

***Three Days on a River in a Red Canoe***, by Vera B. Williams, Mulberry Books, New York, 1981, ISBN 0-688-04072-1

**Literature Annotation:** A family takes a three-day canoe trip on a river.

**Grade Level:** 3

**Duration:** 60 minutes

**Economic Concepts:** Scarcity, Resources, Decision-making, Opportunity Cost

### **Maryland State Curriculum**

**Economic Standard:** Students will develop economic reasoning to understand the historical development and current status of economic principles, institutions, and processes needed to be effective citizens, consumers, and workers participating in local communities, the nation, and the world.

4.A.1.b Identify and apply the steps in the decision-making process

4.A.1.c Identify the opportunity cost of a choice or decision

4.A.2.b Give examples of when limited resources affect the decisions producers make

**Geography Standard:** Students will use geographic concepts and processes to examine the role of culture, technology, and the environment in the location and distribution of human activities and spatial connections throughout time.

3.B.1 Describe places in the environment using geographic characteristics.

### **College and Career Ready Standard for Reading Literary Texts**

**RL4** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, distinguishing literal from nonliteral language.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to...

- identify the economic resources used by the canoeists.
- make decisions about goods to take on an excursion.
- identify the opportunity cost of a decision.
- identify physical and human characteristics seen by the canoeists in the story.

### **Vocabulary**

**opportunity cost:** the foregone benefit of the next best alternative when an economic decision is made. (The next best choice.)

**scarcity:** not having enough resources to satisfy all wants

**natural resource:** gifts of nature used to produce goods and services

### **Materials**

- Book: *Three Days on a River in a Red Canoe*
- Gallon sized zipper baggies, 1 for each student
- Granola Bar: 1 per student
- Resource 1: *My Entertainment Choices*, 1 per student
- Resource 2: *Decisions, Decisions, Decision!*, 1 per student
- Resource 3 a & b: *Physical and Human Characteristics*, 1 per student
- Overhead transparency of Resource 4: *Decision Tree*

- Resource 4: *Decision Tree*, 1 per student
- Area taped on the floor to represent a canoe (approximately 1 ½ sq. ft. per student & teacher)
- Packing rules posted on the chalkboard

### **Teacher Background**

In making decisions (choices), alternatives must be identified and evaluated according to relevant criteria. Consumers must consider their wants, product prices, and what they must give up (opportunity cost) when they make consumption choices.

### **Motivation**

Announce to the students that they will be going on an adventure in class tomorrow and that they will have ten minutes of time during the adventure to entertain themselves. Tell them that they will need to pack three goods from home that they want to bring along for entertainment. Explain that there won't be much space for everyone so they must pack the three goods they want in a special "tote bag." Give each student a gallon-sized zipper baggie. Post the rules for packing the tote bags on the chalkboard:

- Only non-living items may be brought in the bags.
- The three items must be safe and allowed in school.
- The bag must be zipped with the three items inside.

Remind the students that they will need to make decisions as they choose what to bring along on the adventure.

On the following school day, prepare an area of the classroom to be a simulated canoe for the class. Use masking tape to mark off an area with about a foot and a half of square space for each of your students and yourself.

### **Development**

1. Remind the students that they will be going on a special adventure today. Have them look at the area marked off as the "canoe." Ask the students to imagine that they will be stepping into a canoe for a special trip down a river. Have the students take out their entertainment baggies. They will have to choose just one of the three items that they brought from home for entertainment. Explain that when they make a choice for one of the items, they give up the opportunity to choose the other items. Distribute Resource 1: *My Entertainment Choices*, to each student. Have them write the name of their choice and identify their opportunity cost. (*Opportunity cost is the next best choice in a list of choices, so their second choice is their opportunity cost.*)

Ask the students to identify other items they might want on a trip in a canoe (food, clothes, camping gear, etc.) Point out that a scarcity of space on the canoe will cause them to have to make choices about what to take along. Distribute a granola bar to each student and have them add it to their baggie to help meet their want for food.

2. Have the students bring their baggies and board the "canoe." Tell them that you will be reading a story about a three-day canoe trip along a river. Ask them to imagine, as you read, that they are also along on the trip. Have them listen for ways that the canoeists used the natural resources of the environment to help them meet their wants along the way. Read the book to the students, stopping at one of the pages to allow your students to eat their granola bars while the story characters consume their camp food. Stop at

another point in the story and allow the students to entertain themselves with the one entertainment item they packed for the trip.

