

Supply and Demand

Companion Text: The Jakry Kids: Curiosity Shop, by Lin Jakary & illustrated by Ryan Olson
Subject Area & Grade Level: Social Studies, 3rd Grade

Objectives

After this lesson, students will be able to:

- Recognize the subjectivity inherent in the market value of items
- Explain the relationship between supply and demand in simple terms
- Evaluate the role of marketing in consumer decision-making

Introduction

Read the story once through without stopping. Then, ask students what they recall about Marlita's shop. Were things expensive or not? Re-read pages 11 and 12. Then invite students into a brief discussion on the following questions: What is Marlita's reasoning for why nothing's been sold in 53 years: "Nobody wants things when they get too old."

Procedure

Split students into pairs, and have them discuss the following question with their partners:

- Do you think Marlita's is right about why things in her store weren't selling?
- How do stores know what people want to buy?
- Who decides which items sell well or which items sit on the shelf unwanted?

Discussion

Start the discussion with a poll. Ask students how many of them think that, in general, rare things are less expensive or more expensive? Ask for a show of hands. (It is likely that most students will think rare things are generally more expensive.) Explain that in general in our economy, this is true—rare things, meaning things that there are not very many of, tend to be more expensive and commonly available things tend to be less expensive. However, there are other forces at work that help to set the costs of things.

Working with their partner again, have students ponder this scenario: If rare things are expensive, then why is a piece of artwork made by (choose a student who is artistic) in our class not as expensive as other rare items, such as a diamond? It's a rare, one-of-a-kind item, after all.

Allow for students to share their responses, and then lead in to a discussion about the effects of marketing and advertising on consumer decision-making. Explain that these forces shape our ideas of what holds value, and that in different cultures, different things are seen as valuable or good to have. Ask students to reflect on why some items seem "cool" are others don't, and have them share their reflections.

