

Subject area/course: History/Social Studies/Economics

Grade level/band: 11-12

Task source: Center for Collaborative Education (CCE); Author: Rachel Roberge

Project Red Paper Clip

TEACHER'S GUIDE

A. Task overview:

Based on the true story of Kyle McDonald, a Canadian blogger who bartered his way from a red paper clip to a house in a series of online trades, students will be given one red paper clip to make trades for this project – either online or in person. They will have two weeks to make as many trades as they can. They will be blogging about their progress as they go along.

The goal of this assignment is three-fold. The class will explore choice and voluntary trade as a way to increase someone's wealth. The class also will explore how technology and the 21st century have eliminated many barriers to trade and increased wealth as a result. Students write about the experience trading in blog form using narrative writing techniques. They will communicate understanding of key economic concepts, and reflect on their learning throughout the process. Students will submit their blog posts, reflect on the trading experience, and orally present their final item to the class, detailing their experience.

B. Aligned standards:

1. Common Core State Standards

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2](#) Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.3](#) Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.6](#) Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.4](#)

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

2. Critical abilities

Use of Technology: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, making strategic use of digital media and visual displays to enhance understanding. Use technology, including the Internet, to research, produce, publish, and update individual



or shared products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.

Communication in Many Forms: Use oral and written communication skills to learn, evaluate, and express ideas for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, and rewriting while considering the audience.

3. Other standards

New Hampshire State Social Studies Standards: SS:EC:1: Economics and the Individual, SS:EC:2: Basic Economic Concepts

C. Time/schedule requirements:

This task has approximately a two-week work time for students to complete their trades and blog. An additional day or two is needed at the end of the project for students to participate in a "show and tell" style discussion where they present their final item and debrief their experience.

D. Materials/resources:

- Google Blogger (blogspot.com)
- Devices that can access Google blogger (e.g., computer, iPad)
- Kyle McDonald's blog to use as a model: <http://oneredpaperclip.blogspot.com/>
- YouTube clip as grabber: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LYo6sCXZAs8>
- Red paper clips for each student
- Digital cameras or camera phones

E. Prior knowledge:

- Basic understanding of necessary economic terms and concepts

F. Connection to curriculum:

- Voluntary trade creates wealth
- Economic thinking can be applied in any choice
- Technology helps to reduce barriers
- Value is subjective

G. Teacher instructions:

- Teacher introduces the project by playing the YouTube video that describes Kyle MacDonald's experiment.
- Students each receive a red paper clip to trade.
- Students create their blogs using blogspot.com (Google blogger).
- Instruct students that all they need to know to start is that they are to "trade-up" like Kyle did and take pictures of each of the items that they trade for.



- Students revisit economics material. They are asked to highlight and list out 6-8 economic rules, concepts, or theories that they will comment on or demonstrate in their own trading experience.
- Students receive coaching on approaching contacts and “making the trade.”
- Students will role play with one another ways that they might approach someone and describe the value in the item they are trying to “trade-up” for.
- As the unit goes on and students learn each of the concepts, they are encouraged to start blogging and make connections between the unit concepts and their trades.
- Check-in periodically, highlight student blogs that are exemplary, so far.
- Have students submit blogs to teacher for grading when they have completed their reflection posts. Google forms is a recommended way to have students "submit" their blogs because it tells the teacher that the student is ready to have their work assessed and puts the URLs into a convenient spreadsheet for teacher access.
- Students participate in a "show and tell" style wrap-up oral presentation where they present their final item and debrief their experience.

H. Student support:

- Periodic check-ins and soft "due dates"
- Extra scaffolding around economic concepts for students who need it
- Use of the more structured concept "check-off" sheet for students that struggle to pull out the unit concepts on their own.
- Voice-to -typing software for students who struggle in writing
- Provide alternatives to a face-to-face “trade-up” experience for students who live in rural areas or do not have access to transportation. The school may consider providing a reimbursement for postage if a student chooses to use an online method of trading.

I. Extensions or variations:

The following economics activities may be good activities to ensure prior economics knowledge.

- The "bag game" practice activity:
<http://www.fte.org/teacher-resources/lesson-plans/eelessons/bag-and-baggage/>
- *Freakonomics* incentives video clip and reading
- Cost/Benefit Analysis Practice Worksheet
- Teachers can use local rubrics to assess economics content in addition to the Common Core standards assessed on the common rubric.

J. Scoring:

Student work can be scored using the QPA Common Visual or Media Task Rubric.

