

My Side of the Mountain

By Jean Craighead George / ISBN: 0-14-240111-0

Lesson by

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Lesson Description

After reading the book *My Side of the Mountain*, by Jean Craighead George, students discuss the human capital that Sam possessed, the investments in human capital that he made, and why these investments were important. Students work in groups to create a four-fold chart to help them define and understand the meaning of investment in human capital. Students use a KWLH chart to create a plan for investing in their human capital.

Age Level

11-13 year olds

Content Standards

National Standards in Economics:

- **Standard 1:** Students will understand that productive resources are limited. Therefore, people cannot have all the goods and services they want; as a result, they must choose some things and give up others.
 - Benchmark 13, Grade 4: Human capital refers to the quality of labor resources, which can be improved through investments in education, training, and health.
 - **Standard 15:** Investment in factories, machinery, new technology, and the health, education, and training of people can raise future standards of living.
 - Benchmark 1, Grade 4: When workers learn and practice new skills they are improving their human capital.
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Concepts

Human capital
Investment in human capital

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Objectives

Students will:

1. Define human capital and investment in human capital.
2. Give examples of human capital.
3. Identify ways to invest in human capital.
4. Explain why investment in human capital is important.

Time Required

45-60 minutes

Materials

- A sheet of chart paper for each group of four to five students (Folding directions in the procedure are written for paper that is 30" x 25".)
- A marker for each group of four to five students
- Visual 1
- A copy of Handouts 1 and 2 for each student

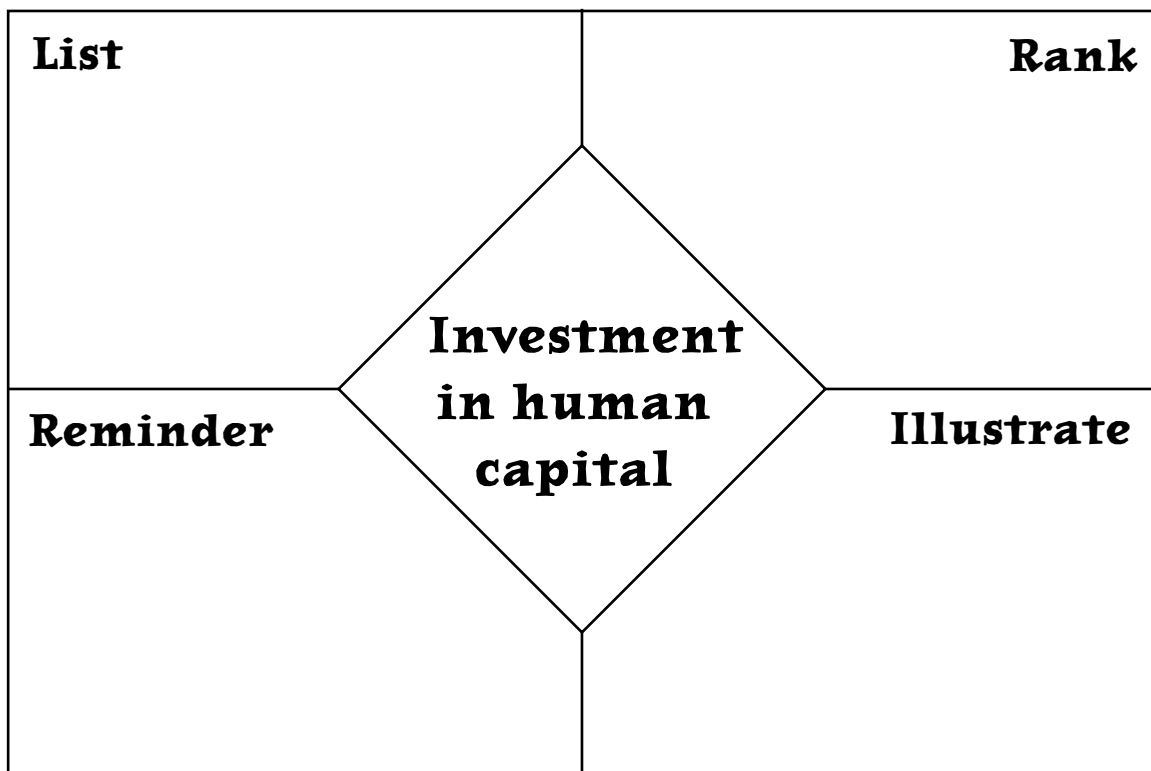
Procedures

1. Explain that you would like to learn to use a yo-yo. Ask the students what you must do to become very accomplished with a yo-yo. (*Answers will vary but may include have someone teach you, practice, look on the Internet for yo-yo tricks and instructions, or read a book about yo-yo tricks.*)
2. Tell students that they are going to read a story about a young man named Sam who had to learn new things in order to survive on his own. Ask them to take note of the skills Sam had, the new ones he learned, and how he learned the new skills. Have the students read the book, *My Side of the Mountain*, by Jean Craighead George.
3. After reading the book, explain that **human capital** is the skills, knowledge, education, and talent that a person possesses. Discuss the following:

