Mousetropolis

By R. Gregory Christie / ISBN: 978-0-8234-2319-4

Lesson Author

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Standards and Benchmarks (see page 16)

Lesson Description

In this lesson, students are asked to recall the story "The Tortoise and the Hare." They learn about characteristics of fables, how the choices the characters make teach the moral, and that choices have costs and benefits. They then listen to the story *Mousetropolis*, a retelling of Aesop's fable "The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse." The students are asked to listen for the choices the mice make in the story. After the story, they take part in a card sorting activity and categorize the choices as either costs or benefits. They conclude the activity by summing the costs and benefits to see which choice offered the most benefits. Finally, they complete a fable story map identifying the important aspects of the story.

Grade Level

1-3

Economic Concepts

Benefit

Choice

Cost

Language Arts Concept

Fable

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Objectives

Student will be able to

- define benefit, choice, cost, and fable;
- explain how costs and benefits help us make choices;
- identify the common story characteristics of a fable; and
- use a simple cost and benefit analysis to make a choice.

Essential Question

How does comparing costs and benefits help us make choices?

Time

60 minutes

Materials

- *Mousetropolis* by R. Gregory Christie (ISBN 978-0-8234-2319-4)
- Handouts 1 and 2, cut into cards
- Handouts 3 and 4, one copy for each student
- Handouts 3 and 4—Answer Keys
- Tape

Procedure

1. Begin the lesson by asking students if they are familiar with the story "The Tortoise and the Hare." If a student knows the story, ask the student to recount the details. If no one is familiar with it, read the summary below. (Alternatively, watch a video of the story. An Internet search for "tortoise and hare video" yields many results. Because this is a well-known fable, the story lines of the videos are very similar):

   The Tortoise and the Hare

   A boastful hare (or rabbit) bragged about his speed to a slow-moving tortoise (a type of turtle). Tired of hearing the hare brag, the tortoise challenged him to a race. The hare got off to a quick start. Halfway through the race, because the hare was so far ahead of the tortoise and confident he would win, he decided to take a nap. When the hare woke up, he learned that the tortoise, crawling slowly but steadily, had won the race.

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2. Explain that this story is a **fable** originally written by a famous Greek author named Aesop. Fables are short stories that usually feature animals given human-like qualities (or anthropomorphized) to deliver a moral, or lesson. They are also called short tales. Discuss the following:
   - What animals are in the fable you just heard? (*A tortoise and a hare*)
   - What human-like qualities did they have? (*They could talk and run races.*)
   - What is the moral, or lesson, of this story? (*Answers will vary, but generally accepted morals are "slow and steady wins the race" and "haste makes waste." Explain these morals further as needed.*)

3. Tell the students that an important part of the story, one that helps teach the moral, is the **choice** the hare made. A choice is a decision between two alternatives, or options. Maybe at breakfast this morning you had two options—orange juice or milk—and you got to make a choice. Maybe after school yesterday you decided between going for a walk or staying at home—you made a choice. The hare had a choice between continuing the race or taking a nap.
   - What choice did the hare make? (*He chose to take a nap.*)
   - Do you think it was a good choice or a bad choice for the hare? (*Bad choice.*)
   - Why? (*He didn't win the race.*)

4. Tell the students that when we make choices, there are things that we give up. The things we give up are called **costs**. When we make choices, there are also things we get to help satisfy our wants. The things we get are called **benefits**.
   - When the hare chose to take a nap, what was his cost? (*He gave up winning the race.*)
   - Were there any others costs of the hare taking a nap? (*Yes. Because he didn't win the race, he also gave up being able to boast about being faster. Also, his reputation was hurt.*)
   - When the hare chose to take a nap, what benefit did he get? In other words, how did taking the nap make him better off? (*He was tired, so he got to get some sleep.*)

5. Explain the following:
   - Identifying the costs and benefits of a choice helps us make better decisions.
   - With every choice there are costs and benefits.
   - The best choice is the one that gives you more benefits than costs. That is, you get more than you give up.
   - You should not chose something if the costs of the choice are greater than the benefits.

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- The hare's choice of taking a nap had two costs: He lost the race and hurt his reputation. There was only one benefit—getting to rest. The hare should not have chosen to take the nap. The costs of the nap were greater than the benefits of the nap.

