

The Activity That Fails

Optional cartoons

- [Cartoon 1](#)
- [Cartoon 2](#)
- [Cartoon 3](#)
- [Cartoon 4](#)
- [Cartoon 5](#)
- [Cartoon 6](#)

Overview:

This brief classroom activity can be used to informally assess students' ability to apply the principles of economic reasoning to environmental issues.

Time: ½ – 1 class period

Materials:

- Handout: “Check Your Environmental Reasoning” – 1 per student (pp. 4-6)
- Overhead Transparencies:
 - “Consensus-Building Through Discussion” (p. 3)
 - “Tally” (p. 7)
 - (*Optional*) Cartoons (pp. 8-13)

Procedures:

1. Distribute “Check Your Environmental Reasoning” and have students enter their answers in the blanks on the last page without consulting one another.
2. Have students place their answer-sheets face down when completed. Prepare for the next part of the activity by reviewing the process of consensus-building. Use the Hayakawa quote (see overhead transparency, p. 2) to emphasize that consensus-building discussions depend on active and open-minded listening; that the goal is to come to a common understanding rather than to hold firmly to a particular position or brow-beat others into agreement.
3. Direct students to choose partners, compare answers, discuss, and reach consensus.
4. Direct partner teams to combine into groups of 4. Allow time for partner teams to compare answers, discuss, and reach consensus.
5. (*Optional*) Continue the consensus process with larger and larger groups.
6. Reconvene the class and allow groups to report on their conclusions. *Expect disagreement. One way to manage the debriefing is to tally the cartoon votes for each statement, and then ask for representatives from various groups to explain their reasoning.*

Teacher Guide:

The artist drew the cartoons to match specific statements. However, field test groups consistently failed to come up with the same answers as the artist – or with the same answers as other field test groups. (Hence, the title of the activity.)

A careful review of the cartoons reveals that there are, in fact, several sets of arguably correct answers. The key to assessing students' mastery with this activity lies in determining whether they are able to clearly articulate the reasons for assigning a particular cartoon to a statement. Their reasoning should reflect accurate knowledge of the economic concepts and accurate application of the economic principles to the situation as they interpret it from the cartoon.

The Environment and The Economy

Classroom Activities and Simulations

Assessment – The Activity That Fails

Overview:

This brief classroom activity can be used to informally assess students' ability to apply the principles of economic reasoning to environmental issues.

Time: ½ - 1 class period

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- Overhead Transparencies:
 - “Consensus-Building Through Discussion” (p. 3)
 - “Tally” (p. 7)
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Consensus-Building Through Discussion

“ . . . [L]istening does not mean simply maintaining a polite silence while you are rehearsing in your mind the speech you are going to make the next time you can grab a conversation opening. Nor does listening mean waiting alertly for the flaws in the other person’s argument so that later you can mow him or her down. Listening means trying to see the problem the way the speaker sees it . . . Listening requires entering actively and imaginatively into the other person’s situation and trying to understand a frame of reference different than your own.”

S.I. Hayakawa

Check Your Environmental Reasoning

A

B

C

D

E

F

Which cartoon best illustrates each of the guides to environmental reasoning below? Place the letter of the cartoon in the blank provided.

- ___ 1. **Environmental problems result from people's choices.**
- ___ 2. **Incentives influence choices.**
- ___ 3. **Low-cost solutions to environmental problems are preferable to high-cost solutions.**
- ___ 4. **Markets can contribute positive solutions to environmental problems.**
- ___ 5. **Private property ownership can provide strong incentives for solving environmental problems.**
- ___ 6. **You can't do just one thing.**

Tally

	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>D</i>
Environmental problems result from people's choices.				
Incentives influence choices.				
Low-cost solutions to environmental problems are preferable to high-cost solutions.				
Markets can contribute positive solutions to environmental problems.				
Private property ownership can provide strong incentives for solving environmental problems.				
You can't do just one thing.				

