Courtyard Choices

Read how limited resources shape a school project.

GE.1.2 "Define scarcity and explain how opportunity costs and tradeoffs exist."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the limited money and time, circle each choice the students make, and write 1 or 2 next to the best alternative given up for each choice.

Getting Ready for the Courtyard Event

1. On Friday, the student council has $240 to improve the school courtyard before a community event. It could buy six shade umbrellas for $240 or four portable tables for $240. The courtyard needs both, but the council cannot buy both sets with its current budget. This is scarcity: resources are limited compared with the wants people have for them. The students also have only one Saturday morning to set up the space. Even if a donor paid for all the supplies, their limited setup time would still force a choice about what to do first.

2. At a meeting, members decide to buy the tables because visitors need places to eat. Since the council can afford only one complete set, choosing tables means giving up the umbrellas. The umbrellas were the next best option because they would have offered shade on a hot afternoon. The opportunity cost of buying tables is the shade those umbrellas would have provided. The council gains seating but gives up shade, a tradeoff. An opportunity cost is not every possible use of the money. It is the benefit of the best alternative passed over when a choice is made.

3. On Saturday, eight volunteers have two hours before the event. They could spend that time assembling the new tables or planting flowers beside the entrance, but not both. They rank assembling tables above planting flowers, so they use the two hours for tables. The opportunity cost of that time is the brighter entrance the flowers would have created. Their choice trades a more colorful entrance for usable seating. If the school offered more money, the volunteers would still face a time limit. Scarcity can involve time as well as dollars, so getting one resource does not erase every tradeoff.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why does the council's $240 budget create scarcity, even though it can pay for either set?

2. What is the opportunity cost of buying the tables? Explain why that cost is more than a dollar amount.

3. What tradeoff do the volunteers make with their two hours on Saturday?

4. If the school gave the council more money, why would the volunteers still face scarcity and an opportunity cost?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Describe a choice you might face outside this courtyard project. In three or four sentences, name a scarce resource, two ways to use it, your choice, the benefit you gain, and the benefit of the next-best option you give up.

Courtyard Choices

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the limited money and time, circle each choice the students make, and write 1 or 2 next to the best alternative given up for each choice. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why does the council's $240 budget create scarcity, even though it can pay for either set?	**The council wants both tables and umbrellas, but $240 pays for only one set.**
2	What is the opportunity cost of buying the tables? Explain why that cost is more than a dollar amount.	**The opportunity cost is the shade the next-best option, the umbrellas, would have provided. It is a lost benefit, not just money spent.**
3	What tradeoff do the volunteers make with their two hours on Saturday?	**They gain usable seating by assembling tables but give up the brighter entrance they could have created by planting flowers.**
4	If the school gave the council more money, why would the volunteers still face scarcity and an opportunity cost?	**Their two hours would still be limited. Using that time to assemble tables means giving up the brighter entrance from planting flowers.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I have one free hour after school and could practice guitar or play basketball. I choose guitar because I want to learn a new song. Basketball is my next best option, so the opportunity cost is the exercise and time with friends I give up. I trade those benefits for music practice.

Accept answers that distinguish a limited resource from the wants it cannot fully satisfy. Opportunity cost should identify the benefit of the next-best option given up, not simply the money or time spent.