The Little Red Hen: 
A Story of Productive Resources and Incentives

EconEdLink, National Council on Economic Education

The Little Red Hen is a classic story. Here it is enhanced in order to provide a framework for illustrating and reviewing the concepts of productive resources and incentives. After reading the story, students will categorize resources into land, labor, capital, and entrepreneurship and be able to identify what future incentives the dog, the cat and the mouse will have to help the little hen in her work. Students will have the opportunity to explore bread making. The lesson can be adapted for any grade K-5 and addresses economic curriculum standards 1 (Scarcity) and 4 (Role of Incentives).

Key Economic Concepts
- Production
- Productive Resources
- Capital Resources
- Human Resources
- Natural Resources
- Entrepreneurship
- Incentive

Lesson Objectives
Students will:
- List the ingredients for making a loaf of bread.
- Sort and categorize the resources needed for making bread using the topic headings capital, entrepreneurship, land, or labor (CELL).
- Describe future incentives for the dog, the cat, and mouse to help out with the making of bread.

Process
In order to provide a context for your lesson on production and resources, first read The Little Red Hen (Handout 1) with your students. Keep in mind there will be several elements to identify in the story:
- resources: what natural, human, and capital resources are needed in the production process?
- production: what are the steps in producing a loaf of bread?

Distribute Handout 1, and then read aloud:
“Have you ever worked hard on a project and found that no one would help you? Then when you got it all done, suddenly everyone wanted to participate, or use your creation? You have something in common with a little Red Hen.

“Read [or let’s read aloud] the story and see if it’s like an experience you might have had, perhaps putting together a skate board ramp, building a fort, growing a pumpkin or carefully setting up your action figures.”

Once you and your students have read the story, here are several activities you may choose to use with your students:
1. Read: “Production is carried out in a ‘sequence’ or ‘steps.’ What steps were involved with the production of the loaf of bread?” [Story Order; found the wheat seeds, planted the seeds, watered the garden, pulled the weeds, harvested the wheat, went to the miller, ground the wheat, read the recipe, mixed the ingredients, baked the bread, ate the bread]
2. List and discuss the resources used in producing a loaf of bread (Handout 2).① (Answers in italics.)
- Capital is the vast array of tools, equipment, buildings, vehicles, and money used in production. The Little Red Hen and some of her friends provide the capital equipment.
- Entrepreneurship is the human effort that undertakes the risk of bringing the other resources together and initiating the production process.

The Little Red Hen herself provides the idea for the project and the know-how and enthusiasm to keep it going.
- Land provides the basic raw materials (natural resources)—vegetation, animals, minerals, and energy—that go into the making of goods. The raw materials for making bread (flour made from wheat, water, yeast, salt, sugar, and fuel—or energy) all arise from the land.
- Labor is the human resource that does the “hands on” work of transforming raw materials into goods. The Little Red Hen herself provides the labor, but maybe next time, the other animals in the story will pitch in, one would hope!

3. Identify and discuss the steps in producing a loaf of bread (Handout 2, “Little Red Hen’s Baked Bread”). Emphasize that the yeast (living cells) in bread dough needs time to grow and rise in a warm, dark place before the bread can be baked.

Conclusion
Many children have not had the opportunity to see where a commercial loaf of bread comes from, or to feel the bounce of rising dough in a kitchen. The Little Red Hen not only helps to introduce the process, but gives the students an opportunity to reflect how they might feel if they did the work on a project or activity and others expected to benefit. Close the lesson by inquiring of the students how Meow, Bark, and Squeak might behave in the future, and if there is an incentive for them to change their ways.

Assessment Activity
Using pictures or words, have students create cards of the ingredients, tools, and individuals involved in making bread. You should prepare at least 15-30 in total. Have students sort these into productive resources—human, natural, capital or entrepreneurial. Have each student write down their answers for review by the teacher or by another student. Students may use the word search to help in identifying many of the terms used in this lesson.

You also might create matching sets of cards and have the students use them to play concentration. For example you have a picture of a mixing bowl and the word capital in order to create a match.

Extension Activity
- Your students might choose to look at what yeast is and the science behind the “rising” of bread.
- Coordinate with your school chef to have students knead small balls of dough, which can then be baked at home.②

Notes

This Pullout section is a version of a lesson from EconEdLink, which provides economic lesson materials for K-12 teachers and their students. This lesson was written by Abbejean Kehler, president of the Ohio Council on Economic Education. Go to www.econedlink.org/lessons/ and click on the EconomicsMinute lessons button. Used by permission, National Council on Economic Education, www.ncee.net.

Teachers may contact John E. LeFeber, Curriculum & Instructional Developer, National Council on Economic Education, Technology Office, 201 N. 8th Street, Suite 215, Lincoln, NE 68508. Phone: 402-435-6924, Fax: 402-435-6867; jlefeber@ncee.net

Also, visit the website JumpStart (“financial smarts for students”) at www.jumpstart.org.
The Little Red Hen
As retold by Abbejean Kehler

Once upon a time, out just by the edge of your town, lived a little Red Hen.