3. Remind students that a scarcity of time, or space, or materials presents us with the need to make economic choices. For example, on the simulated canoe trip there was a scarcity of space which forced the students to make decision about which entertainment item to take along. Distribute Resource 2: *Decisions, Decisions, Decisions!* to the students. Have them prioritize the three choices in each scenario by numbering 1 for their first choice, 2 for their second choice, and 3 for their third choice. Have them identify their final choice (priority 1) and their opportunity cost (priority 2).
4. Review with the students the physical and human characteristics of the Earth. Have the students work in groups of four. Distribute Resource 3a & b: *Physical and Human Characteristics*, to each group. Have the students cut out the word cards on the worksheets. Place the two title cards, "Physical Characteristics" and "Human Characteristics," on a desk surface to create a chart. Have the groups re-read the story to find all the characteristics in the story and to place the word card for those features in the correct column of the desk chart.
5. Remind the students that the canoeists brought some of their food and other supplies with them on the trip, but that they counted on the natural resources of the environment for other foods and uses. Ask the students to identify how the canoeists used each of these natural resources in the story:
  - Water (used to move the boat and to wash dishes)
  - Rocks (used as shelves and drain boards for washing dishes)
  - Fish (used for food)
  - Crayfish (used as food)
  - Sand (used as scouring powder)
6. Ask the students if they would enjoy going on a real canoe trip for three days. Make a list of the pros and cons of such a trip:
  - **Pros:** have fun, enjoy a physical activity, see new sights, feel close to nature, have adventures, etc.
  - **Cons:** might be dangerous in a storm, might be uncomfortable, you have to paddle, rapid could be scary, you can't take your TV, etc.

Tell the students that thinking about pros and cons will help them to make decisions about how to use their time and resources wisely. Display an overhead transparency of Resource 4: *Decision Tree*. Tell the students that you will model how to use the tree to help you make a decision. At the base of the tree identify the problem of scarcity of time for outdoor adventure activities. In the ovals labeled "choice," list two choices of outdoor adventure activities, such as a canoe trip and a rock climbing trip. For each choice have students list the "pros" and "cons." Identify the choice you gave up as your opportunity cost of choosing one kind of entertainment to take along in the canoe.

Use the Decision Tree to model a number of choices that need to be made in a classroom, such as what to play at recess, rewards for completing homework, choices of field trips, etc.

### **Thoughtful Application**

1. Distribute Resource 4: *Decision Tree* to each student. Tell the students that they will use this “Decision Tree” to help them make a decision about how to spend the limited free time that they have on Saturdays.

Identify the economic problem of scarcity of time on Saturdays and have the students write this problem on the oval at the base of tree. Then have the students list two choices for how to spend time on Saturdays in the “choice” ovals about the problem: go to the movies with a friend or play soccer with my team. For each choice have students list one or more “pro” and one or more “con.” Then have the students make a decision by identifying which of the options they would choose for the use of time on a Saturday. Finally, have the students identify the opportunity cost of the decision.

### **Scoring Key**

- 3 points: Students identifies one or more pros and one or more cons for each choice and correctly identifies the final choice and opportunity cost.
- 2 points: Student identifies one pro or one cons for each choice and correctly identifies the final choice and opportunity cost.
- 1 point: Student correctly identifies the final choice and opportunity cost.
- 0 points: All other responses

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

## ***My Entertainment Choices***

The three items I brought for entertainment are:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

My first choice of entertainment is:

\_\_\_\_\_

The opportunity cost of my choice is:

\_\_\_\_\_

***Decisions, Decisions, Decisions!***

You are making plans for the weekend. You have three choices for how to spend your time. You can only choose one activity. Circle your choice:

- Go on a canoe trip.
- Spend the weekend with a friend.
- Go to an amusement park.

My choice is \_\_\_\_\_

The opportunity cost of my choice is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

You are deciding what to do with your birthday money. You have three choices for how to use your twenty dollars. You can only choose one way. Circle your answer.

- Spend in on books.
- Spend it on a game.
- Save it for vacation.

My choice is \_\_\_\_\_

The opportunity cost of my choice is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

You are deciding what to do with the space in your bedroom. You have three choices for how to use the space. You can only choose one way. Circle your choice:

- Put a desk in your room.
- Put a bookshelf in your room.
- Leave the space for a play area.

My choice is \_\_\_\_\_

The opportunity cost of my choice is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

***Physical and Human Characteristics***

town	river
island	dam
waterfall	railroad
reservoir (human-made lake)	sandy beach

***Physical and Human Characteristics***

train bridge	cliff
meadow	woods
stone bridge	roads and highways
<b>PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS</b>	<b>HUMAN CHARACTERISTICS</b>

## DECISION TREE