6. Tell the student you are now going to read a story called *Mousetropolis*. Explain that this story is a retelling of Aesop's fable "The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse." In this story, there are two mice: City Mouse and Country Mouse. They each make a choice. Remember every time we make a choice there are costs and benefits. Listen carefully for the choices, costs, and benefits in the story.

7. Begin reading the story. Pause after page 5 (which ends with "Uh, not for me, City Mouse said. "So what do you do for fun?") and discuss the following:
   - What problem was City Mouse having? (*There was too much noise; he couldn't sleep.*)
   - City Mouse made a choice to do something about his problem. What was his choice? (*He chose to go on vacation to the country.*)
   - When City Mouse got to the country, the meal he was offered was rice, beans, and barley. Did he like to eat those things? (*No.*)
   - How do you know? (*He said, "Not for me"; he refused to eat them.*)

8. Continue reading until page 13 (which ends with "Later that night it was too hot and too quiet.") and discuss the following:
   - What did City Mouse and Country Mouse do for fun? (*They went to a jamboree [party] and danced and played music.*)
   - Did City Mouse like the jamboree? (*Yes.*)
   - How do you know? (*He said "Not bad."*)
   - Why was walking to and from the jamboree dangerous for the mice? (*There was an owl; the owl could eat them.*)
   - What was the problem after the mice got back from the jamboree and tried to go to sleep? (*It was too hot and too quiet.*)

9. Tell the students that they will participate in an activity to help them think about the costs and benefits of the choice City Mouse made to go to the country. On the board, draw a table like the one below, large enough so that the cards from the handouts can be sorted in the columns. You will fill in the right-hand side later.

Choice: City Mouse goes to the country			
Costs	**Benefits**		

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10. Distribute one card from *Handout 1: City Mouse's Costs and Benefits* and a piece of tape to five students. Ask the students to decide whether their cards show a benefit or a cost. Call the students up one at a time to place the cards in the appropriate column—Costs or Benefits—under "Choice: City Mouse goes to the country." After all cards are placed, review the answers and make any needed corrections. (See the table below Step 14 for the correct answers.)

11. Tell the students you will continue reading so they can learn about Country Mouse's choice. Finish reading the story and then discuss the following:
    - Because it was too hot and too quiet, Country Mouse made a choice. What was his choice? (*To go to the city with City Mouse.*)
    - When they got to the city, what fun event was going on in the subway? (*There was music and dancing everywhere.*)
    - In the city, was there more variety of food than in the country? (*Yes.*)
    - There was also a danger in the city. What was it? (*The cat; the cat could eat them.*)

12. Now tell the students they are going to identify the cost and benefits of the choice Country Mouse made. On the board, fill in the columns for the Country Mouse choice on the right-hand side of the table as shown below.

Choice: City Mouse goes to the country		**Choice: Country Mouse goes to the city**	
Costs	**Benefits**	**Costs**	**Benefits**

13. Distribute one card from *Handout 2: Country Mouse's Costs and Benefits* and a piece of tape to five students. Ask the students to decide whether their cards show a benefit or a cost. Call the students up one at a time to place the cards in the appropriate column—Costs or Benefits—under "Choice: Country Mouse goes to the city." After all cards are placed, review the answers and make any needed corrections (see the table below).

Choice: City Mouse goes to the country		**Choice: Country Mouse goes to the city**	
Costs	**Benefits**	**Costs**	**Benefits**
Rice, beans, and barley to eat	Music and dancing at the jamboree	Danger: A cat might eat you.	Wide variety of food to eat
Danger: An owl might eat you.	Quieter than the city	Too much noise late at night	Music and dancing in the subway
Can't sleep because it's too hot and too quiet		Can't sleep because of a party next door	

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14. As a class, count how many cards are in each column and write the number beneath the column. Ask the students to look at the City Mouse (left-hand) side of the chart and discuss the following:
    - How many costs are there? (*3*)
    - How many benefits are there? (*2*)
    - Are there more costs or benefits for City Mouse staying in the country? (*There are more costs.*) Write a number sentence to represent the costs and benefits (*3 costs > 2 benefits*).
    - What is the best choice for City Mouse? (*The city.*)
    - Is this where City Mouse is at the end of the story? (*Yes.*)

15. Now ask the students to look at the Country Mouse (right-hand) side of the chart and discuss the following:
    - How many costs are there? (*3*)
    - How many benefits are there? (*2*)
    - Are there more costs or benefits for Country Mouse staying in the city? (*There are more costs.*) Write a number sentence to represent the costs and benefits (*3 costs > 2 benefits*).
    - What is the best choice for Country Mouse? (*The country.*)
    - Is this where Country Mouse is at the end of the story? (*Yes.*)

16. Ask the students to share some costs and benefits of a choice they made. If they need help, give them some prompts. For example, ask them to think about what they had for breakfast. Maybe they choose to a have a breakfast pastry such as a Pop-Tart. The benefit is that Pop-Tarts are very tasty; the cost is that they are not that filling and not very healthy and they may already feel hungry.

