

***Across the Lines*** by Carolyn Reeder (New York: Avon Books, 1997. ISBN 0-380-73073-1)

**Literature Annotation:** Two young boys (twelve-year-old Edward and his slave and boyhood companion, Simon) witness Union troops swarming onto *Riverview*, the family plantation. Within an hour, Edward's family is forced to evacuate to the home of relatives in nearby Petersburg, Virginia while Simon escapes to freedom among the Union troops. *Across the Lines* follows the experiences of the two boys: Edward, behind the Confederate lines during the siege of Petersburg and Simon, behind the Union lines.

**Grade Level:** 8

**Duration:** 2-3 days

**Economic Concepts:** decision-making, scarcity, opportunity cost

### **Maryland State Curriculum**

**Economics Standard:** Students will develop economic reasoning to understand the historical development and current status of economic principles, institutions, and processes needed to be effective citizens, consumers, and workers participating in local communities, the nation, and the world.

- 4.A.1 Analyze the decisions that people made because resources were limited relative to economic wants for goods and services in America
  - 4.A.1.a Describe the opportunity cost of economic decisions by individuals, businesses, and governments in the U.S. through 1877
- 4.A.2 Analyze how scarcity affected economic choices prior to 1877
  - 4.A.2.a Compare how scarce resources affected the decisions of consumers and producers in different regions of the United States
- 4.A.4.c Describe the economic opportunities and obstacles faced by different individuals and groups of people before and after the Civil War

**History Standard:** Students will examine significant ideas, beliefs, and themes; organize patterns and events; and analyze how individuals and societies have changed over time in Maryland, the United States, and around the world.

- 5.C.5 Analyze factors affecting the outcome of the Civil War

**Social Studies Skills & Processes Standard:** Students shall use reading, writing, and thinking processes and skills to gain knowledge and understanding of political, historical, and current events using chronological and spatial thinking, economic reasoning, and historical interpretation, by framing and evaluating questions from primary and secondary sources.

- 6.A.2 Use strategies to prepare for reading (before reading)
- 6.A.3 Use strategies to monitor understanding and derive meaning from text and portions of text (during reading)

### **Reading Standard (General Reading Processes):**

- 1.E.2.a Applying pre-reading strategies
- 1.E.3.a Applying during-reading strategies
- 1.E.4.f Connect the text to prior knowledge

### **Reading Standard: (Comprehension of Literary Text)**

- 3.A.3.d Analyze characterization
- 3.A.3.e Analyze relationships between and among characters, setting, and events
- 3.A.6.a Analyze main ideas and universal themes
- 3.A.8.c Analyze the relationship between a literary work and its historical or social context

**Lesson Objectives:** Given the novel *Across the Lines*, students will be able to...

- relate economic decision-making to events depicted in the novel
- identify the opportunity cost of potential jobs
- create a scarcity timeline
- describe the impact of scarcity on the lives of civilians during the Civil War
- research selected Civil War events to determine the accuracy of events portrayed in the novel

### **Vocabulary**

**scarcity:** the condition that results from the imbalance between relatively unlimited economic wants and the relatively limited resources, goods and services available to satisfy those wants.

**opportunity cost:** the foregone benefit of the next best alternative when an economic decision is made

**ironclads:** 19th century warships protected with thick iron plates

**earthworks:** an embankment or fortification made by piling up earth (dirt)

**contraband:** a slave who fled to the Union lines

**cobblestones:** rounded stones used in the past to pave streets

**sutler:** a person who followed an army to sell food and other items to the soldiers

### **Materials**

- Copy of the novel *Across the Lines*
- 1 copy per group of Activity 1: *On a Moment's Notice* (includes an accommodations version labeled *Activity 1a: On a Moment's Notice*)
- 1 copy per student of Activity 2: *Making Connections* (includes a sample for activity modeling)
- 1 copy per group of Activity 3: *Decisions! Decisions! Decisions!*
- 1 copy per group of Activity 4: *Costs & Benefits*
- 1 copy per group of Activity 5: *Scarcity Timeline*
- 8 ½ x 11 sheets of paper (1 per pair of students)
- OPTIONAL: *MSA Connections* (pages 13-14 of lesson plan)

**Teacher Background:** Content knowledge of the Civil War period

### **Motivation**

Several times a year, the alarm rings at school and we all leave the classroom immediately to participate in a fire drill. If you were to reach quickly for one thing to take what item would that be and why? (Create a list on the board and discuss reasons.) What does your teacher usually take? (*Grade book*) Why? (*To account for all of the students in the event of a real emergency.*)

Today we are going to begin to read a novel about people living in Virginia during the Civil War who had to make many important life-altering decisions often on a moment's notice.