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- What human capital did Sam possess when he moved to the Catskill Mountains? (*Knew how to use the flint and rock to create sparks, knew how to make a fish hook out of twigs, knew that a library could be a good resource for information, knew other things from books that he had read or from school*)
 - How did this human capital help him survive? (*He used the fish hook to catch fish. He found a library where he could read and study.*)
 - What was the first problem he had when he arrived in the Catskills? (*He chose the wrong area for sleeping. He couldn't start a fire.*)
 - What skills and knowledge did Sam acquire after moving to the Catskills? (*He learned how to start a fire. He learned how to find his grandfather's land. He learned how to train a falcon.*)
 - How did he acquire these skills and knowledge? (*He learned from people like Bill that he met. He learned by visiting the library and studying. He learned through practice and experience. Sam recalled information he had learned before and used this knowledge to help himself survive.*)
 - Why did Sam acquire these skills and knowledge? (*To survive in the mountains*)
4. Explain that **investment in human capital** is acquiring skills and knowledge to improve human capital. In Sam's case, he invested in human capital by going to the library to find information, by talking with people he met, and developing skills—through practice—to produce the goods he wanted.
5. Divide the class into groups of four or five. Distribute a piece of chart paper and a marker to each student. Instruct the students to fold the paper as follows:
- Holding the paper in landscape fashion, fold the 30" side in half to create a sheet measuring 15" x 25".
 - Fold the 25" side of the paper in half to create a sheet that measures 15" x 12 ½".
 - Take the corner of the paper with folded edges on both sides and fold the corner in about 3 inches.
 - Open the paper and draw lines along all of the folds in the paper. The paper should look like the example below.

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6. Instruct students to label the page as follows:
 - Write: "List" in the box at the top left, "Rank" in the box on the top right, "Reminder" in the box at the bottom left, "Illustrate" in the box at the bottom right.
 - Write "Investment in Human Capital" in the diamond.

7. Tell students that each group will have five minutes to work. Give the following instructions:
 - In the box labeled "List," list words or examples that describe investment in human capital. What are some examples of things you might list in this space? (*Answers will vary but may include education and practice.*) In the box labeled "Rank," rank the top three words or examples from your group's list of words or examples that describe investment in human capital. These are the words or examples you will share with the class.
 - In the box labeled "Reminder" write a phrase or statement that will remind you of what investment in human capital is. For example, practicing basketball might remind you that practice is an example of investment in human capital. Investment in human capital is like practicing basketball because it makes you better at something.

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- In the box labeled "Illustrate," draw a picture that illustrates your reminder. You will share the picture with the class. If practicing basketball is your reminder, what would you draw in the "Illustrate" box? (*Someone playing basketball*)
 - Emphasize the list, reminder, and illustration given here are just examples. The groups should come up with their own lists, reminders, and illustrations.
8. Allow time for groups to share their posters with the class. If possible, display the posters in the room.
 9. Assign each of the groups one of the following: soccer player, dancer, pianist, magician, teenage driver, or teenage babysitter. Ask each group to make a list of ways this assigned individual might invest in human capital and to explain why investment in human capital might be important for that individual.
 10. Allow time for groups to share their responses. Make sure that each group addresses the two questions. (*Answers to the first question will vary but may include practice, lessons, reading, or taking a class. In response to the second question, students should say that investment in human capital is important if the individual wants to get better at the task or job or if the individual wants to know more about the task or work.*)
 11. Explain that people invest in their human capital so that they can learn to do something really well—dance, sing, play soccer, drive a car. And, people invest in their human capital so that they will be better at their work. For example a teenage babysitter might take first aid and CPR because parents would feel more comfortable hiring a sitter with these skills.
 12. Point out that Sam usually knew what he had to learn to accomplish a task, and he came up with a plan for learning and for accomplishing the task. The plan included the investments in human capital that Sam would have to make.
 13. Explain to the students that they are going to develop a plan for investing in their human capital.

