

Lesson 19

Employment: Personal Choices and the Nation

Objectives

- To role play situations in which choices about future employment must be made
- To speculate on the outcome and impact of those choices
- To identify values involved in those choices

Notes to the Teacher

The selection of a vocation is an important decision with which students must wrestle. This lesson provides them with some insight into that decision-making process.

Students, grouped in pairs, role play six scenarios relative to employment decisions.

This lesson, as outlined, takes the better part of two periods. It may be lengthened or shortened, however, to suit individual time and class needs. It is a companion lesson to the lesson that follows.

A copy of Robert Frost's poem "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" is needed.

Procedure

1. Read Frost's poem aloud to the class and discuss its meaning. Inform students that they are going to role play a situation in which their character has to make a similar, serious decision.
2. Divide the class into pairs. Have each pair decide who will be the "character" and who will be the "best friend." Assign each pair a number, one through six. Tell them that that is the number of the scenario they will follow.
3. Distribute **Handout 21** and review it with the class, making sure they understand what is expected of them. Allow sufficient time for the pairs to prepare their scenarios.

4. Conduct the role playing. Have a student read each scenario to the class just before it is acted out. The order and time allotted for each scenario varies depending on the class.
5. Have students speculate, either orally or in writing, what the character's life will be like a decade from now. Do this at the end of each presentation.
6. Have the class speculate on the implications for the U. S. economy if the vast majority of the people faced with a similar choice made the same decision as the character. (What would happen, for example, if nearly every working woman chose to work on the weekend rather than the weekday, as outlined in scenario three? What would happen if the reverse occurred?)
7. Conclude by discussing the role of technology in employment. Help students understand that continuing education and retraining are forces at work in today's employment picture. Whatever their employment decision is, it will probably change (more than once) during their lifetimes.

Employment: Personal Choices and the Nation

Below are six situations in which the individual must make a serious, possibly life-altering decision about employment. Study your situation and get to know your character. You and your character's best friend will role play and discuss the situation and your decision in front of the class. Note that the "best friend" role is at once both secondary and indispensable. It is the best friend's job to keep the discussion going where necessary by asking, "What about this?" or "What's good (or bad) about that?" or something similar whenever the main character seems bogged down. The best friend's main job is to listen while his or her friend "talks out" a tough decision—just like a real-life best friend would do.

The following questions are designed to help you in your analysis and presentation:

1. What is the problem in the story?
2. What are the character's alternatives?
3. How do I, the character, feel about those alternatives?
4. What are the values involved in my character's choices?
5. What does my character decide?
6. What values does this decision indicate my character considers most important?

Scenarios—Role Playing Situations

1. You are a young female of Caribbean ancestry. You have been working part time in your family's bakery and you love the idea of one day opening up your own business. The New York City Police Department has actively been recruiting you and other minority women in your neighborhood. The idea of retirement after twenty years of service has really sharpened your interest. What do you do?
2. You are a shop steward for a large manufacturing plant in a suburb of a big city. There is no public transportation in your area and you and your wife work in different directions from your home. Both of you need cars. Your wife's vehicle breaks down and you must purchase a new one. Interest rates are high and you can spare only \$2500 as a down payment. Your choices are narrowed down to an American-made car with good gas mileage for \$9500 and an Asian model for \$7000. What do you do?
3. You are returning to work after having three daughters, the youngest of whom is now in first grade. You are offered an excellent weekend job at a municipal hospital working Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays. You are also offered a job in a small manufacturing plant from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. weekdays for less money and fewer benefits. What do you do?
4. You are a thirty-five-year-old longshoreman. Your labor union's membership is shrinking yearly and you are one of the youngest members. If you work three more years you will be eligible for GAI (guaranteed annual income) whether or not you work each day. You have been offered a position with a salary and benefits cut at a computer repair firm. What do you do?
5. You are a nineteen-year-old male, high school graduate, who has been unemployed since graduation. You took vocational classes in high school and did well in them, but your area is being hit with severe unemployment in your field. As a result, employers are hiring few people and those being hired have significant job experience. The military offers you a contract promising further training and hands-on experience in your field for the duration of your enlistment. The recruiter also tells you that people with your skills are especially needed right now in an area that has been "heating up" militarily in recent months. What do you do?
6. You are the fiancé of the young man in scenario #5, above. The one thing preventing your marriage to date has been his lack of reliable employment with which to support a family. Your job pays enough for one to live on, but not enough for two, and certainly not enough for three or four. What are you going to say to your fiancé when he comes over tonight to discuss his options with you?