Divide students into groups of 3-4 students per group and complete Activity 1. After completing Activity 1, allow time for groups to report their findings. Then, read Chapter 1 in *Across the Lines* to see how the situation was handled in the novel. (An alternative version of Activity 1 is provided for students needing accommodations.)

### **Development**

1. After reading the first chapter, have students skim pages 6-14 and create a list of items that were packed to go with the family from Riverview to Aunt Charlotte's house in Petersburg. Discuss why those items were chosen. (EX: "Ham" – less waste than chicken.) Then, have students identify the opportunity costs involved in the decision to take those items. How might their choices have been different if they had more time in which to prepare? (*Items mentioned include: quilts, sketch pad, silver, paper, food – ham,*

sweet potatoes, barrels of cornmeal, clothing, doll, toy tea chest, feather pillow, crystal punch bowl,) Finally, compare the items actually taken to the items that the groups chose in Activity 1.

2. Distribute a copy of Activity 2: *Making Connections* to each student. Review each of the three types of connections. Encourage students to add to the chart as they progress through the novel. Modeling examples are provided on page 6 of this lesson plan for teachers to model the process prior to having the students work on their own. The student worksheet follows on page 7.
3. Divide the class into six groups. List each decision below on a slip of paper and let a member of each group select a slip. Then, have the group complete Activity 3: *Decisions! Decisions! Decisions!* and report out to the class. The decisions include:
  - Simon's decision to run away
  - Jocasta's decision to stay with the family in Petersburg
  - Edward's decision to run the Union lines in search of quinine
  - Family member's decision to "join up" and fight
  - Aunt Charlotte's decision to not cash in Union currency
  - Simon's decision at the end of the story
  - Edward's decision not to allow his mother to pay his tuition with food
4. Throughout the story, Simon takes on a variety of jobs. Have students complete Activity 4: *Costs and Benefits* to determine the costs and benefits of each of his jobs.
5. In some ways, the roles of the two boys were reversed after the arrival of the Union troops: Simon was free while Edward's freedom was limited. Have students complete a Venn diagram or other appropriate graphic organizer to compare the life of Simon as a free man with that of Edward's in Petersburg.
6. Have students work in small groups to complete Activity 5: *Scarcity Timeline*. (A model of sample events is included on page 11.) Then, discuss how scarcity impacted the lives and the decisions made by the people in Petersburg.
7. Edward sketches throughout the novel. Distribute a sheet of 8 ½ x 11 paper to pairs of students. Allow them to sketch their favorite scene from the story and write a brief description of the scene at the bottom of the sketch. Then, create a gallery walk of sketches arranged in chronological order. Pictures can be placed on the wall in a hallway for other classes to view as a pictorial book report.

**Assessment:** Have students complete Activity 6: *Assessment*.

**Extension:** Techno-Quest:

*Across the Lines* is a fictional account that includes scenes from real events. Use the Internet to research the following topics to determine if the novel reflected historical accuracy:

- The Siege of Petersburg
- The Battle of the Crater
- The Importance of Petersburg to the Union
- Scarcity During the Civil War

Use examples from the novel and your online research to support your findings.

## **Activity 1: *On a Moment's Notice***

### **Setting the scene:**

It is May 5, 1864. You live with your family on "Riverview", a plantation along the James River in Virginia. Your father is fighting for the Confederacy leaving your mother in charge of the family and the plantation. Suddenly, Union ships, heading for Richmond, land below your plantation. Yankee soldiers disembark from the ships, march onto your property, and announce that they are seizing "Riverview." Your family has one hour to pack and leave. You are fortunate because you have relatives who live in Petersburg, Virginia and they will let you live with them.