17. Remind the students that Mousetropolis is a fable like "The Tortoise and the Hare" and that fables have similar characteristics and story lines. Display *Handout 3: Fable Story Map*. Tell students that they will work with a partner to complete this story map based on *Mousetropolis* to learn about the important parts of a fable.

18. Distribute a copy of Handout 3 to each student, assign pairs, and allow time for them to complete the handout. (Some students may struggle with the "Events" portion of the handout as there is no single combination of four events that are correct. Let them know that they need to simply list four sequential events that help advance the story. The important aspect is that they can recall details of the story in order.) When they have finished, review their answers. (See Handout 3—Answer Key for suggested answers.)

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Closure

19. Review the important points of the lesson by discussing the following:
    - What do you call short stories that usually feature animals given human-like qualities and that deliver a specific moral, or lesson? (*Fables*)
    - What do you call a decision between two alternatives, or options? (*A choice*)
    - Every time we make a choice, there are things that we give up. What do you call the things we give up? (*Costs*)
    - Every time we make a choice, there are also things that we get to help satisfy our wants? What do you call the things we get? (*Benefits*)
    - How do costs and benefits help us make choices? (*Looking at what we are giving up and what we can potentially gain can help us make good choices. If the costs of something are greater than its benefits, we should not choose that thing. If the benefits of something are greater that the costs, we should choose that thing.*)

Assessment

20. Distribute a copy of *Handout 4: Assessment* to each student. Tell the students you are going to read a story to them. After the story, they will complete Part A of the worksheet. Read the story. (Alternatively, watch a video of the story "The Grasshopper and the Ant." An Internet search for "grasshopper and ant video" yields many results. Because this is a well-known fable, the story lines of the video are very similar.)

    The Grasshopper and the Ant

    In a field on a warm summer day, a grasshopper was hopping about. He was chirping and singing happily. An ant passed by, carrying a very heavy ear of corn that he was taking to his nest.

    "Why don't you play with me," said the grasshopper, "instead of working so hard?" "I can't. I am helping to gather food for the winter," said the ant, "and I think you should do the same."

    "Why worry about the winter?" said the grasshopper. "It's so far away and we have plenty of food today." The ant did not listen. He went on his way and continued his work gathering food.

    When the winter came the grasshopper had no food. He was starving. "I wish I would have worked in the summer instead of playing," he thought.

21. Review the directions for Handout 4: The students are to complete Part A using the word bank. For Part B, they are to read the story, look at the chart, and answer the questions. Allow time for students to work, and then review their answers using Handout 4—Answer Key.

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Suggested Extension Activity

22. Read Aesop's version of the story "The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse" and complete a story map for it. Have the students compare and contrast that story with *Mousetropolis* using the completed story maps.

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Handout 1: City Mouse's Costs and Benefits (page 1 of 2)

City Mouse

Rice, beans, and barley to eat

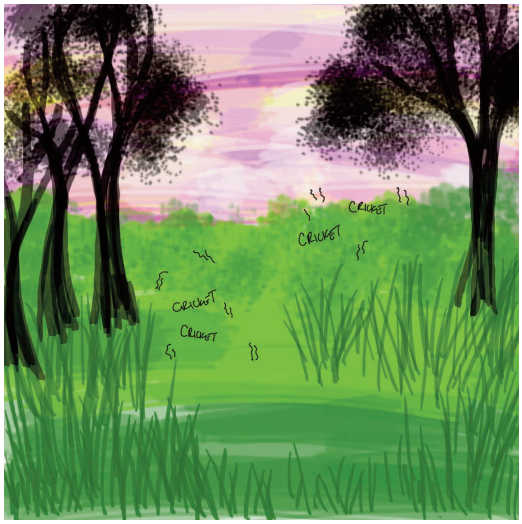
City Mouse

Music and dancing at the jamboree

City Mouse

Danger: An owl might eat you.

