

Economics: A Christian Worldview – Tragedy of the Commons Fairy Tale

(TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS)

Purpose

Students will rewrite the economic principle of common-resource overuse (the “Tragedy of the Commons”) into a short children’s story that clearly communicates the concept.

Time

25-30 minutes (just the rewrite today; tomorrow groups will read their stories/nursery rhymes)

Instructions

Pre-Step 1: Print out Pages 1 & 2 for yourself and Page 3 to hand out to each student.

Step 1 – Quick Review (5 minutes)

Briefly review the idea:

When a resource belongs to “everyone” and no one in particular is responsible for it, individuals often use it without thinking about long-term consequences. The benefits are personal and immediate; the costs are shared and delayed.

Ask:

- Why might people overuse something that is free to everyone?
- What does “external cost” mean?
- Who suffers when a resource is depleted?

Keep discussion focused and short.

Step 2 – Form Groups (2–3 students) (2 minutes)

Assign roles within each group:

- Writer – drafts the story
- Idea Generator – helps design the scenario
- Moral Checker – ensures the economic principle is clear

If group of 2:

- Writer
 - Concept & Moral Checker
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Step 3 – Assignment Instructions (Explain Clearly)

Each group must create a children’s story that includes:

- ✓ A shared resource
- ✓ Multiple users
- ✓ Short-term gain
- ✓ Long-term damage
- ✓ A clear moral
- ✓ Humor if appropriate/desired!

They may choose one format:

- Picture Book (6 short “pages”)
- Animal Fable
- Nursery Rhyme (8 or 12 rhyming lines)

Limit length to keep things manageable:

- No more than 12 sentences (story formats)
 - 8 or 12 lines (nursery rhyme format)
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Step 4 – Work Time (20-25 minutes).

BE SURE TO TELL STUDENTS TWO THINGS:

1. You’re going to finish this by the end of class.
2. You’re going to read these in class tomorrow, so **bring yours with you to class!**

Let students get started!

Also, circulate and ask guiding questions when needed:

- Who owns the resource?
- Why doesn’t anyone protect it?
- What makes the damage “external”?
- Is your moral obvious enough for a six-year-old?

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Your group must explain this economic idea to a six-year-old:

When something belongs to everyone and no one is responsible for it, people often use too much of it. The damage shows up later.

Choose ONE format:

- Picture Book (6 short “pages”)
 - Animal Fable
 - Nursery Rhyme (8 or 12 rhyming lines)
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Your Story MUST Include:

1. A shared resource (forest, lake, playground, candy jar, pasture, etc.)
2. Multiple users
3. Short-term benefit
4. Long-term harm
5. A clear moral

Keep it simple! (A first-grader should be able to understand it.)

And have fun! It’s fine to use humor to make your point.

Maximum length:

- 12 sentences (story formats)
 - 8 or 12 lines (rhyme format)
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Story Planning Sheet

1. What is the shared resource?

2. Who is using it?

3. Why do they take more than they should?

4. What happens over time?

5. What is the long-term consequence?

6. Write your clear moral: