

# Can't We Just Get Along?

## Competition, Consensus, Cooperation

### Teachers' Guide

#### Overview

This project has three (3) different scenarios that serve the same purpose: Give students the chance to discuss fundamental issues of governing and setting up an economic structure. The scenarios differ a bit to make them work for the given situation (a bubble biosphere—**Training for Mars**, an uninhabited planet—**In a Galaxy Far, Far Away** and a devastated earth—**Aftermath**), but the prompts are the same. There are short and long versions of each of the scenarios (the longer versions have more detailed information).

My experience doing these simulations over the years is that students generally choose a system where everyone contributes and everyone has an equal vote. Given that, you may want to use (as an extension to the above or as your main scenario), the activity<sup>1</sup> based on my Stanford University economics professor friend Ran Abramitzky's intriguing economics book *The Mystery of the Kibbutz Egalitarian Principles in a Capitalist World* about the Israeli Kibbutzim [plural of kibbutz]. Kibbutz means **gathering**—see page 3.

You can use these materials in three ways:

- 1) As a political/civics/government activity, where the focus is on setting up the governing principles.
- 2) As an economics activity, where the focus is on setting up the economy.
- 3) As both a governing and economics lesson so your students can see the interplay between them.

The Aftermath scenario has two follow-up parts to extend discussion of the issues as the planet and the environment (political and economic) evolves.

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<sup>1</sup> Ran's grandparents were founders of one of first kibbutzim and his mother grew up on one. In the book, he explores how this worked (and didn't) throughout the over 100 years that they have existed and continue to do so. Here is a link to the book: <https://press.princeton.edu/titles/11178.html>.

The first Kibbutz was established in 1909. Today there are about 270 kibbutzim where about 130,000 people live.

## What's Included in the Zip File [PDF](#)

- Teachers Guide and Student Hand-outs for each scenario
- Trading cards for Aftermath ?

## Grade Levels/Subjects/Disciplines

- Economics, Civics/Government, Contemporary Problems, U.S. History

## Objectives

- For students to see how they would set up a government and what preconceived ideas they have
- For students to see how they would set up an economic system,
- Provide a forum for vigorous discussions
- For student to understand the pros and cons of equal sharing

## Standards

**Common Core:** CCRA SL 11–12.1, 3, 4

**CA Civics:** 12.2.6

**National Standards:** Civics Standard #3; Economics #1 <sup>2</sup>

## Time Needed

Two or three 45-minute class periods (see **Activities and Timeline** next page).

One for discussions in the groups;<sup>3</sup> One or two for presentations and coming to a consensus

## Optional

- One to two days for Aftermath Parts 2 and 3
- One day for Equal Sharing Activity

## Skills

Organizational, analytical thinking, team work

## General Preparation for all Lessons

- 1) Pick which scenario you are going to use (the scenarios also contain the Student Instructions)
- 2) Make one copy of the scenario hand-out per student

## Materials

- Drawing materials (optional)

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<sup>2</sup> Government standard from the Center for Civic Education (CCE); economics standards for the National Council for Economic Education (NCEE).

<sup>3</sup> For homework, groups put their ideas into a form that can be presented to the class.

## Activities and Timeline

### DAY 1:

- 1) Assign students to groups of 3 to 5 (or let them choose).
- 2) Have each group choose a spokesperson and scribe (notetaker).
- 3) Give students the period to work in groups.
- 4) By the end of the period, have groups summarize, and the scribe write down, what they decided and/or draw, flowchart, etc., then have them make a presentable version for homework. They should **give their new civilization a name.**

### DAY 2:

- 5) Have each spokesperson present their group's ideas either (using a projector or on the board)
- 6) Begin the class discussion, if time

### DAY 3:

- 7) Finish the discussion. You should try to have the class come to a consensus [most or all agree]
- 8) Do the Extension Activity

Note: If you are going to do a unit on the US Constitution, you can use this project as lead-in to our free download: **The Constitution in a Nutshell** <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/US-Constitution-in-a-Nutshell-2752471>, which takes you and your class through our Constitution in depth.

## Equal Sharing Activity

One of the central principles of kibbutzim is **equal sharing of wealth**. In his book, Ran investigates the economics of equal sharing and the basic economic problems with it. This activity is designed to see how your students try to solve the economic problems discussed and analyzed in the book: brain drain, adverse selection and shirking (see QQQ for the activity).

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## TRAINING FOR MARS

You and your classmates are going to make an expedition to Mars in two years. To get prepared, you will live in bubble where you will have to grow your own food, repair the equipment and keep your environment clean and healthy. You will be entirely self-contained. You **will** have technology and the Internet so you'll be able to do research and communicate with people on the outside. However, to make the conditions most Mars-like, and since teleportation isn't reliable, you won't be able to leave the bubble nor bring anything into it, just as you won't have that ability once you're on Mars.

While providing for your physical well-being will be critical in the coming months, your most important task right now is to figure out how you will all live together harmoniously.

1. **Inhabitants:** (Those who were on the bubble) are the people in this class with the exception of your teacher. No one else will be joining you during the year, but other people will be colonizing Mars once your group gets is settled and habitable.
2. **Weather:** The climate inside the bubble is temperate (mild winters and warm summers), the nights may be somewhat cold. The equivalent of 15 to 20 inches of rain falls per year.
3. **Topography:** Your bubble is in a flat area, but the ground is grassy in some places and rocky in others.
4. **Natural resources:** The bubble will have are a couple of small man-made streams and one river which you will duplicate on Mars. Nothing appears to be growing except some grasses and flowers, but you will be planting some crops right away. Sunlight will shine through the bubble which will allow you have solar power.
5. **Animals:** In order to have milk, meat, fish and eggs, as well as company, your bubble has cows, pigs, and sheep; chickens and turkeys; various kinds of fish; cats, dogs and horses.
6. **Equipment and food:** To get you started you will bring into the bubble about a 3 month's supply of food and water (fruits, vegetables, meat, eggs, bread, milk, cereal, tea, coffee and snacks, etc.) along with the usual assortment of plates, silverware, glasses, pots and pans. You'll have large power generator which you will set up and run, and which you will take with you. There's a collection of hand and power tools as well as solar equipment. A large variety of flower, plant and vegetable seeds are also available.
7. **Personal items:** You have your own clothes, books and other effects. Everyone has access to a computer which can be used to communicate with the outside while you are on earth and with earth from Mars. One person is a doctor and there is a small, but well-equipped medical station which will be transported with you to Mars. You are bringing such items as needles, thread, matches, batteries, flashlights and other items that you think will be useful. There are many unknowns as yet about how this experiment will work.

### STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS

Using the above information, your group needs to come to a consensus on rules for how to produce and distribute work and resources to insure survival and improve living conditions.

- Give your new civilization a good name.
- Decide how to govern yourselves
- Create an overview of your economic system

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## IN A GALAXY FAR FAR AWAY

Aeronautical engineers created “jump” technology which allows spacecraft to travel large distances in seconds. As a result, many planets in other galaxies are being colonized. Your job is to create a government and economic structure so that there will be intra-planet (on your planet) and inter-planet (within the your galaxy) peace, harmony and prosperity.

1. **Inhabitants:** (Those who are on the spacecraft) are the people in this class with the exception of your teacher. Other humans and creatures will also settle other planets in the future.
2. **Weather:** The climate on your planet varies (mild to cold winters and warm to hot summers), Fifteen to 20 inches of rain falls per year in many places.
3. **Topography:** The topography is varied: hills and mountains, large expanses of flat ground, forests, and deserts.
4. **Natural resources:** There are streams and rivers. Nothing appears to be growing except some grasses and unfamiliar flowers. The planet has sunlight similar to earth so you will able to use solar power.
5. **Animals:** In order to have milk, meat, fish and eggs, as well as company, your bubble has cows, pigs, and sheep; chickens and turkeys; various kinds of fish; cats, dogs and horses.
6. **Equipment and food:** When you arrive the spaceship will have about a 3 month’s supply of food and water, (fruits, vegetables, meat, eggs, bread, milk, cereal, tea, coffee and snacks, etc.) along with the usual assortment of plates, silverware, glasses, pots and pans. Water testing, purification and desalinization equipment is also available. Although it has its own large power generator, there remains only enough fuel to run the spaceship for about 2 to 3 months. There’s a collection of hand and power tools as well as solar equipment. A large variety of flower, plant and vegetable seeds are also available.
7. **Personal items:** You have your own clothes, books and other effects. Everyone has access to a computer which can be used to communicate with earth. One crew member has a small hydroponic greenhouse in which tomatoes and strawberries are growing. One person is a doctor and there is a small, but well-equipped medical station on board. Crew members are bringing such items as needles, thread, matches, batteries, flashlights, diving gear and other items that crew members thought would be useful. There are many unknowns as yet about this planet.

### STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS

Using the above information, your group needs to come to a consensus on rules for how to produce and distribute work and resources to insure survival and improve living conditions.

- Give your planet a good name
- Decide how to govern yourselves
- Create an overview of your economic system

## IN A GALAXY FAR FAR AWAY

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### STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS

Using the above information, your group needs to come to a consensus on rules for how to produce and distribute work and resources to insure survival and improve living conditions.

- Give your planet a good name
- Decide how to govern yourselves
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## AFTERMATH

It's 2102. You have been on a submarine exploring the ocean's depth when suddenly you lose communication with the command station. As you surface, you and your shipmates stare in horror and disbelief at the scene before you. Destruction and devastation are everywhere. Many buildings, trees and houses have been reduced to rubble. Those remaining are charred and crumbling. You realize that you are one of the few fortunate survivors of a major disaster. A brief exploration of the surroundings brings the following information to your command.

