The Free Ride

How one offer shapes different choices

E.C.1.5 "Describe how incentives influence behavior and how individual decisions are shaped by subjective preferences."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the free-fare incentive, circle personal preferences, and draw arrows from each marked detail to a decision it helps explain.

A Bus Fare and a Saturday

1. On Saturdays, the town's public bus usually costs teenagers two dollars per ride. To reduce traffic near the downtown market, the town offers free rides on the market route for one month. For students deciding whether to visit, the free fare changes the cost of taking the bus, not the price of food. Malik, who enjoys hunting for used books at the market, takes the bus instead of asking his sister for a ride. The free fare makes that choice easier, but his interest in books gives him a reason to go in the first place.

2. Jules also likes the market's book stall, but Saturday morning is her only chance to practice with her soccer team. She skips the trip, even though the bus ride would cost nothing. Her choice does not mean the fare offer failed for everyone. It means the value she places on practice is greater, for her, than the benefit of a free ride and a market visit. Meanwhile, Tasha already works downtown on Saturdays. She uses the free bus rather than paying the usual fare, but she would have traveled downtown even without the offer.

3. The town counts more teen riders during the free-fare month, yet ridership alone cannot show why each person boarded. Some, like Malik, may choose the bus over another ride; others, like Tasha, may simply save money on a trip they already planned. A free fare is an incentive because it lowers the cost of riding, but its effect depends on each person's priorities and alternatives. If the buses run only in the morning, a teen who prefers an afternoon visit might still find the bus inconvenient. The same offer can lead to different decisions.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How do the free fare and Malik's interest in books each help explain his choice?

2. Why does Jules skip the market even though the bus is free?

3. What does the free fare change for Tasha, and what does it not change?

4. Why can't the town use its rider count alone to tell whether the free fare caused more teens to visit the market?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A school offers three dollars off tickets to its play. In four sentences, describe two students with different preferences, the choice each makes, and how the discount affects each choice.

The Free Ride

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the free-fare incentive, circle personal preferences, and draw arrows from each marked detail to a decision it helps explain. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do the free fare and Malik's interest in books each help explain his choice?	**The free fare makes taking the bus cheaper, while his interest in used books gives him a reason to visit the market.**
2	Why does Jules skip the market even though the bus is free?	**She values her Saturday morning soccer practice more than a free ride and a market visit.**
3	What does the free fare change for Tasha, and what does it not change?	**It changes what she pays for the bus, but not her decision to travel downtown for work.**
4	Why can't the town use its rider count alone to tell whether the free fare caused more teens to visit the market?	**Some teens may switch to the bus for a trip they already planned, as Tasha does. A higher rider count does not show how many new market visits the offer caused.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Nina enjoys plays but usually saves her money, so the three-dollar discount leads her to buy a ticket. The lower price makes the play worth the cost to her. Eli prefers spending that evening at basketball practice, so he does not buy a ticket. The discount lowers the price for Eli too, but it does not change what he wants to do that evening.

Accept answers that distinguish the fare incentive from personal preferences and explain how both shape decisions. For Your Turn, the two students may make the same choice if their different reasons and the discount's effect are clear.