

# Shop Till You Drop?

## OVERVIEW

In this simulation, students experience how resources are distributed and used by different people based on access to wealth. Students discuss and work toward personal and structural solutions to address the environmental impacts of resource consumption, and to help alleviate poverty.

## INQUIRY/CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

- What are the choices that people with relatively little access to wealth/income can make compared to people with relatively high access?
- What are the impacts of each of those choices and decisions?
- What personal choices can we make to help reduce some of these impacts, and what actions can we take to help alleviate poverty?

## OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Determine and explain purchasing/consumption choices
- Compare different purchasing/consumption choices and their social and environmental effects
- Describe how relative affluence and high consumption patterns relate to environmental degradation
- Discuss and begin to implement personal choices they can make to reduce environmental impacts as well as develop and implement an action plan to help alleviate poverty

**TIME REQUIRED:** 1 hour

## KEY ISSUES/CONCEPTS

- Equity, poverty, and scarcity
- Consumption patterns
- Environmental resources

## SUBJECT AREAS

- **Social Studies**  
(Geography, Economics, Global Studies, Contemporary World Problems)
- **Science** (Environmental, Life)
- **Math**
- **Health/Nutrition**

## NATIONAL STANDARDS CONSISTENCY

- **NCSS: 1, 2, 3**
- **NSES: C, F**

## GRADE LEVEL: 6–12



## FTF Related Reading

- Intermediate: Chapters 4 & 6 from *Global Issues and Sustainable Solutions*
- Advanced: Units 3 & 5 from *It's All Connected*

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## Materials/Preparation

- Handout: *Global Mall Dollars*, 1 card per student (there are 6 cards per sheet)
- Handout: *Global Mall Items*, 1 sheet per student
- (Optional) Teacher master: *Global Mall Impacts*, 1 copy as teacher reference
- Butcher paper, 1 sheet per group
- Marking pens, 2–3 pens for each group
- Make enough copies of the *Global Mall Dollars* sheet so that there is 1 card for each student. (Each sheet has 3 \$200 cards, 2 \$1,000 cards, and 1 \$2,500 card to reflect income distribution around the world. Therefore, more students will end up with \$200 cards and \$1,000 cards than \$2,500 cards.) Cut the sheets along the dotted lines and fold each card so the amount is not visible.



with their *Global Mall Dollars*, but that they must first meet their basic needs by selecting items from the categories of food, water, and fuel, and only then can they buy any of the other items.

2. Pass around a basket with the *Global Mall Dollars* and instruct each student to take 1 card and not show it to anyone.
3. Instruct students to write the items they purchase on the lines on their card (or on the back), along with the cost of each item (be sure they do this part of the activity individually).
4. While students are making their purchasing choices, you should keep the pressure on to instill a sense of urgency. Ask, “Who’s done shopping?” Say, “The mall is closing soon!” Students with \$200 *Global Mall Dollars* will likely finish much sooner than those with \$1,000 and \$2,500.
5. When students finish their shopping, have them break into 3 groups, putting students with the same dollar amounts (\$200, \$1,000, \$2,500) together (there will be more students with \$200; if necessary, subdivide groups so you have between 3 and 5 students per group).
6. In their groups, have students share and compare what they chose to purchase, and why. Ask them to discuss anything they could not afford to purchase and how not having those items might affect their lives.
7. Have each group report to the class on the decisions they made and the impact that these decisions would have on their lives.

## Activity

### Introduction

1. Have the class brainstorm human needs (food, water, energy, clothing, health care, etc.).
2. Tell the students that today, as global citizens, they will have a chance to shop for these needs at the “Global Mall”. The Global Mall sells all of the resources that humans depend on to live, as well as some “nonessential” items.

### Steps

1. Pass out the handout, *Global Mall Items*, which lists the items available. Tell students they can select items from the list to purchase

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8. You can choose to stop the lesson here and conclude with the reflection questions below, or continue with the following part of the activity.
9. Give each group a large sheet of paper and some pens, and ask students to list 3-5 items that members of their group purchased. Have them create 2 columns titled “Social Impacts” (effects of the choices on people) and “Environmental Impacts”. For each item listed, have groups write all of the impacts they can think of, positive or negative, for each category. Give them the following example: “If your group chose ‘Firewood Gathering’, you might list such Social Impacts as women and children spending their time gathering wood rather than going to school, harvesting food, cooking, or engaging in recreation activities. Environmental Impacts might include deforestation, habitat destruction, and soil erosion.”
10. Circulate among the groups and suggest impacts they might not have considered. Use the handout *Global Resource Mall Impacts* as a teacher reference.
11. Have each group present and discuss their findings with the class.
12. Conclude with the following reflection questions.