### **Your task:**

Your group is responsible for planning what your family will take with you to Petersburg. While making your decisions, keep the following in mind:

- You have only one hour in which to pack.
- You are limited to what will fit into two wagons. Each wagon is 10' long, 5' wide and 14" deep.
- You have just planted your crops and, therefore, cannot take fresh vegetables with you.
- Your move to Petersburg will add to the number of people in the household who need to be fed by your relatives.
- You cannot take anything from this century such as an MP3 Player because the year is 1864 and today's technology is not available.

### **Activity Steps:**

1. Think about what you would take to Petersburg. For the next 5 minutes work on your own to develop a list of the items that you think your family should take to Petersburg.
2. Then, work within your group for 5 minutes to discuss possible items to include and develop a group list of things you and your family should take. Write your final list in the space below.
3. Work together to prepare a reason for each of the items you have included in your group's list.
4. Select a spokesperson to present your group's list and reasons to the class.

### Activity 1a: *On a Moment's Notice*

#### Setting the scene:

It is May 5, 1864. You live with your family on "Riverview", a plantation along the James River in Virginia. Your father is fighting for the Confederacy leaving your mother in charge of the family and the plantation. Suddenly, Union ships, heading for Richmond, land below your plantation. Yankee soldiers leave the ships, march onto your property, and announce that they are seizing "Riverview." Your family has one hour to pack and leave. You are fortunate because you have relatives who live in Petersburg, Virginia and they will let you live with them.

#### Your task:

Your group must plan what your family will take to Petersburg. While making your decisions, keep the following in mind:

- You have only one hour in which to pack.
- You are limited to what will fit into two wagons. (Each wagon is 10' long, 5' wide and 14" deep.)
- You just planted your crops and, therefore, cannot take fresh vegetables with you.
- Your move to Petersburg will add to the number of people in the household that your relatives must feed.
- You cannot take anything from this century, such as an MP3 Player, because the year is 1864 and today's technology is not available.

1. Read the list of items below. Put a check on the line next to each of the items you think your family should take with them to Petersburg.
2. Compare your list with the other students in your group.
3. Add any other items that your group thinks should be included on the list.
4. Work together to prepare a reason for each of the items you have included in your group's list.
5. Select a spokesperson to present your group's list and reasons to the class.

\_\_\_\_\_ Live chickens

\_\_\_\_\_ Paper and pencil

\_\_\_\_\_ Molasses

\_\_\_\_\_ Silver teapot

\_\_\_\_\_ Sugar

\_\_\_\_\_ Jewelry

\_\_\_\_\_ Flour

\_\_\_\_\_ Spare cash \$\$\$\$

\_\_\_\_\_ Furniture

\_\_\_\_\_ Pillows and mattresses

\_\_\_\_\_ Corn meal

\_\_\_\_\_ Clothing

\_\_\_\_\_ Smoked hams

\_\_\_\_\_ Other items (List below)

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## MODEL

### Activity 2: Making Connections

A good reader is always able to make connections with the text. Connections can be made in three ways:

1. **TEXT-TO-SELF (TS):** You personally relate to the material and use the connection to better understand it.
2. **TEST-TO-TEXT (TT):** You compare how the material you're reading connects to other reading material.
3. **TEXT-TO-WORLD (TW):** The material you are reading connects to the world, or to other people, and you use that connection to look through other peoples' eyes.

When I read the part about...	It reminded me of...	What type of connection did you make?
Simon hiding in the house	The Diary of Anne Frank when Anne and her family were hiding in the attic from the Nazis.	TT
The soldiers moving from the boat onto the plantation	Watching the TV news and seeing U.S. troops march through places in Iraq	TW
Edward's family deciding what to take to Petersburg	When I had to pack my things when we moved	TS

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Activity 2: Making Connections**

A good reader is always able to make connections with the text. Connections can be made in three ways:

- 4. **TEXT-TO-SELF (TS):** You personally relate to the material and use the connection to better understand it.
- 5. **TEST-TO-TEXT (TT):** You compare how the material you're reading connects to other reading material.
- 6. **TEXT-TO-WORLD (TW):** The material you are reading connects to the world, or to other people, and you use that connection to look through other peoples' eyes.

