When Crowds Act

Weighing the gains and costs of a shared action

S.8.10 "Discuss both the benefits and social costs of collective behavior in society."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two benefits of the Ice Bucket Challenge and circle two social costs. Number one benefit and one cost that you think are closely connected.

What a Bucket of Ice Water Set in Motion

1 In 2014, videos of people pouring buckets of ice water over their heads spread across social media. The Ice Bucket Challenge called attention to amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS, a disease that damages nerve cells controlling muscles. Many participants donated to ALS organizations and invited friends to take part. Together, they reached an audience that would have been difficult for one person to reach. The shared activity made an unfamiliar disease visible in everyday conversations. Yet a video could travel widely without explaining what living with ALS means or why research and care need long-term support.

2 The campaign brought substantial donations to ALS organizations, helping fund research and services for people affected by the disease. Its quick spread showed how a crowd can turn small individual acts into a large pool of support. But public invitations also created pressure. Someone might feel judged for refusing to post a video or give money, even if they could not afford to donate. Social media also rewards striking performances. A clip of a splash might get attention while a careful explanation of ALS receives less. Visibility, therefore, did not always mean deeper understanding.

3 Pouring water also raised questions about waste, especially where water was scarce. Some participants chose a different way to take part, such as sharing information or donating without making a video. Those choices kept the goal in view while avoiding a particular cost. The campaign illustrates a wider pattern in collective behavior: people acting together can bring resources and attention to a shared problem, but the method can place burdens on others or draw attention away from the problem itself. To judge an action fairly, consider who benefits, who bears costs, and whether a different approach could keep the benefits.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did inviting friends help the campaign raise support, and what social cost could those invitations create?

2. What did widely shared videos achieve, and why might that benefit have been limited?

3. How could someone keep the campaign's goal while responding to a concern about pouring water?

4. Why are donation totals alone not enough to judge the campaign's effects on society? Use one benefit and one cost from the passage.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine students organize a schoolwide winter coat drive. In one paragraph, discuss two possible benefits, two possible social costs, and one choice that could reduce a cost while keeping a benefit.

ANSWER KEY

When Crowds Act

HIGH SCHOOL · S.8.10

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two benefits of the Ice Bucket Challenge and circle two social costs. Number one benefit and one cost that you think are closely connected. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did inviting friends help the campaign raise support, and what social cost could those invitations create?	**Invitations helped the campaign spread and gather donations, but they could make people feel judged if they could not donate or did not post a video.**
2	What did widely shared videos achieve, and why might that benefit have been limited?	**The videos made ALS more visible, but a popular clip might explain little about the disease or the need for long-term support.**
3	How could someone keep the campaign's goal while responding to a concern about pouring water?	**They could share information about ALS or donate without making a water-pouring video, keeping attention on the cause while avoiding water use.**
4	Why are donation totals alone not enough to judge the campaign's effects on society? Use one benefit and one cost from the passage.	**Donations helped fund ALS research and services, but the campaign could also pressure people who could not afford to give. Both effects matter when judging it.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A schoolwide coat drive could help families stay warm and give students a way to work together. However, publicly naming who needs a coat could embarrass those students. Sorting and storing donated coats could also take time from school staff. Organizers could let families request coats privately, which would protect their dignity while still helping them stay warm. They could also arrange volunteers to sort donations so the drive places less work on staff.

Accept other passage-supported benefits and social costs when students explain the connection between them. For the coat drive, accept plausible effects and a specific choice that reduces one stated cost without losing a stated benefit.