Choices in the Heat

How limited resources shape a city's heat response

SS24.E.1a "Explain the relationship between scarcity as a basic condition of economics and the decision-making needed to allocate limited resources."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two limits on the city's resources, circle the two spending plans, and write 1 beside the sentence that explains what choosing either plan requires the city to give up.

A Place to Cool Off

1. During a week of dangerous heat, Riverton expects 150 residents to need a public place to cool off each afternoon. Its emergency fund has $90,000 left for the summer. The city also has a limited number of staff members who can supervise cooling sites. These limits create scarcity: the city cannot provide a seat near home for every person who might need one. Officials must decide not only whether to spend the money, but also where to place services and how residents will reach them. Leaving the fund untouched would be a choice too, with consequences for people facing the heat.

2. One proposal would open two school gyms as cooling sites for $45,000 each. Each gym can seat 60 people, so this plan offers 120 seats in two neighborhoods. Another proposal would open one central recreation center for $60,000 and run a shuttle for $30,000. That center can seat 100 people, while the shuttle could help residents without cars reach it. Both proposals use the entire $90,000. The city cannot combine the two gyms with the shuttle or operate both proposals at once. Choosing either plan means giving up the services provided by the other.

3. At a public meeting, residents disagree about which shortage matters most. Some favor the two gyms because they offer 20 more seats and put cooling spaces in two neighborhoods. Others favor the central center and shuttle because a seat is useful only if a person can get to it. Officials choose the central center and shuttle, reasoning that transportation is the more urgent barrier for residents without cars. This decision does not eliminate scarcity: the center still has only 100 seats for an expected 150 people. The plan distributes limited money, space, and transportation according to a stated priority.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why must Riverton choose between the two proposals instead of providing all their services?

2. What does the city gain by choosing the central center and shuttle, and what does it give up?

3. How do the two proposals reflect different priorities for allocating cooling services?

4. If all 150 residents reach the central center, how many cannot get a seat? Explain what this shows about the city's decision.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Invent a different community need involving a limited resource. In four to five sentences, describe two possible uses of that resource, choose one, and explain what your choice gains, what it gives up, and why the resource cannot meet every need.

ANSWER KEY

Choices in the Heat

GRADE 12 · SS24.E.1a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two limits on the city's resources, circle the two spending plans, and write 1 beside the sentence that explains what choosing either plan requires the city to give up. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why must Riverton choose between the two proposals instead of providing all their services?	**Both proposals use the entire $90,000 fund, so the city cannot operate both or add the shuttle to the two gyms.**
2	What does the city gain by choosing the central center and shuttle, and what does it give up?	**It gains shuttle service that could help residents without cars reach cooling space. It gives up the two neighborhood gyms and their 20 additional seats.**
3	How do the two proposals reflect different priorities for allocating cooling services?	**The gym plan prioritizes more seats in two neighborhoods. The center-and-shuttle plan prioritizes transportation to a single site.**
4	If all 150 residents reach the central center, how many cannot get a seat? Explain what this shows about the city's decision.	**Fifty residents cannot get a seat because the center holds only 100. Choosing how to use limited resources does not eliminate scarcity.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Our town has one vacant lot beside a train station, but residents want both a community garden and a covered bicycle shelter. The lot is too small for both uses. I would build the bicycle shelter because commuters currently leave their bikes exposed to rain. This choice gives up space where neighbors could grow food together. The limited land forces the town to prioritize bicycle storage over a garden, even though both would benefit residents.

Accept equivalent explanations that connect a specific resource limit to a choice and its trade-off. For Part 3, look for two distinct uses of one limited resource and a reasoned explanation of the chosen use and the forgone one.