When I read the part about...	It reminded me of...	What type of connection did you make?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Activity 3: Decisions! Decisions! Decisions!**

**Part 1:**

- On the lines below, describe the problem from the *Across the Lines* that your group has been assigned.
- Discuss the options that the person had in making the decision and write them on the chart.
- Identify the choice made in the book by circling the option.

**Problem:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3

**Part 2:** In your group, complete the following questions:

1. Identify the opportunity cost of the decision. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Why do you think that decision was made? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Does your group think that a wise decision was made in the novel? Explain your answer.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How might the story have changed had a different decision been made? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Part 3:** Be prepared to report your findings to the class.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Activity 4: Costs and Benefits

Throughout *Across the Lines*, Simon works at various jobs in order to survive. Simon should have considered both the **costs** (what he gave up) and the **benefits** (what he gained) in order to make good job decisions.

**PART 1:** In the chart below, create a list of Simon's jobs. Then, describe the cost and the benefit of each job. (The first one is completed for you.)

JOBS	COST(S)	BENEFIT(S)
Slave on Riverview Plantation	Personal freedom	Food, clothing, friendship with Edward

**Part 2:** From the chart above, select one of Simon's jobs that you think was his best decision and one that was his worst decision. Explain the reasons for your choices.

**Best Decision:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Worst Decision:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

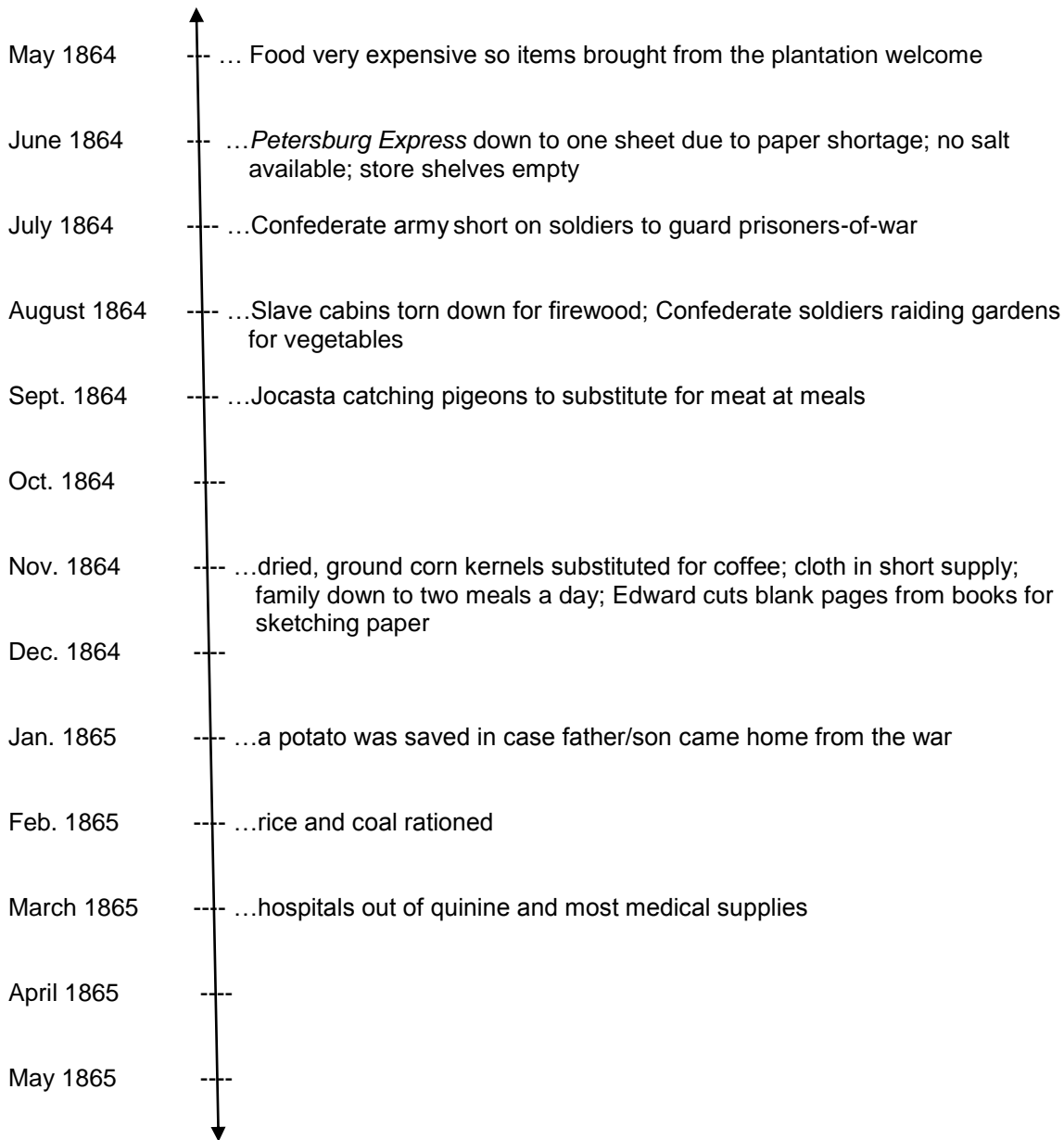
Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Activity 5: Scarcity Timeline

