

6. Spotting Economics: When They Want Blueberries

OVERVIEW

Students will hear *Blueberries for Sal*, by Robert McClosky, a story about two mothers and their offspring who wanted blueberries for the coming winter for themselves and their families. Then students will explore their own wants.

ECONOMIC CONCEPTS

Economic wants, choices, opportunity cost, saving, natural resources, capital resources, human resources, intermediate goods

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Identify *economic wants* as desires that can be satisfied by consuming a good or a service.
- Understand that when a person makes a choice, he or she incurs an opportunity cost—the next best alternative given up.
- Define natural resources, capital resources, human resources, and intermediate goods, and give examples of each.

MATERIALS

- Book, *Blueberries for Sal*, by Robert McClosky (ISBN: 014050169X)
- *Activity Sheet 6A: A Wants Survey* (one copy per student)
- *Activity Sheet 6B: Sal and the Bears* (transparency)
- *Activity Sheet 6C: T-Shirt Pattern* (one copy per student or make patterns to trace)
- Optional additional book: *Stanley* by Syd Hoff (An I Can Read Book)
- clothespins (two per student) and yarn
- Make two signs that say “I really need it!” and “I might want it!” Attach the signs to tongue depressors, which can serve as handles.

PROCEDURE

1. Introduction: Surveying Wants

- a. Send home the survey on *Activity Sheet 6A: A Wants Survey* for their parents to fill out. Have students write their names on the line; take it home for their parents to fill out; and bring it back the next day.
- b. Discuss the survey results with students. Call attention to the following:

- The responses will vary somewhat from family to family. Ask students: Why did this happen? (*Different people like different things and have different values.*)
- The response to the second item, “To be safe, warm, fed and clothed,” will probably be the same for almost everybody—a “very important” choice (#1). Ask students: Why did your parents choose this? (*Because these things are necessary for survival.*)

2. Exploring Blueberry Wants

- a. Introduce the book, *Blueberries for Sal*, by Robert McClosky, and either read it to students, or have them read it. Then ask students to try to spot the economic wants that the characters in the story had.
- b. Remind students of the choices that their parents made on the class survey. Tell them that Sal and her mother also had a choice. They could pick berries and eat them now, or pick them and save them for later. Use transparency made from Activity Sheet 6B: *Sal and the Bears* (top of the page) and ask the following:
 1. What choice did Sal make? Why? (*Sal chose to eat the blueberries now because she liked the taste.*)
 2. What was Sal's opportunity cost? (*Sal gave up the opportunity to have blueberries to eat later when she got home.*)
 3. What choice did Sal's mother make? Why? (*She chose to save the blueberries and can them so that the family could eat them next winter.*)
 4. What was her mother's opportunity cost? (*Her mother gave up the opportunity to enjoy the blueberries now.*)
 5. Why did Mother Bear and Little Bear choose to eat the blueberries rather than bury them and save them like squirrels bury nuts? (*They wanted to grow big and fat and store up food for winter.*)
 6. What did the bear mother want most for her cub? (*food and safety*)
 7. What did Sal's mother want most for her? (*food and safety*)
- c. Guide students to understand that parents want many things for their children. But,

because they can't have everything, they must prioritize their wants.

- d. **Optional:** Read the additional book, *Stanley* by Syd Hoff, and discuss with the class:
1. Why didn't Stanley like living in a cave? (*It was cold, there were bats, and he had to sleep with his head on a rock.*)
 2. Did he like the house he built better than a cave? (yes)
 3. Did his cave provide him shelter? (Yes, the cave provided shelter, but Stanley wanted something better.)