City Mouse



Quieter than the city

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Handout 1: City Mouse's Costs and Benefits (page 2 of 2)
Handout 2: Country Mouse's Costs and Benefits (page 1 of 2)

City Mouse

Can't sleep because it's too hot and too quiet

Country Mouse

Danger: A cat might eat you.

Country Mouse

Wide variety of food to eat

Country Mouse

Music and dancing in the subway

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Handout 2: Country Mouse's Costs and Benefits (page 2 of 2)

Country Mouse

Too much noise late at night

Country Mouse

Can't sleep because of a party next door

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Handout 3: Fable Story Map

Title

Characters

Setting

Problem

Events

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Solution

Moral

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Handout 3: Fable Story Map—Answer Key

Title

Mousetropolis

Characters

City Mouse and Country Mouse

Setting

The country and the city

Problem

Each mouse has issues with where they live.

Events

1. *It is too noisy in the city.*
2. *City Mouse goes to visit his cousin Country Mouse in the country.*
3. *It is too hot and too quiet in the Country, so both mice decide to go to the city.*
4. *Country Mouse does not like the city.*

Solution

City Mouse goes back to the City. Country Mouse goes back to the Country.

Moral

The grass isn't always greener on the other side.

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Handout 4: Assessment

Name: _____

Part A

Directions: After you listen to the story, fill in the blanks using the vocabulary from the word bank below. Each word is used only once.

The story "The Grasshopper and the Ant" is a _____. I know this because these types of stories are usually _____ in length. Also, the main characters are _____ that do human-like things such as talk. Finally, these type of stories always teach a lesson, which is also known as a _____.

In this story, the grasshopper made a _____ to play instead of collecting food for the winter. He got to have fun, which is a _____, but he did not have anything to eat in the winter, which is a _____.

Word Bank

animals	cost
benefit	fable
choice	moral
short	

Part B

Directions: Read the story, look at the chart, and answer the questions.

Francis has a problem. He wants to go outside and play after school, but his mom always tells him he has to do his homework first. He lists all of the costs and benefits to help him decide what to do.

Costs	Benefits
He won't get his homework done.	Playing outside is fun!
His mother will be upset he disobeyed and might punish him.	
He will get a bad grade.	

1. What should Francis do? _____

2. How did comparing the costs and benefits help you come up with an answer to Francis's problem?

   _____

   _____

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Handout 4: Assessment—Answer Key

Part A

Directions: After you listen to the story, fill in the blanks using the vocabulary from the word bank below. Each word is used only once.

The story "The Grasshopper and the Ant" is a _____*fable*_____. I know this because these types of stories are usually _____*short*_____ in length. Also, the main characters are _____*animals*_____ that do human-like things such as talk. Finally, these type of stories always teach a lesson, which is also known as a _____*moral*_____.

In this story, the grasshopper made a _____*choice*_____ to play instead of collecting food for the winter. He got to have fun, which is a _____*benefit*_____, but he did not have anything to eat in the winter, which is a _____*cost*_____.

Word Bank

animals	cost
benefit	fable
choice	moral
short	

Part B

Directions: Read the story, look at the chart, and answer the questions.

Francis has a problem. He wants to go outside and play after school, but his mom always tells him he has to do his homework first. He lists all of the costs and benefits to help him decide what to do.

Costs	Benefits
He won't get his homework done.	Playing outside is fun!
His mother will be upset he disobeyed and might punish him.	
He will get a bad grade.	

1. What should Francis do?
   Francis should not go outside after school. He should do his homework instead.

2. How did comparing the costs and benefits help you come up with an answer to Francis's problem?
   Going outside has more costs than benefits. Because of this, Francis should do his homework.

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National Standards in Economics

Standard 2: Effective decision making requires comparing the additional costs of alternatives with the additional benefits. Many choices involve doing a little more or a little less of something: few choices are "all or nothing" decisions.

- **Grade 4, Benchmark 1:** Choices involve getting more of one thing by giving up something else.
- **Grade 4, Benchmark 2:** A cost is what you give up when you decide to do something. A benefit is what satisfies your wants.

Common Core State Standards: English Language Arts, Grades 1-3

Reading: Literature

- Key Ideas and Details

  RL.1.1: Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

  RL.3.1: Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers

  RL.3.2: Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.

  RL.3.3: Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

- Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

  RL.1.7: Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, settings, or events.

  RL 2.7: Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot.

Speaking and Listening

- Comprehension and Collaboration:

  SL.2.2: Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

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