She lived in a little house with Bark, the Dog, Meow, the Cat and Squeak, the Mouse.

One day after she washed and put away all the breakfast dishes, she put on her hat, picked up her purse, and decided to walk to the nearby farm market.

She liked to go to the farm market and visit with her friends and neighbors. She really liked to talk with Mrs. Granger, who owned the Pick & Shop right next door to the market. The Pick & Shop was filled from the floor to the ceiling with shelf upon shelf of canned goods, dry goods, dairy products, and shiny kitchen wares.

On this particular day, the Little Red Hen was smiling and singing as she made her way to the market. She was nearly there when she decided to stop for a moment and rest under the biggest oak tree in the county.

While she rested she happened to look down at her feet. Right there was a small handful of wheat grains. She carefully picked them up and blew away the dirt and tiny sticks.

A great idea came to her! The seeds could be planted, and would grow into enough wheat to make a couple of wonderful loaves of bread. She carefully wrapped the seeds into a handkerchief and pushed them deep down in the pocket of her apron.

She was so excited that she turned around and headed home as fast as her little feet would carry her.

At home she found Bark, the dog, and told him of her plan to plant the wheat. “Will you help me?” “Not I.” said Bark.

Meow, the Cat, all curled up in the window also heard the Little Red Hen. “Not I.” said Meow.

The Little Red Hen called for Squeak, who wiggled out from under the couch. Before the Little Red Hen could speak, Squeak said “Not I!” So the Little Red Hen said, “I will plant the wheat.”

The next morning bright and early she prepared a special corner of the garden and carefully planted the wheat grains.

All summer she watered them and carefully picked out the weeds. She raked around each plant to keep the dirt soft.

Then, one day, it was time to gather in her fine brown wheat. After breakfast she asked everyone “Who will help me gather my wheat and take it to the mill?” Before she could finish, Bark, Squeak and Meow all said together, “Not I.” and they scurried off. “Well,” said the Little Red Hen, “then, I will.” She carefully cut the wheat with a scythe (a very sharp tool) and put all the grains in a brown paper sack.

She set off to see Ben, the miller. You probably don’t know who a miller is, do you? Well a miller is someone who runs a mill. OK, well what does a mill do? A mill is made up large grinding stones that can roll over the little wheat kernels and turn them into flour. Flour is just what the Little Red Hen needed to make the loaves of fluffy bread she had been dreaming about all summer.

“All! Ben! How are you today?” said the Little Red Hen. He smiled at her and just nodded hello; he was very busy lifting a heavy sack of freshly ground
flour for Mrs. Granger on to a cart. The Little Red Hen reached the door of the mill and looked inside. She had not been inside before. Holding tightly to her sack of wheat, she went over to Ben who had just finished his task. His big voice was warm and friendly—“what can I do for you today Miss Hen?” he asked.

“I have this small bag of wheat that I have grown, and would like to grind it into very soft flour.” “Well you are in luck! I just finished Mrs. Granger’s order, and have a few minutes to turn that wheat into flour for you, right now.” The Little Red Hen was beginning to have a happy, jump up and down, sort of feeling in her stomach. “Oh, goody!” she said. She handed Ben the sack of wheat kernels and it took only 3 minutes for him to hand her back the sack filled with soft flour. The Little Red Hen reached into her coin purse and asked “How much do I owe you?” Ben said he thought about 5 cents since it was such a small amount. “That sounds fair.” She reached in and pulled out a shiny nickel and handed it to Ben. By this time she could not contain herself any longer and she hurried down the road shouting and waving good bye to Ben.

In no time at all she was back home in her kitchen and called for Bark, Meow and Squeak to come see her flour. No one came. She washed her hands, put on her best apron and began to set out the ingredients for her bread. First she got the recipe and carefully read each item, gathering them all together on the side of the table—milk, eggs, salt, sugar, water, syrup and yeast. Then she reached into the cupboard and got down her favorite yellow mixing bowl, three large wooden spoons, four loaf pans and a whole bunch of measuring cups and spoons. When she had all her tools ready, she called to her roommates again, “Bark, Meow; Squeak; where are you?” Each made their way into the kitchen to hear what all the noise was about.

“I am ready to bake this very special bread. Who will help me?” Before she looked back up from her recipe card, all three had slid off, calling behind, “Not I,” “Not I,” and “Not I,” all in different voices. “OK”, she said firmly then “I will.” She worked carefully all morning and soon the loaves of bread were in the pans and safely in the oven. As she cleaned up her baking tools she began to plan what she would put on the fresh bread. “Peanut Butter? No, butter and jelly, No, no, a bit of honey, or maybe some cheese.” There were so many good choices!

Soon the smell of baking bread spread throughout the house. Oh my, it smelled wonderful! It wasn’t long before Bark wandered into the kitchen to find the dog bed next to the warm oven. He curled up and was just closing his eyes. He wanted to be near when the bread came out of the oven. Minutes later, Meow jumped up on the kitchen windowsill and began purring. Even Squeak scurried out from behind the back door and pretended to be looking for crumbs.