3. Additional Concepts: Resources for Canned Blueberries

- a. Explain to students that resources are the things that people use to produce a good, such as canned blueberries. Define and discuss each type of resource as follows:
- *Natural resources* are the gifts of nature that are present without human intervention. (Examples: land, oil, trees, sunlight)
 - *Capital resources* are human-made aids to production. (Examples: a computer, a truck, a hammer, a building)
 - *Human resources* include all of the human effort that could be directed toward producing goods and services. (Examples: a construction worker, a teacher, a police officer, a doctor)
 - **Note:** Resources are combined to produce goods and services. Sometimes the goods that are produced are then used to produce other things. For example, sugar, chocolate chips and flour are goods. (*They aren't natural resources, because they do not occur in nature.*) When they are combined with human and capital resources to make chocolate chip cookies they are called "intermediate goods".
- b. Ask students to try to spot these resources in the story. Use a transparency made from *Activity Sheet 6B: Sal and the Bears* (bottom of the page) and ask the following:
1. What capital resource did Sal and her mother use to pick blueberries? (*pails*)
 2. Show students the pictures on the last two pages in the book. Ask them what other capital resources will Mother be using to produce canned blueberries. (*pots, spoon, jars, rings, stove*)
 3. What human resources will she use? (*her own labor and Sal's labor, if she helps*)

4. What natural resources will she use? (*the blueberries and water*)
5. What intermediate goods will she use? (*sugar*)

4. A Wants Line

- a. Write the words *economic wants* on the board and review the definition (desires that can be satisfied by consuming a good or a service).
- b. Brainstorm with students to create a long list of wants that people have (such as air, water, food, clothing, shelter, toys, games, bicycles, television sets, etc.) Be sure to make the list long enough that each student may be assigned to a different want.
- c. Explain that since we have so many economic wants we are not able to have all of the goods and services that we want. Ask students to give examples of a time when they were not able to have something that they wanted.
- d. Ask students if they have ever worn a T-shirt with a picture of something they wanted on it. Tell them that they will be creating wants T-shirts, and hanging them out to dry. To do this, sketch on the chalkboard a clothesline stretched between two poles, as below. Label one pole with "Really important wants " and the other pole with "Not so important wants."
- e. Give each student a copy of *Activity Sheet 6C: T-Shirt Pattern* (or give them a pattern to trace), and have them cut out the T-shirts. Have each student select a different want from the chalkboard list and draw and label it on his or her T-shirt.
- f. Ask for two student volunteers to be the "clothesline poles." Stretch line or cord between the two students, and have them hold it up. In their other hands have them hold the two signs that say, "Really important wants" and "Not so important wants!" (During this activity students will attach their *T-shirts* to the clothesline with clothespins.)
- g. Bring students to the "clothesline" a few at a time, and have them line themselves up, in the order in which they think their *T-shirts* should be hung on the clothesline. Tell them that they should put items important to their health closest to the "Really Important Wants" and less important items nearer to the pole at the other end. Explain that all of these things are wants, but, since we can't have everything we want, we must learn to prioritize our wants.
- h. Also explain that where different things fall on the "wants line," depends on what is important

to the individual making the choices.
Demonstrate this as follows:

- Ask students where they would put a bicycle if they were newspaper carriers, and needed the bicycles for their jobs. Then ask them where they would put the bicycle if they had just broken a leg and had a bulky cast on it.
 - Ask one of the girls where she would put “a new dress” on the line. Then ask the same girl where she thinks any of the boys in the class might put this item. Point out that if someone does not want an item, the item would not be on that person’s “wants clothesline” at all.
- i. Have students keep adding shirts, and rearranging them as necessary. After the order of all shirts has all been determined by the class, have students fasten their T-shirts on the *clothesline* with clothespins. At this point, the clothesline can be attached to a bulletin board, stretched along a chalk tray, or displayed in the hallway.

