

Walter Williams: Economist of Liberty

Activities & Assignments

Grades 3-5

“Simon Says”

Help students visualize the benefits of work ethic, upward mobility, and determination by having them use their bodies to mimic the following words and then answer the questions. Other words can be used. Teacher can choose which word “Simon says” and which words are just spoken.

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|--------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| 1) Work hard | 5) Study | 9) Wash dishes |
| 2) Be lazy | 6) Watch TV | 10) Play a video game |
| 3) Be silly | 7) Do pushups | 11) Take notes |
| 4) Give up | 8) Daydream | |

Questions:

- Which of the phrases that I gave you demonstrates a good work ethic?
- What makes a person determined to work hard, study, do pushups, etc?
- People who pursue upward mobility would spend more time doing what things and less time doing what other things that you heard?

A Difference in My Life

Prompt: Who in your life has helped you the most, or has taught you the most? What did this person do for you that made such a big difference in your life?

Option 1: Write a letter to the person based on the prompt. Specific memories can be shared: holiday gatherings and other memorable times where this person influenced the student.

Option 2: Write a paragraph about the person based on your memory, correspondence you’ve held on to, or even a personal interview. In this paragraph, try to convey why and how this person had such a big impact on your life.

Grades 6-8

You are The Employer

You own a store. Buying your products (inventory) costs you \$1000 from January to June and \$3000 from July to December. Renting your storefront costs \$300 per month. Health insurance for your 5 employees costs you \$500 per month. As the breadwinner of your family, you still must pay yourself to provide for your family, but also pay your employees their hourly wage.

1. If minimum wage is \$10/hour and your employees work 40 hours/week, how much will they make?
2. It costs your family \$2500 each month to live, how much do you need to bring in for total sales to pay all of the expenses (rent, health, insurance, salaries)?
3. Will you have to set your prices higher in February or August in order to pay rent, health insurance, salaries, and have enough to provide for your family?
4. What is profit?
5. What other expenses does a storeowner have to account for? (Utilities, trash, permits, etc.)
6. Give reasons why minimum wage is a controversial topic.
7. What should store owners do when inflation affects their inventory costs?
8. Discuss supply and demand. What types of items may be in greater demand during holidays? What happens to the price if that item is not being manufactured in high quantities (the supply is low)?

Think-Pair-Share: First, as individuals (or in small groups), research one of the following topics: *minimum wage*, *affirmative action*, or *rent control*. **Think** about why these policies are supported or opposed and what their consequences, intended or not, might be. Then, **pair** up with another student (or student group) who researched a *different* topic from the above three. **Share** what you found out about these topics. Why did Walter Williams believe these policies actually harm the very people they are intended to help?

What other perspectives on these topics are held by economists? How and why do they reach different conclusions from Williams?

Op-ed – Based on the Think-Pair-Share activity, students can write an op-ed for a school publication or to submit to the local newspaper. Alternatively, teachers can give this as an assignment if there is no school or student-run publication.