

Notable Trade Book Lesson Plan:

The City of Ember and The People of Sparks

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📖 *The City of Ember* by Jeanne DuPrau. Random House, 2003.

📖 *The People of Sparks* by Jeanne DuPrau. Random House, 2004.

Abstract

*Using children's literature to teach economics is a good method of making unclear concepts seem logical and authentic and has been used effectively by primary school educators for many years. However, finding a popular book that contains clear and comprehensible examples of economic choice, goods and services, and supply and demand at the upper elementary/middle school level can be a challenge. Meeting this challenge is Jeanne DuPrau's **Ember Series**, a compelling futuristic cautionary tale that encourages its readers to think seriously about the allocation of limited resources and the consequences of planning for the future. This interactive lesson takes a situation from a book's plot and applies it to economic principle "voluntary trade creates wealth."*

<p>Book Summaries:</p>	<p><i>The City of Ember:</i> Lina Mayfleet and Doon Harrow are young citizens of Ember, a 241-year-old subterranean settlement. This community, which was founded and stocked with supplies by “The Builders,” is now suffering food and clothing shortages and frequent power failures. Its citizens are hostages and have no possibility of travel beyond the lights of the city. The two twelve-year-olds enter the work force and soon discover the understanding of how technology works has long been forgotten. The people of Ember only know how to repair things, not how they operate. In their desire to help restore the dying power generator, they soon discover that the greed of government officials is preventing the population’s access to available resources. It is Lina who finds the way to save Ember from total darkness, when she discovers the remains of an ancient message. She is convinced that this is the clue to the salvation of the city, and with Doon’s help, they will be able to understand it, before it is too late.</p> <p><i>The People of Sparks:</i> Doon, Lina, and Poppy are the first citizens of Ember to walk under a natural sun in over 200 years. The remaining evacuees from their underground home soon join them. Together they discover Sparks, a post-disaster village with a population much less than the 400 helpless newcomers. Soon the well-meaning citizens of Sparks, worried about the depletion of their resources, grow resentful of the “ungrateful and demanding” refugees, and conflict between the two societies seems inevitable. A disaster is narrowly prevented as both groups try to understand the other and resolve their differences with a hope for a prosperous future.</p>
<p>NCSS Standards:</p> <p>NCEE Standards:</p>	<p>I. Culture—a. compare similarities and differences in the ways groups, societies, and cultures meet human needs and concerns.</p> <p>V. Individuals, Groups, Institutions—g. apply knowledge of how groups and institutions work to meet individual needs and promote the common good.</p> <p>VII. Production, Distribution, & Consumption—a. give and explain examples of ways that economic systems structure choices about how goods and services are to be produced and distributed. e. describe the role of specialization and exchange in the economic process.</p> <p>Standard 5—Gain from Trade: Voluntary exchange occurs only when all participating parties expect to gain. This is true for trade among individuals or organizations within a nation, and usually among individuals or organizations in different nations.</p> <p>Standard 6—Specialization and Trade: When individuals, regions, and nations specialize in what they can produce at the lowest cost and then trade with others, both production and consumption increase.</p>
<p>Materials:</p>	<p>Visual-Voluntary Trade Activity (Appendix A) Activity Sheet–The Value of Trade (Appendix B) This may be used as an individual activity sheet or made into a visual to facilitate class</p>

	<p>discussion.</p> <p>Copies of Identification (Appendix C) and Trading cards—for services (Appendix D) and goods (Appendix E)</p> <p>Envelopes and tag board</p>
Objectives:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The students will review and discuss the economic terms “goods” and “services.” 2. The students will participate in a trading activity. 3. The students will describe the ways in which trade can create wealth.
Procedures: Exploration/ Introduction: Development: Expansion:	<p>A. Introduction</p> <p>When the citizens of Ember leave their decaying underground home, they take very few physical goods with them. If they are going to survive, they will need the basics: food, clothing, and shelter. Will the people of the village of Sparks be able to meet the needs of the struggling refugees? Do the Emberites have anything of value they can trade for the things needed for survival?</p> <p>Note: It is not necessary for the students to have read <i>The City of Ember</i> or <i>The People of Sparks</i> to successfully participate in this activity.</p>
	<p>B. Procedure</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prepare materials prior to class. Create enough trading envelopes for each student in the class. Each envelope should have an identification card taped or glued to the front and contain between four or five trading cards. The cards are placed in the envelopes randomly, making each trading session different and unpredictable. (Trading cards work well if run off on one color for the Ember Service Cards and another color for the Sparks Goods Cards. This allows for easy resorting after the activity.) There will be repeats. 2. Display Visual Voluntary Trade Activity. Read and review content with students. 3. Divide students into two groups representing the citizens of Ember and Sparks. 4. Give each student a prepared envelope. 5. Allow students time to read the character identification and investigate the contents of their envelope. 6. Announce: “The trading session is open.” Allow 3-6 minutes for trading. Announce: “All trading must stop.” 7. Allow students time to assess the results of their trading. Pass out individual copies or display a transparency of <i>The Value of Trade</i> activity sheet. 8. Encourage students to share their experiences during the trading. Note: Some students discover it is to their advantage to trade a good or service several times. Others will find trading one good