5. Closure

- a. Review basic economic concepts brought out in the lesson by asking the following questions. Be prepared to reread portions of the book if necessary.
1. Who had wants in this story? What were they? (*Both mothers wanted food and safety for their offspring. Both babies just wanted blueberries.*)
 2. What do you do when you can’t have everything you want? (*make choices*)
 3. Who made choices in the story and why did they make the choices they did?
 - *Sal chose to eat the blueberries now because she liked the taste.*
 - *Sal’s mother chose to save the blueberries and can them so that the family could eat them during the next winter.*
 - *Mother Bear and Little Bear chose to eat blueberries now because they wanted to grow big and fat and store up food for winter.*
 4. What was each one’s opportunity cost?
 - *Sal gave up the opportunity to have blueberries to eat later when she got home. This was Sal’s opportunity cost.*
 - *Sal’s mother gave up the opportunity to enjoy the blueberries now. This was her opportunity cost.*
5. Give examples of natural, human and capital resources as well as intermediate goods used to make canned blueberries. (*capital: pots, spoon, jars, rings, stove; human: her own labor as well as Sal’s labor, if she helps; natural resources: the blueberries and water; intermediate goods: sugar*)
- b. Review economic concepts brought out in the lesson activities by asking the following questions.
1. Some things that people want can’t be bought with money. Can you think of any examples? (*friendship, health, fitness, knowledge*) Although they cannot be bought with money, they are not free. What is the cost? (*Time, energy*)
 2. What are the basic wants that parents most often have for their children? (*They want their children to be safe, warm, fed and clothed.*)
 3. How were your parents’ wants similar to the mothers’ wants in this story? (*They wanted food and safety for us, just as the mothers in the story.*)
 4. Ask students: Why can’t you have everything you want? (*Resources are limited, so people must make choices. People do not have enough time to do everything they want, enough money to buy everything they want, enough natural, human, or capital resources to produce everything they want.*)

EXTENSION

- To help students remember concepts related to economic wants, teach them *The Wanting Song* (Tune: *London Bridge*) from the Econ Song Book.
- To help students explore their economic wants, use Lesson 1, *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*, from Economics and Children’s Literature, Supplement 3.
- “Toys for Me: A lesson on Choice” an interactive, online lesson about wants. <http://www.econedlink.org/lessons/index.php?lesson=517&page=teacher>
- Use Lessons 1 and 4 from the Master Curriculum Guide in Economics: Teaching Strategies K-2, that are available on the CD-ROM disk, *Virtual Economics*.

Activity Sheet 6A: A Wants Survey

What do my friends and family want for me?

Dear Parents,

We are studying about wants in our class. We are learning that because resources are limited and wants are unlimited, people can't have all of the things they want. People prioritize their wants.

We will appreciate it if you will fill out this survey for us. Please share your choices with your child.

Assume that your child does not already have the things on the list below. Please prioritize each choice:

1 – very important 2 – important 3 – not very important

I want _____
Your child's name

<input type="checkbox"/> To have the most popular toys. <input type="checkbox"/> To be safe, warm, fed and clothed. <input type="checkbox"/> To be happy. <input type="checkbox"/> To have the latest video games. <input type="checkbox"/> To enjoy nature. <input type="checkbox"/> To be healthy. <input type="checkbox"/> To own the most DVD's. <input type="checkbox"/> To be responsible. <input type="checkbox"/> To be physically fit. <input type="checkbox"/> To do his or her best. <input type="checkbox"/> To enjoy people. <input type="checkbox"/> To enjoy music. <input type="checkbox"/> To have healthy teeth. <input type="checkbox"/> other _____	<input type="checkbox"/> To enjoy books. <input type="checkbox"/> To speak correctly. <input type="checkbox"/> To be thoughtful of others. <input type="checkbox"/> To have the most baseball cards. <input type="checkbox"/> To enjoy art. <input type="checkbox"/> To develop his/her talents. <input type="checkbox"/> To have the most DVD's. <input type="checkbox"/> To love and respect himself/herself. <input type="checkbox"/> To love and respect others. <input type="checkbox"/> To have the most expensive clothes. <input type="checkbox"/> To have good manners. <input type="checkbox"/> To have friends. <input type="checkbox"/> To be the first to see new movies. <input type="checkbox"/> other _____
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Thank you for completing this survey.

Activity Sheet 6B:
Sal and the Bears

Exploring Blueberry Wants:

1. What choice did Sal make? Why?
2. What was Sal's opportunity cost?
3. What choice did Sal's mother make? Why?
4. What was her mother's opportunity cost?
5. Why did Mother Bear and Little Bear choose to eat blueberries rather than bury them and save them like squirrels do?
6. What did the bear mother want most for her cub?
7. What did Sal's mother want most for her?

Exploring Blueberry Resources:

1. What capital resource did Sal and her mother use to pick blueberries?
2. Look at the pictures at the end of the story. What other capital resources will Mother be using to produce canned blueberries?
3. What human resources will she use?
4. What natural resources will she use?
5. What intermediate goods will she use?

**Activity Sheet 6C:
T-Shirt Pattern**





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