

## A Learning Cycle Lesson Plan: Scarcity

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### *Abstract*

*This learning cycle lesson plan uses hands-on experiences to assist fifth or sixth graders in developing the important economic concept of scarcity. This lesson focuses on enabling students to understand that scarcity forces people to make choices about goods and services because they cannot have everything they want.*

Grade Level: Fifth or Sixth

NCSS Standards: Production, Distribution, and Consumption  
Time, Continuity, and Change  
Individual Development and Identity

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### *Exploratory Introduction*

Materials: Large opaque plastic containers (one of which is filled with pretzel sticks), brown paper lunch bags (several per student)

#### **Objectives**

Students will define scarcity as “the condition that exists when wants exceed resources available to satisfy wants.”

Students will ascertain that scarcity compels consumers and producers to find alternative methods and means for satisfying their economic wants.

#### **Procedures**

1. Explain that you have a snack for the class and that students should come to the front of the room, row by row, and serve themselves.
2. Call the first row of students to the front and give them brown lunch bags in which to put their pretzels. Allow them to take as many pretzels as they want, giving them extra lunch bags to hold pretzels if needed.

#### **Assessments**

Review the plans constructed by the students to determine if they minimized the scarcity of pretzels or found acceptable alternatives to satisfy their economic wants.

3. Continue calling tables of students until the container of pretzels is empty.
4. Students will ask for the pretzels in the other containers. Open the containers and act surprised that they are empty. Explain you thought they were all filled with pretzels.
5. Apologize to those students who did not receive a snack. Explain that everyone thought there were plenty of pretzels.
6. Discuss the following: **a)** *What is the problem?* (There are not enough for everyone who wants pretzels)  
**b)** *Why does this problem exist?* (There was a limited amount of pretzels, and the students who were served first got as much as they wanted)
7. Explain that the experience students had with the pretzels symbolizes a major problem that all societies face: **scarcity**. Scarcity occurs because people want many things, but resources available for producing the things people want are limited.
8. Tell students that other students still need a snack. Ask students what could be done (*students could share what they have; teacher could provide an alternative, or those without a snack could go without*).
9. Have students construct a plan to resolve the shortage of snacks.

*Lesson Development*

Materials: Handouts of wartime recipes, ration books from WWII or pictures of ration books, student handouts on clothes rationing during WWII activity

**Objectives**

**Procedure**

**Assessments**

<p>Students will evaluate the role WWII had on the scarcity of various goods and services.</p> <p>Students will devise a plan in which they will be able to satisfy their economic wants during a time of scarcity.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Distribute wartime recipes to small groups. Discuss the recipes and question students about the ingredients. What does <i>mock</i> mean? Why were these recipes trying to imitate ingredients instead of using the real ingredients?</li> <li>2. Discuss the rationing and the different goods and services that were rationed during WWII (butter, sugar, coffee, meat, gas, clothing, male workers). Show ration books and explain the use.</li> <li>3. Question students as to what alternatives people may have tried in order to still satisfy their economic wants (such as making recipes without certain ingredients, trying new foods, walking more or using bicycles, women going to work and doing men's jobs).</li> <li>4. Explain that students are going to participate in a simulated role-play, pretending to be transported back into the time period of WWII. Their house has just been bombed, and they have lost everything they own. They must buy new clothes, and they only have 48 coupons from their ration books to buy all they need for a year.</li> <li>5. Distribute student recording sheets to be used for recording decisions and information about buying clothes.</li> <li>6. Give students time to formulate their own plan for buying what clothing they will need to satisfy their economic wants.</li> </ol>	<p>Clothes rationing decision recording sheet is included below. Using the checklist, determine if students found a way to satisfy their economic wants.</p>
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	<p><b>Closure:</b>  <b>7.</b> Discuss their plans, including alternatives they chose, why they chose the alternatives, and why they did not choose others.</p>	
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*Expansion*

Materials: Limited amount of art supplies, \$25.00 for prizes

**Objectives**

**Procedures**

**Assessment**

<p>Students will design a checkers tournament providing alternative solutions and methods designed to overcome the obstacles scarcity presents.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1.</b> Discuss the various problems faced when planning field trips, assemblies, or projects you like to do with your students (<i>not always enough money, not enough time to plan, possibility of limited materials</i>).</li> <li><b>2.</b> Ask for suggestions and ideas to help overcome those barriers.</li> <li><b>3.</b> Tell students they are going to work in small groups in order to design a school-wide checkers tournament. They will be responsible for the publicity, design, planning, implementation, and evaluation of the tournament.</li> <li><b>4.</b> Have students make a chart with four identified areas of scarcity that they will need to address (<i>time, space, equipment, materials, participants, etc.</i>). Have students list ideas and alternatives for dealing effectively with these areas.</li> <li><b>5.</b> After giving students time to develop their plans, allow each group to present their plans to the class.</li> </ol> <p><b>Closure:</b>  <b>6.</b> Discuss the areas of scarcity that the groups addressed. Compare and contrast the ideas and information presented by each of the different groups.</p>	<p>Check the chart each group creates for the four targeted areas of scarcity and the alternative solutions and methods designed to overcome them.</p>
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**Clothes Rationing in WWII  
Decision Making Record Sheet**

Your home has just been bombed. You need to use your ration coupons to buy new clothes. You only have 48 coupons to buy what you need. Fill in the following table with your purchases and reasons for your purchases.

Item Purchased	Number of Coupons	Reason for the Purchase	Alternative Solutions

Total number of ration coupons used \_\_\_\_\_

Total number of ration coupons not used \_\_\_\_\_

### Clothes Rationing During WWII Poster

During WWII, every man, woman, and child was allowed 48 coupons for clothing each year.

Item	Coupons
Overcoat or raincoat	5
Jacket or blazer	6
Boy's trousers	6
Girl's tunic or skirt	4
Girl's dress	5
Pajamas, nightie, dressing gown	6
Cardigan, jumper	5
Underpants, knickers, vest	2
Boy's shirt, girl's blouse	4
Child's shoes, sandals, boots	2
Gloves, hat, scarf, cap	2
Socks, stockings	1
Ties, handkerchiefs	1

### Additional Resources and Web Links

<http://ecedweb.unomaha.edu/lessons/popcorn.htm>

<http://www.teachingideas.co.uk/history/files/ww2rationing.pdf>