	<p>for another good will help them trade for a desired service.</p> <p>9. Remind the students that while the citizens of Ember have skills and knowledge to trade, it is their TIME to do these things that they are actually bartering. Skills remain with a person; they are not traded away.</p> <p>10. The desired results of this activity is for students to conclude through their own experiences that “Voluntary Trade Creates Wealth.”</p>
Suggested Extension Activities:	Two lessons, <i>The City of Ember Literature Guide</i> and <i>Helping Students Cope with Natural and Man-Made Disasters</i> , can be found at: http://www.highsmith.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/Production/LSP/pages/lsp_nov05_resources.htm
Additional References/Web links:	Students may wish to visit Jeanne DuPrau’s Homepage at: http://www.jeanneduprau.com/index.shtml

Visual

Appendix A

Voluntary Trade Activity Ember and Sparks

Introduction

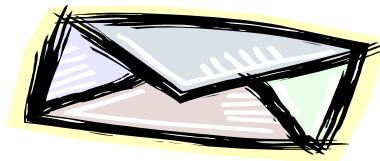
The citizens of Ember have arrived at Sparks with very little. However, they do have skills and knowledge (services) they would be willing to exchange with the well-established citizens of Sparks for food, clothing, and shelter (goods). Could both groups benefit from exchanging goods for services?

Definition Review

Goods - Physically tangible things such as food and shoes

Services – Physically intangible things such as medical care and ditch digging

Trade - the voluntary exchange of goods and/or services.



Directions:

- Each person will receive an envelope. On the outside of the envelope is a description of the trader and his/her motivation for trading. The inside of the envelope contains goods or services cards.
- Trading may only take place during the time allocated by the trade leader. Trade starts with the words “The trading session is open” and ends with the words “All trading must stop.”
- Each person must make at least three trades.
- Be prepared to discuss the trades that were made at the conclusion of the activity.

Activity Sheet

Appendix B

The Value of Trade

Directions:

Fill in the correct information. Be prepared to share your trading experiences with the group.

1. Who were you during the trading activity?

2. What did you have to trade?

3. Were you able to make three trades?

4. Who did you trade with?

5. Who do you think benefited from the trade? Why?

6. Why is it possible to trade a good for a service?

7. Do you think your trades have been successful and you are better off now than before you traded?

Ember Trader

You are an orphan and young citizen of **Ember**. When you arrived from **Ember** to the village of Sparks, your only possessions were a change of clothing tied up in an old blanket and a small jackknife with a dull blade. Your immediate goal is to find food and shelter.

Assignment: Trade at least three goods or services in this envelope to help you achieve your goal. Be prepared to discuss how this trade was to your advantage.

You are an adult citizen from **Ember**. You left the city with the clothes you had on your body. You are the caregiver for a two-year-old child. Your concern is for the well-being of this child, and your goal is to find food, shelter, and safety for her.

Assignment: Trade at least three goods or services in this envelope to help you achieve your goal. Be prepared to discuss how this trade was to your advantage.

You are the oldest child in a family of three children in the city of **Ember**. Your parents are hard workers and expect you and your siblings to work hard to help provide food and shelter, because you left Ember with only the clothes you were wearing. Your family's main goal is to stay together.

Assignment: Trade at least three goods or services in this envelope to help you achieve your goal. Be prepared to discuss how this trade was to your advantage.

Sparks Trader

You are a homeowner in the village of **Sparks**. You live alone and are having a difficult time keeping your house clean and your garden weeded. Your goal is to live in a neater and more organized household. You would like as much help with cleaning chores and building projects.

Assignment: Trade at least three goods or services in this envelope to help you achieve your goal. Be prepared to discuss how this trade was to your advantage.

You are a town official in the village of **Sparks** and would like to see your citizens improve their life styles. Your goal is to have a more progressive community, and you would like to see new energy sources, nicer roads, and better health care.

Assignment: Trade at least three goods or services in this envelope to help you achieve your goal. Be prepared to discuss how this trade was to your advantage.

You are an only child. Your family has a big house in **Sparks** and a large and well-cared-for garden. Your goal is to help the newly arrived citizens. You want to help as many as possible by trading with many different people.

Assignment: Trade at least three goods or services in this envelope to help you achieve your goal. Be prepared to discuss how this trade was to your advantage.

Appendix D

Ember Trading Cards
(Services)

<p>Sewing Skills</p> 	<p>Building Skills</p> 	<p>Cooking Skills</p> 
<p>Knowledge of Electricity</p> 	<p>Strong and willing to do physical labor</p> 	<p>Medical Skills</p> 
<p>Strong and willing to do physical labor</p> 	<p>Cleaning Skills</p> 	<p>Gardening Skills</p> 

Appendix E

**Sparks Trading Cards
(Goods)**

<p>A Jar of Honey</p> 	<p>A Pair of Shoes</p> 	<p>A Homemade Quilt</p> 
<p>Two Worn Winter Coats</p> 	<p>Three Small Packs of Vegetable Seeds</p> 	<p>An Old Empty Shed with no Windows but a Good Roof</p> 
<p>Three Young Chickens</p> 	<p>An Set of Two Small Cooking pots</p> 	<p>A Fishing Pole Complete with String and Some Hooks</p> 