## Assessment Reflection Questions

### *For Intermediate and Advanced Students*

- How did it feel to have more or less money and options than other people in the class? How did it feel to see what you could and could not afford at the Global Mall?
- How many of you could not afford education? What would your lives be like if you could not go to school?
- How would it feel to have to choose between food and health care?
- How many of you have ever been very sick or gone to a hospital or had friends and family who have? What would your life be like now if you had been unable to get medical care?
- What is the effect on people when a small group is consuming the majority of resources?
- What were the impacts caused by people with fewer Global Mall Dollars, and what were the impacts caused by people with more Global Mall Dollars?
- What are some specific examples of how to reduce the social or environmental harm of some choices? What are 3 things that every one of us could do in the next week to lessen our environmental impact?

### *For Advanced Students*

- How do poverty and wealth afford people different options? Discuss the fact that roughly one-fifth of all people worldwide survive on less than \$1 (U.S.) a day – how does this limit their choices, and what are the environmental, social, and global security implications of this?
- When you were choosing what to buy, did you think about the environmental impact? For those of you in the lowest income range, did you have a choice about the environmental

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impact you produced? If not, how did it feel to not have a choice?

- How is this activity like the real world?
- Which income group from this activity is most prevalent in our country?

## Lesson Extension

- Assign each group a family from the book, *Material World*, by Peter Menzel. Have the students analyze what that family owns and brainstorm the relative impact of those items. Have them create a graph of the relative wealth and consumption of each family measured against their environmental and social impacts.

## Writing Connection

- Students write and illustrate a short story about a family who has the same budget as they did in the activity. Have them include details about the family's life, choices, impacts, and solutions.

## Math Connection

- Have students create a monthly budget for a family of 4 based on an annual income of \$18,850, which is the average annual poverty threshold in the U.S. for a family this size. Have students take into account expenses such as housing, food, clothing, medical, insurance, transportation, etc. They can research local organizations in their community that may be able to help meet the needs of this family.

## Action Projects

- Throw a “BeadWear Party” at your school through the BeadforLife project. BeadforLife is an organization that fights poverty by employing very poor women in Uganda to make beautiful jewelry out of recycled paper. This project provides you with the opportunity to help women feed their children and send them to school by selling their products, while at the same time educating yourself and your friends, parents, and community about Uganda and the plight of poor people around the world. For a detailed description of this

and other service learning projects, visit [www.facingthefuture.org](http://www.facingthefuture.org), click on **Take Action** and then **Service Learning Projects**.

- Contact your local chapter of Habitat for Humanity to find out how you can help alleviate homelessness in your community. Habitat for Humanity builds simple, decent, and safe homes both in the U.S. and around the world that low-income families can afford to buy. For more information, visit [www.habitat.org](http://www.habitat.org).
- Visit [www.facingthefuture.org](http://www.facingthefuture.org) and click on **Take Action**, then **Fast Facts Quick Actions** for more information and action opportunities on poverty, consumption and other connected global issues.

## Additional Resources

### Books

- *Plan B: Rescuing a Planet Under Stress and a Civilization in Trouble*, Lester Brown, W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 2003. Brown calls for a worldwide mobilization to stabilize population and climate before they spiral out of control. It provides a plan for sustaining economic progress worldwide.

### Websites

- [www.netaid.org](http://www.netaid.org) – NetAid is a non-profit organization that educates, inspires, and empowers young people to fight global poverty.
- [www.gbmna.org](http://www.gbmna.org) – The mission of the Green Belt Movement International is to empower individuals worldwide to protect the environment and to promote good governance and cultures of peace.
- [www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org) – The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) is the UN's global development network organization advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience, and resources to help people build a better life.

# Global Mall Items

<b>Food</b>	Rice and beans once or twice a day	Beans, vegetables, and rice daily, plus meat/dairy about once a month	A variety of fast foods 3 times a day, such as hamburger, chicken sandwich, tacos, French fries, soda, and ice cream	High quality food 3 times a day, including eggs, meat, fish, fresh vegetables, fresh imported fruit, bread, milk, imported cheese, chocolate, and other desserts
	<b>\$75</b>	<b>\$150</b>	<b>\$300</b>	<b>\$500</b>
<b>Water</b>	Untreated water collected from a lake and carried 2 miles by women and children	Untreated water collected from the village well 9 months a year, and from a river the other 3 months	Purified water brought by government trucks every week	Indoor plumbing with hot and cold running water, showers, and bathtubs
	<b>No cost</b>	<b>\$75</b>	<b>\$200</b>	<b>\$400</b>
<b>Heat / Fuel</b>	Firewood cut from local forest, sometimes hours away; work done mostly by children	Coal purchased in the market and used for cooking and heating	Oil used for gasoline, cooking, and heating	Solar panels using the sun's energy to heat home and water; natural gas for cooking
	<b>No cost</b>	<b>\$125</b>	<b>\$300</b>	<b>\$700</b>
<b>Education</b>	Crowded school 1 hour away through grade 5 (free, but you must buy a uniform to attend)	Elementary, middle school, and high school located in the local village	K-12 education with college an option for most people	Graduate degree preparing people for professions such as doctor, lawyer, professor
	<b>\$50</b>	<b>\$125</b>	<b>\$400</b>	<b>\$900</b>
<b>Health Care</b>	Walk or be carried 10 hours to the nearest village clinic, where they have a dozen medicines	Good medical care available in a city 1 hour away by bus	High-quality health care and hospital anytime you are sick and for yearly checkups	High quality health care, including elective surgery such as knee repair and cosmetic and laser eye surgery
	<b>\$75</b>	<b>\$200</b>	<b>\$500</b>	<b>\$700</b>
<b>Luxury Items</b>	Radio running on batteries	Small color television in your house	Refrigerator and air conditioning in your house	Hawaii surf vacation, airline ticket, and hotel room
	<b>\$50</b>	<b>\$150</b>	<b>\$350</b>	<b>\$700</b>

