



EduTrend Contents

P4C · SOCIETY AND COMMUNITY · MIDDLE SCHOOL

The Shared Field

Common resources and the tragedy of the commons

Ages 12–14

Level: Intermediate

50 minutes

Circle and small groups
· up to 30

Activity 04

Inside: activity at a glance · step-by-step session plan · facilitator notes · 3 student worksheets · assessment checklist

ACTIVITY 04 · AT A GLANCE

The Shared Field

Groups play a game as farmers sharing one field of grass counters. Each round, every farmer decides how many sheep to graze. The field regrows a little each round, but if too many sheep graze, it is ruined for everyone. Students then learn the idea Garrett Hardin called the tragedy of the commons, and enquire into how communities can protect shared resources.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the session students can:

- explain the tragedy of the commons;
- analyse individual and group interests;
- evaluate solutions;
- reach a group judgement.

KEY WORDS

commons · share · resource · rule · trust · sustainable

CURRICULUM LINKS

Geography: sustainability. Maths: modelling. Citizenship: community rules.

1**STIMULUS**

Share something to think about

2**THINK**

Quiet thinking time

3**QUESTION**

Create and choose a question

4**ENQUIRE**

Reason together

5**BUILD**

Agree, disagree, add

6**REFLECT**

Last words

Materials (per class)

- Grass counters
- Sheep tokens
- Round record sheet
- Question and thinking-move cards
- Worksheets 1, 2 and 3

Before the session

- Read the stimulus and note possible concepts.
- Prepare question and thinking-move cards.
- Set out a circle so everyone can see each other.
- Print the worksheets.

SAFETY

Everyone may pass. Discuss ideas, not people, and use the story or invented examples rather than personal situations.

ACTIVITY 04 · SESSION PLAN

Step by step

Stay neutral: ask for reasons, examples and counter-examples rather than giving your own view.

Time	What happens	Say or ask
0–8 min Stimulus	Play several rounds of the shared field game.	<i>"What did you notice?"</i>
8–20 min Questions	Students create questions in pairs and vote on one.	<i>"Which question is most interesting to talk about?"</i>
20–44 min Enquiry	Enquire into the chosen question, building on each other's ideas.	<i>"Why do shared things get used up?"</i>
44–50 min Last words	Each person says one last thought or passes.	<i>"Has your thinking changed?"</i>

CHALLENGE CARD (print or copy onto the board)

Explain how your community could protect a shared resource.

ACTIVITY 04 · FACILITATOR NOTES

The philosophy in brief

Garrett Hardin described the tragedy of the commons in a 1968 article in Science.

Elinor Ostrom later showed that many communities manage shared resources well through their own rules and trust.

Common ideas to listen for

- “People who overuse are simply greedy.” The situation creates pressure.
- “Only governments can solve it.” Communities often do.
- “Shared resources always fail.” Many are managed well.

Adapting the activity

Support

Play two rounds.

Stretch

Design rules for a shared resource in school.

WORKSHEET 1

Field record

Name: _____

Class: _____ Date: _____

Record each round.

Field record

Round	Sheep grazed	Grass left
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

WORKSHEET 2

Thinking moves

Use these in the enquiry.

Thinking moves

Thinking move	My example
I agree with... because...	
I disagree with... because...	
An example is...	
A counter-example is...	
Building on what... said...	

WORKSHEET 3

Last words

Before and after.

How can a community look after what it shares? Before the enquiry I thought... Now I think... because...

FOR THE TEACHER

Assessment checklist

Use during the session. One sheet covers up to eight students; copy as needed.

Student	Asks a philosophical question	Gives reasons and examples	Listens and builds on others

Suggested codes: W = working towards · E = expected · G = greater depth

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

The Shared Field is a sample activity from the EduTrend Contents P4C Society and Community programme (middle school, level: intermediate). Every activity in the programme follows the same format: a practical challenge, a clear session plan, facilitator notes and ready-to-print worksheets, so that teachers, club leaders and parents can run it without extra preparation.

Full 15-, 20- and 32-week programmes are available from EduStore at edutrend.org.

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