“Ding, Ding!” the timer on the table sounded. The Little Red Hen knew it was time to take out the bread. And oh, good friend, can’t you just smell it? “I wonder,” she said aloud, “who will help me eat this fine bread?” Not one second went by before Squeak, Meow and Bark all said together, “I will!” The Little Red Hen began to laugh out loud. “I thought so!”

She opened the drawer with the cutting knives and selected the right one. Then she sliced off a single slice of bread. By now everyone’s mouth was watering, thinking “this will be soooo good!” But then the Little Red Hen cut the single slice of bread into three smaller pieces. She put each piece on a napkin and handed one to Squeak, and one to Bark, and one to Meow. They were each very troubled and she could see that on their faces.

“I am happy to share a bite of bread with you as your friend,” she said firmly but nicely.

“Maybe the next time I need help, you will volunteer!” Quick as a wink, Meow, Bark and Squeak all sat straight up and said, “I will!”

THE END
Four Kinds of Productive Resources

Resources are the capital, entrepreneurship, land, and labor (remember “C.E.L.L.”) that society uses to produce consumer goods and services. Who provides the productive resources in the story of The Little Red Hen?

- **Capital** is the vast array of tools, equipment, buildings, vehicles, and money used in production.
- **Entrepreneurship** is the human effort that undertakes the risk of bringing the other resources together and initiating the production process.
- **Land** provides the basic raw materials (natural resources)—vegetation, animals, minerals, and energy—that go into the making of goods.
- **Labor** is the human resource that does the “hands on” work of transforming raw materials into goods.

Kitchen Equipment in Detail
(capital equipment and natural resources)

Soap and Water

Wash your hands as you prepare to measure, mix, and bake.

Mixing Bowl

Any sturdy, 4-quart capacity bowl is fine.

Thermometer

When you bake with yeast, it’s crucial that water temperature is accurate. No finger is sensitive enough. Look for one with a stainless steel stem and dial on top.

Measuring Spoons and Cup

Don’t “eyeball” the amount you need. Use measuring spoons and cups for accuracy. Level off flour with a knife or straight edge. Make sure your measuring cup for liquids is placed on a straight surface.

Wooden or Metal Spoon

A long handle is required; either wood or metal will do.

Rubber Spatula

Use it to scrape dough from the sides of the bowl.

Baking Pans

Common sizes are 9 x 5 inches or 8 1/2 x 4 1/2 inches.

Timer

Measure the resting time of dough, and the baking time of bread, precisely.

Kitchen Towel

Keep on hand to cover the dough as it rises. Towel should be damp.

A Good Oven

Bread usually bakes best at 360° Fahrenheit, and a nice even heat helps the loaf cook evenly.

Wire Cooling Rack

The steam that builds up in the pan can make bread loaves soggy. A wire cooling rack helps bread cool down when it’s just come out of the oven, and stay dry.

Source: www.breadworld.com/beginnertips/

Little Red Hen’s Baked Bread

**Harvest Spelt Bread:** Marilyn Mulgrew of Rochester, New York, created this prize-winning recipe. Marilyn says, “This is the perfect bread for any occasion. It has a savory flavor that complements almost any meal.” It yields two 1 1/2-pound loaves.

**Ingredients**

- 1/2 cup warm water, 2 packages (1/4 ounce each) dry active yeast, 1 cup warm low-fat milk (or substitute), 2 tbsp. melted canola margarine, 1/2 cup maple syrup, 1 egg, beaten (or substitute), 3 cups whole-grain spelt flour, 1 tsp. ground cinnamon, 1 tsp. ground allspice, 1/2 tsp. sea salt, 1 can (1 pound) pumpkin, 3 cups white spelt flour

**Preparation**

1. Place the water in a 1 quart bowl, and sprinkle with the yeast. Stir once or twice, and set aside for 5 to 10 minutes.
2. Combine the milk, margarine, maple syrup, and beaten egg in a 2 quart bowl. Set aside.
3. Combine the whole-grain flour, spices, and salt in a 3 quart bowl. Stir in the yeast mixture, the milk mixture, and the pumpkin, and mix thoroughly. Add the white flour, a little at a time, until a dough is formed.
4. Turn the dough onto a lightly floured board, and knead for 3 to 4 minutes or until the dough is slightly elastic. Cover with a clean kitchen towel, and let rise on the board in a warm place for 1 to 2 hours, or until the dough has doubled in size.
5. Punch down the dough, and divide it in half. Shape each half into a loaf, either round or oblong, and cover. Let the loaves rise in a warm pace for 1 to 2 hours, or until doubled in size.
6. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F, and lightly coat a 17 x 11 inch baking sheet with nonstick cooking spray. Place the loaves on the baking sheet, spacing them about 3 inches apart, and bake for 45 minutes, or until the loaves sound hollow when tapped. Allow the loaves to cool on the sheet for 10 minutes. Transfer the loaves to a wire rack and cool completely before slicing.