# Global Mall Impacts

<b>Food</b>	<p><b>Rice and beans</b>  <u>Environmental:</u> locally grown, no pesticides  <u>Social:</u> lack of essential vitamins results in more malnutrition</p>	<p><b>Beans, veggies, meat</b>  <u>Environmental:</u> may be locally grown/raised, may include some pesticide use  <u>Social:</u> better nutritional value</p>	<p><b>Fast foods</b>  <u>Environmental:</u> beef production means high water/feed use, deforestation  <u>Social:</u> convenient, but unhealthy, high fat related to heart disease</p>	<p><b>High quality food</b>  <u>Environmental:</u> beef production, imports use more energy, chemicals, pollution  <u>Social:</u> healthy but cash crops take away from staple food production</p>
<b>Water</b>	<p><b>Untreated water</b>  <u>Environmental:</u> use of lake, stream water degrades habitat  <u>Social:</u> disease, death, poverty (time spent away from school, work, etc.)</p>	<p><b>Village well</b>  <u>Environmental:</u> high use degrades aquifer  <u>Social:</u> disease, death, poverty</p>	<p><b>Water trucked in</b>  <u>Environmental:</u> truck uses fuel, pollution, global warming  <u>Social:</u> less disease, more convenient</p>	<p><b>Indoor plumbing</b>  <u>Environmental:</u> energy use, metal, and plastic for pipes  <u>Social:</u> fast, easy, safe, convenient</p>
<b>Heat / Fuel</b>	<p><b>Firewood</b>  <u>Environmental:</u> deforestation, global warming, desertification  <u>Social:</u> poverty (time away from school, work, food production), smoke linked to lung disease</p>	<p><b>Coal</b>  <u>Environmental:</u> air pollution, mining  <u>Social:</u> easier to use than firewood, but may result in lung disease if cooking area is not ventilated, miners susceptible to lung disease</p>	<p><b>Oil/Gas</b>  <u>Environmental:</u> oil drilling, spills, pipeline impacts, pollution, loss of habitat, global warming  <u>Social:</u> convenient, but results in dependency on oil/gas supplies</p>	<p><b>Solar panels</b>  <u>Environmental:</u> clean renewable source  <u>Social:</u> convenient, expensive to install but saves money in the long run, no health risks</p>
<b>Education</b>	<p><b>School: 1-hour walk</b>  <u>Environmental:</u> lack of education related to population growth  <u>Social:</u> illiteracy, few job skills, poverty</p>	<p><b>School in village</b>  <u>Environmental:</u> educated people have resources and knowledge to protect environment  <u>Social:</u> allows access to jobs, money, health care</p>	<p><b>K-12 education</b>  <u>Environmental:</u> better able to protect resources, but may consume more  <u>Social:</u> better jobs, higher income, health care, quality of life</p>	<p><b>Graduate school</b>  <u>Environmental:</u> better able to protect resources, but high level of consumption  <u>Social:</u> better jobs, quality of life, but may be more prone to stress</p>
<b>Health Care</b>	<p><b>Clinic 10 hours away</b>  <u>Environmental:</u> high mortality linked to high birth rates, population growth impacts environment  <u>Social:</u> illness, death, disease transmission, poverty</p>	<p><b>Medical care 1 hr away</b>  <u>Environmental:</u> low mortality linked to lower birth rates  <u>Social:</u> less disease, lower mortality, may not get treatment except in critical situation</p>	<p><b>Hospital</b>  <u>Environmental:</u> low mortality linked to lower birth rates  <u>Social:</u> less illness, disease, etc., but with high financial cost</p>	<p><b>Elective surgery</b>  <u>Environmental:</u> may use many resources, medicine, equipment  <u>Social:</u> cure non-life threatening problems, increase quality of life and social status</p>
<b>Luxury Items</b>	<p><b>Radio</b>  <u>Environmental:</u> energy, batteries toxic to soil  <u>Social:</u> access to information, enjoyable</p>	<p><b>Color TV</b>  <u>Environmental:</u> energy resources to manufacture  <u>Social:</u> entertainment, access to information</p>	<p><b>Refrigerator</b>  <u>Environmental:</u> global warming, resources to manufacture, energy  <u>Social:</u> better health, fresh food</p>	<p><b>Surf vacation</b>  <u>Environmental:</u> air travel contributes to global warming, heavy use of resources  <u>Social:</u> lower stress, enjoyable, but expensive</p>

# Global Mall Dollars



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