently, model writing the answers for students to copy or use as inspiration.

Closing:

Close with a brief conversation about the consequences of Blackbeard's choices. Since he does not have a single "good choice," help students think about how Blackbeard would have made his decisions, which were driven by the scarcity of a single resource.

Assessment:

Ask students to do a quick-write about the choice they think Blackbeard should have made following the events of the video. Since there is no clear "good" choice, students need to justify their answers using their prior knowledge of pirates or information from the video.

Extensions:

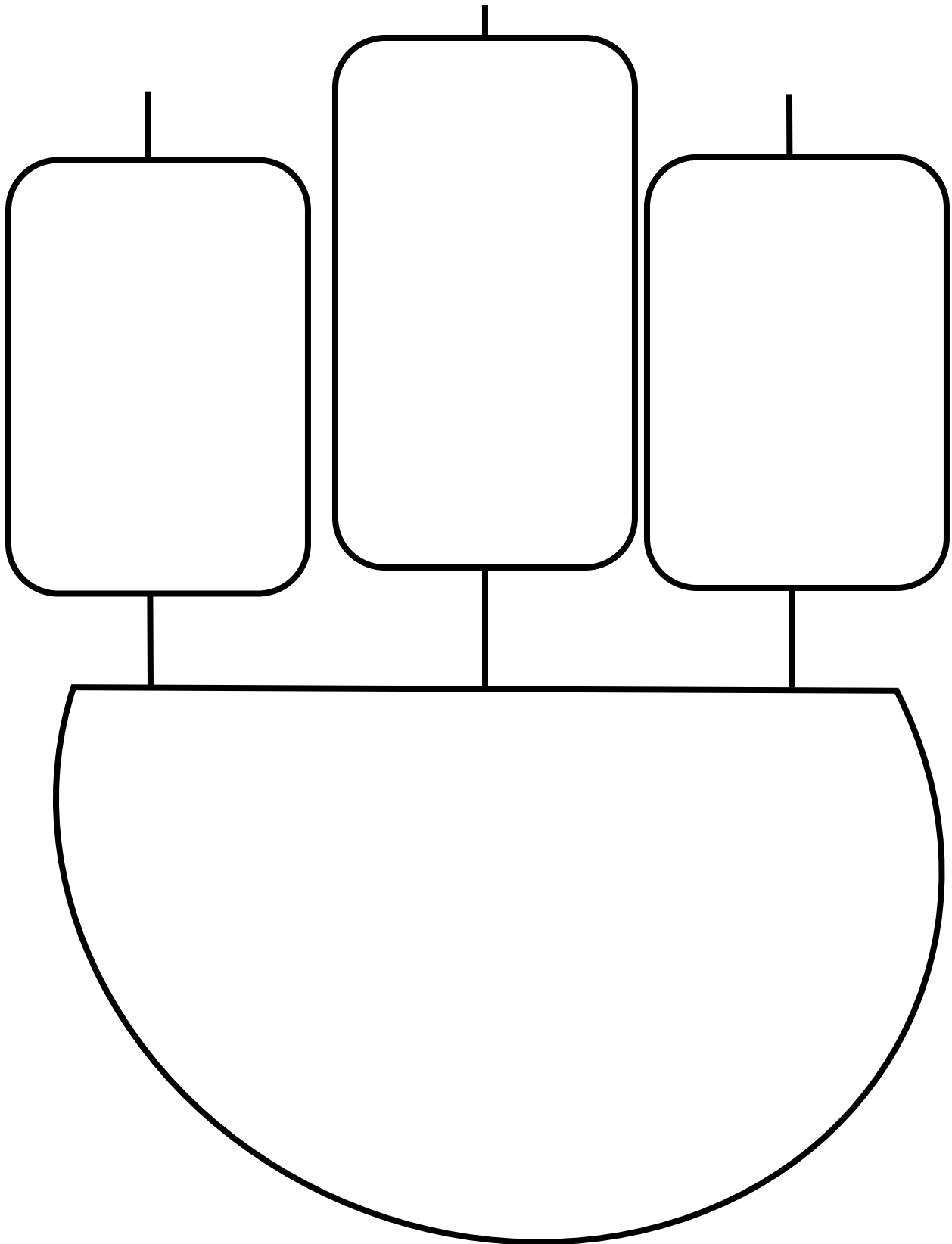
-There are numerous children's books that address the idea of scarcity. Many of them revolve around financial scarcity (Tight Times, Alexander Who Used to Be Rich Last Sunday), and can be challenging to use with students living in tough economic circumstances. As an alternative, consider one that looks specifically at a scarce resource: The Great Fuzz Frenzy by Janet Stevens and Susan Stevens Crummel. In this hilarious story, a prairie dog colony develops an affinity for tennis ball fuzz, and disaster strikes when the fuzz runs out. Students can identify the scarce resource and make prediction after prediction about what the prairie dogs should do next. The plot is straightforward, and the economics lesson shines through, while imparting a little social-emotional learning support, as well.

-As a quick sponge activity, have a class discussion by asking, "what is our most scarce resource?" Some students will think of natural resources like water or oil, and others might think of consumer goods that they wish they could buy without hesitation. However, the standard economics answer is simple: time. There is no way to make more of it, and everyone is allocated the same amount. Students may be surprised or feel like it's not a "real answer," but encourage them to think through how limited and desirable time truly is.

-Consider closing the discussion with this poem by Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, civil rights hero and college president:

*I have only just a minute,
Only sixty seconds in it.
Forced upon me, can't refuse it.
Didn't seek it, didn't choose it.
But it's up to me to use it.
I must suffer if I lose it.
Give account if I abuse it.
Just a tiny little minute,
but eternity is in it.*

Blackbeard's Limited Resources



Flip-Up Organizer