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14. Display *Visual 1: Investment in Human Capital—KWLH Chart* and explain how to complete the chart using the example of Sam starting a fire:
 - What did Sam already know about starting a fire? (*How to create sparks using stones*)
 - What did Sam want to know? (*How to actually start a fire*)
 - What did Sam learn and from whom? (*He learned how to start a fire, Bill taught him.*)
 - From what other sources might Sam have learned more about starting a fire? (*Books in the library, talking to others he met*)
 - Why was it important for Sam to make this investment in his human capital? (*Sam invested in himself so that he could start fires to keep warm and cook food; by doing so, he could take care of himself in the mountains.*)
15. Distribute a copy of Handout 1 to each student. Tell the students to write their names on the first line of the chart. Explain that for homework each student should select a topic about which they want to learn (invest in their human capital). Each student should be asked to complete the KWLH chart.
16. During another class period, allow time for students to share or display their KWLH charts on human capital.

Closure

17. Review the important points in the lesson by asking the following questions:
 - What is human capital? (*Human capital is the skills, knowledge, education, and talent that a person possesses.*)
 - Give examples of human capital that you possess. (*Answers will vary but may include ability to read and compute, dance, sing, play an instrument, play a sport, work well in groups, paint, or draw.*)
 - What is investment in human capital? (*Investment in human capital is acquiring skills and knowledge to improve human capital.*)
 - How can people invest in their human capital? (*People can invest in their human capital through education, practice, lessons, reading, talking to others, etc.*)
 - Why is it important for people to invest in their human capital? (*To get better at their jobs, to learn more for the future, to learn to work together, to have the skills they need for life—such as reading, writing, and so on*)

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Assessment

18. Distribute a copy of *Handout 2: Assessment* to each student. Review the directions. Use the answers below to check students' responses.

Part 1:

1. Shannon is in fifth grade. She reads, writes, and computes very well. She plays piano and soccer. She gets along very well with other people.
2. Patrick is a lawyer. He is well educated. He uses his writing and speaking skills every day for his work. He has good negotiation skills.

Part 2:

1. Shanna's investments in human capital: *Studies hard in high school, took a woodworking class, went to trade school and learned to use tools, read building plans and constructed things, served as an apprentice to learn while on the job.*
Shanna's investments in human capital were important because she has a job she likes, she produces nice things, and she earns a good income.
2. Mikhail's investments in human capital: *Graduated from high school, had good grades in science, attended college and studied very hard, worked for a veterinarian during the summers, went to veterinary school*
Mikhail's investments in human capital were important because he is able to help sick animals, he likes his job, and he earns a good income.
3. Krista's investments in human capital: *Swimming lessons, practice, participation in swim meets, weight training*
Krista's investments in human capital were important because she made friends, kept herself healthy, and got a scholarship to help pay for college.

Visual 1: Investment in Human Capital—KWLH Chart

KWLH Chart—Investment in Human Capital for			
What I KNOW	What I WANT to Know	What I Have LEARNED	HOW I can Learn More from Other Resources

Handout 1: My Investment in Human Capital

KWLH Chart—Investment in Human Capital for			
What I KNOW	What I WANT to Know	What I Have LEARNED	HOW I can Learn More from Other Resources

Handout 2: Assessment

Part 1

Directions: In the sentences below, underline the examples of human capital.

1. Shannon is in fifth grade. She reads, writes, and computes very well. She plays the piano and soccer. She gets along very well with other people.
2. Patrick is a lawyer. He is well educated. He uses his writing and speaking skills every day for his work. He has good negotiation skills.

Part 2

Directions: Read each paragraph below and on next page. Beneath the paragraph list at least two examples of investment in human capital that each person made. Write a sentence explaining why each person's investment in human capital was important.

1. Shanna is a carpenter. She studied hard in high school to get good grades in mathematics. She took a wood working class and learned that she really liked building things. She went to trade school where she learned to use all kinds, of tools including power tools like sanders and special saws. She learned to read building plans and construct many different things. After two years of trade school, she went to work as an apprentice for another carpenter. There she learned many skills on the job. Because of her training and hard work, she earns a good income, likes her work, and produces high-quality products.

Handout 2: Assessment (Continued)

2. Mikhail is a veterinarian. After graduating from high school with especially good grades in science, he went to college. He majored in biology and studied very hard to graduate with honors. While in college, during the summers, he worked for a veterinarian so he could practice working with animals. After college, he applied to veterinary school and was accepted. After four years in veterinary school, he took a job as an assistant veterinarian at a small veterinary hospital in his hometown. It was hard work and took a while, but Mikhail now earns a good income as a veterinarian. He is able to help sick animals, and he enjoys his work.

3. Krista is on the high school swim team. She took swimming lessons when she was young and really liked the water. She joined the swim team at the YMCA. She went to swim team practice three evenings a week, practiced on her own two evenings a week, and went to meets on weekends. But she had fun and made a lot of good friends. In high school she practices every day, trains with weights three times a week, and participates in school swim meets. Her practice and hard work have paid off. She made lots of friends through swimming, and she is healthier because she swims. Plus, she was accepted to college and got a scholarship for swimming that will help pay some of her college expenses.