1. **Inhabitants:** (Those who were on the submarine) are the people in this class with the exception of your teacher. There appear to be no other people in this part of the world.
2. **Weather:** While the climate is still temperate (mild winters and warm summers), the nights may be somewhat cold. Fifteen to 20 inches of rain falls per year.
3. **Topography:** From your vantage point, you can see a number of small and large hills close by. Much flat land is evident which has either chunks of concrete embedded in it or is simply bare.
4. **Natural resources:** Water is percolating up out of the ground around your feet, but you are not sure that it is safe to drink. Nothing appears to be growing and no animals can be seen, although it is possible that some survived in another location.
5. **Equipment and food:** As you would expect, the submarine is well-equipped. There is about 3 month's food and water supply, (fruits, vegetables, meat, eggs, bread, milk, cereal, tea, coffee and snacks, etc.) left, along with the usual assortment of plates, silverware, glasses, pots and pans. Water testing, purification and desalinization equipment is also available. Although it has its own large power generator, there remains only enough marine fuel to run the sub for about 2 to 3 months, but also have solar equipment which you can set up. There's a collection of hand and power tools. A large variety of flower, plant and vegetable seeds are also available.
6. **Personal items:** You have your own clothes, books and other effects. Everyone has access to a computer, but there does not seem to be any Internet service you can connect to. One crew member has a small hydroponic greenhouse in which tomatoes and strawberries are growing. One person is a doctor and there is a small, but well-equipped medical station on board. Crew member brought such items as needles, thread, matches, batteries, flashlights, diving gear and other items they thought would be useful. There are many unknowns about your predicament.

### STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS

Using the above information, your group needs to come to a consensus on rules for how to produce and distribute work and resources to insure survival and improve living conditions.

- Give your restored civilization a hopeful, optimistic name
- Decide how to govern yourselves
- Create an overview of your economic system.

## AFTERMATH

It's 2102. You have been on a submarine exploring the ocean's depth when suddenly you lose communication with the command station. As you surface, you and your shipmates stare in horror and disbelief at the scene before you. Destruction and devastation are everywhere. Many buildings, trees and houses have been reduced to rubble. Those remaining are charred and crumbling. You realize that you are one of the few fortunate survivors of a major disaster. A brief exploration of the surroundings brings the following information to your command.

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Using the above information, your group needs to come to a consensus on rules for how to produce and distribute work and resources to insure survival and improve living conditions.

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## AFTERMATH PART 2

The time is awhile later. The first season's crops have been planted and harvested. The second season's are going in. Some communal lodgings have been built, the generator is operational as is the solar equipment, so that there is electricity and power. Part of the group had gone off on an expedition in-land and have returned with some good news. They found a number of buildings that are not damaged. Stores containing such items as bicycles, hardware, office supplies, and furniture have a limited amount of usable or repairable merchandise. Food stores also exist, but the safety of the food remains in doubt. Cars parked in underground garages were spared, but the gasoline supply is unknown at this time. A fuel refinery, cement plant and steel mini-mill also appear to have survived, at least partially. One power substation is somewhat undamaged. Some cell towers are still standing and power systems seem to be repairable.

With this additional information, what are the next steps you would take?

## EQUAL SHARING ACTIVITY

### Background

As practiced in the early days, **Equal Sharing** meant that **all goods and property** were owned by the communally and not the individual and that they were shared equally. In practice this meant, each person was assigned a job by the work manager (which rotated among the group). These jobs could be cooking, working in the fields, caring for the children, any job that was needed to maintain the community. Everyone lived in the same size house (which had the same basic equipment and features) and ate in the communal dining room. Money was not needed in the community. There was an assortment of benefits to living there:<sup>1</sup> parks, swimming pools, concerts, etc. [economic term for this is **public goods**]. You could take as much food as you wanted. As the community grew and prospered more amenities were added. Everyone received cradle to grave care. This worked out very well for many, many years.

In his book, Ran explains the main economic issues with equal sharing of wealth: These are:

- Brain drain: the most ambitious, best educated people have an incentive to leave the community and look for higher paying work outside.
- Adverse selection: the desire for people with lower skills, less motivation, or higher need for help to want to stay as they are taken care of and receive the same share of the goods and services.
- Shirking: people not working hard because they receive the same benefits as those who do work hard.

**Q1:** Your community has equal sharing, what rules would you create to limit or solve these problems?

**Q2:** What sanctions [penalties] would you use to enforce the rules you make?

**Q3:** Since people get assigned to work according to what the kibbutz needs, there seems to be no incentive to study hard given that there is no financial return to do so. What, if anything, should your community do? Is there a benefit to the community to have educated members?

**Q4:** What is the value of the safety net (meaning you will be taken care of by the community)?

### In the 1980s:

There were a number of circumstances (both internal and external) created serious problems for many of these communities. They began to *reform* i.e., move away from equal sharing.

### Present time:

The community is deciding whether or not to move away from equal sharing. First make a list of the pros and cons of equal sharing. Then answer the following question:

**Q5:** Your community has had equal sharing for a long time, but is now struggling economically due to the three factors plus outside pressures, so has decided to replace equal sharing with something else. What would you change to keep your community viable?

**Q6:** How would you take care of those members who have lived and worked in this community for a long time, but are now older or and/or too sick contribute much?

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<sup>1</sup> While there were not many amenities in the early days, the standard of living on the kibbutzim was often higher than in the rest of the British Mandate Palestine (Israel was not an independent state until 1948).