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The Giving Tree

By Shel Silverstein

Summary

This is a tender story about a tree and a boy. The tree loves the boy so much that it is willing to give the boy everything that it has (apples, shade, branches, and trunk). This story represents the ultimate sacrifice of love and the serene acceptance of another's capacity to love in return.

Key Economic Concepts

Natural Resources
Scarcity

Economic Wants
Price

Materials

Handouts 1, 2, and 3



Teaching Procedure

1. Carefully read and discuss this story with your students. Define and discuss the words sacrifice, natural resource, and scarcity.
2. Using Handout 1, have students make a list of all the natural resources that the tree gave to the boy and how the boy used them for his own benefit. Point out how the boy's wants changed as he grew older. Have students identify their various wants and list them on the board.
3. Explain the concept of **scarcity**. Divide the class into three groups and have the students make a list of natural resources. Compare the lists and discuss the concept of scarcity as it applies to natural resources. (*Natural resources are scarce because most are not freely available to anyone who wants them. An exception is sunshine.*)
4. Discuss how some things are **more scarce** than others. Explain that the **price** of something reveals how scarce it is compared to other things.
5. In large print, write the word APPRECIATE across the blackboard. Discuss the importance of being appreciative. Ask the students if they feel the boy showed appreciation towards the tree. How does appreciation of our natural resources help us to make better choices?
6. On Handout 2, have students write a note of appreciation to the tree. Then have students write a note of appreciation to someone who has sacrificed something for them (mother, father, teacher, grandparent, person in the armed services, etc.).

7. List **goods** (products) that are directly related to apple trees (wood, apple pies, caramel apples, applesauce, cider, apple juice, apple butter, etc.). Discuss why these goods are all **scarce**.
8. Complete Handout 3, the Writers Journal for The Giving Tree.



Key Questions To Ask Students

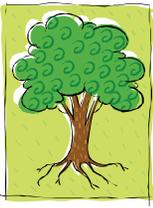
1. What are **natural resources**? (*gifts of nature, source of raw materials*)
Why are natural resources **scarce**? (*not enough for everyone to have all they want*)
2. In the marketplace, how can you tell if one resource (or **good**) is **more scarce** than another? (*Its price gives the clue!*) Give examples.
3. Discuss the differences between **renewable** and **non-renewable** resources.
4. What are the **economic wants** in this story? Did the boy really need all the tree gave him? What are the consequences when we lose control of our wants? (*We purchase goods and services we cannot afford. We may get into too much debt.*)
5. Did the boy appreciate the tree's sacrifices? How does appreciation help us make better choices?



Follow-Up Activities

1. *Play Dough Production*: Make examples of natural resources using play dough.
2. *Bulletin Board*: Create a bulletin board using the headings "Renewable Resources" and "Non-Renewable Resources." Cut out and categorize pictures from magazines.
3. *Johnny Appleseed*: Study Johnny Appleseed and other apple facts.
4. *Field Trip*: Visit an apple orchard. Discuss the natural, capital, and human resources used to produce apples.
5. *Kids in the Kitchen*: Make an apple pie. Read and discuss the story, *How To Make an Apple Pie*, by Marjorie Priceman.





The Giving Tree Chart

Stages of Boy's Life	Tree's Gift to the Boy	How the Boy Used Each Resource
Little Boy		
Young Man		
Man		
Older Man		
Old Man		

Thank You Letters



Dear Giving Tree,

Thank you,

* * * * *

Dear _____

Thank you,



Writer's Journal for *The Giving Tree*

1. In your own words, tell what the economic word **scarcity** means.

2. Write a sentence describing the **scarcity** situation in *The Giving Tree*.

3. In your own words, tell how the tree felt about giving up most of its natural resources, goods, and services. Did giving make the tree happy? Was the tree happy at the end of the story?

4. Did the boy understand and appreciate the tree's sacrifice for him? Explain.



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