Scarcity was a major factor for the Confederacy. *Across the Lines* includes many examples of scarcity and the impact that it had on the South and the Confederates. Create a timeline that illustrates evidence of scarcity in Petersburg at the following periods: Early June 1864, June 21, 1864, August 1864, September 1864, November 1864, March 1865. Your timeline should include a title, years labeled in equal increments, and events labeled at the appropriate dates.



**Activity 5: Scarcity in Petersburg**  
**SAMPLE RESPONSES**



### **Activity 6: Assessment**

**Directions:** The concept of scarcity is depicted throughout the novel, *Across the Lines*. Based on what you have learned about scarcity and what you have read in the novel, complete the following questions:

1. Describe one scene from the novel that illustrates the concept of scarcity.
2. Explain how the scarcity problem, described in item 1 above, affected the ability of the character(s) to satisfy their wants. Use information from the novel to support your explanation.
3. How did the character(s) resolve the scarcity problem described in item 1?
4. Describe an example of scarcity in today's world.
5. Explain ways in which we might be able to solve the scarcity problem described in item 4.

### MSA CONNECTIONS: ASSESSMENT SUPPORT

The following reading items could be added to your content assessment to support reading within the context of social studies.

**After reading the following chapters: *May 5, 1864 – July 30, 1864***

#### **MSA Reading Connection:**

2.A.5.a (Vocabulary in context)

Details on page 33 suggest that the word “contraband” means:

- A. slave families who set up homes in the South
- B. slaves who fled to the Union lines\*
- C. slaves who plotted against their Masters
- D. slaves who worked for the Confederates

#### **MSA Reading Connection:**

2.A.5.b (Language that creates tone)

Read page 68 of *Across the Lines*. Describe the tone created by the author's words and phrases in paragraph 2. In your response, use details and examples from the story that support your description.

**After reading the following chapters: *August 9, 1864 – Mid-February 1865***

#### **MSA Reading Connection:**

2.A.5.b (Language that creates tone)

The tone of Jocasta’s words in the first paragraph on page 131 is best described as one of

- A. amusement
- B. desperation
- C. sarcasm\*
- D. suspicion

#### **MSA Reading Connection:**

3.A.3.d (Analyze characterization)

By returning to the sutler (pages 169-170), Simon shows that he

- A. has self respect.\*
- B. wants to avoid bullies.
- C. believes that people shouldn’t steal.
- D. likes to spend his wages.

**After reading the following chapters: *March, 1865 - Early May, 1865***

**MSA Reading Connection:**

2.A.4.c (Main Ideas)

The author uses dates as chapter titles throughout the novel. What other title would help a reader better understand the main idea of the chapter called "Middle to Late March, 1865?" Use information from "Middle to Late March, 1865" to support your answer.

**MSA Reading Connection:**

2.A.4.c (Main Ideas)

A main idea expressed throughout the novel is the importance of:

- A. learning the true meaning of courage and freedom.\*
- B. calling on others in times of trouble.
- C. turning bad experiences into good outcomes.
- D. becoming a soldier when your country is in danger.