



# REPUBLIC ISLAND - ECONOMICS

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This enquiry was written as an extension activity for the Republic Island enquiry (from The If Machine) but it was easily long enough for a full session and could possibly run over two sessions for younger groups.

## Stimulus

*On the island there is a lake full of fish. Though they are plentiful the fish are really tricky to catch by hand and you only manage to catch one a day. That is ok because one fish a day is enough to survive.*

(Draw a hand on the board and write 1 per day)

(Mime trying to catch a slippery fish and then pass the imaginary fish around the class.)

## Starter Question

- ✓ **Is there a better way to catch a fish? (Expect all sorts of answers. Can write them up on board and ask children to vote on the best method.)**

So we have decided that (a net/spear/coconut) is the best method.

(Ask the class for a volunteer to be Survivor A)

Survivor A spends all day making a net and makes a good one but as a result has no fish to eat that night.

## Task Question 1

- ✓ Should the others share their fish with A?

The next day Survivor A uses the net and is able to catch 2 fish! (Could get child to mime fishing with a net and others to catch with their hands) (Draw a net and write 2 per day on the board)

## Task Question 2

- ✓ Should Survivor A share their extra fish with the others?

If Survivor A doesn't share the extra fish with the others how many extra fish will she have saved in a week? (Write days of the week on the board. Draw two fish next to each day and cross one out to show it has been eaten. Do this until someone works out the answer.) With 7 fish saved Survivor A doesn't have to do any fishing for a week and has time to build a house. (Draw 7 fish equals a house). The others also want to be able to build a house and ask to borrow the net.

## Task Question 3

- ✓ Should Survivor A lend them the net?

(Read out the following or get survivor A to read out the following. For a shorter session and for younger groups just use idea 1.)

Survivor A: Why don't they build their own? What's in it for me? What if they don't give it back?

1. I will lend you 2 fish so you have time to build a net but after you have made it you need to pay me back twice as many fish as I lent you so you will owe me 4 fish.

2. I will lend you the net but you will owe me half a fish for every day you borrow the net. I can make more nets to rent out to everyone. If I rent out 10 nets I will earn 5 fish per day with out doing any fishing at all. (ha ha ha) (I couldn't resist putting the laugh in the speech for effect. However the child reading it out felt he was evil because of the evil laugh so it may influence views a bit too much?)

Task Question 4

- ✓ Are 1 and 2 fair?

(Then you can perform an experiment on the class. Select some children to go with option 1 and some with option 2 and some to stick with catching fish by hand. See who ends up better off in a week. Older children could go into groups and work it out.)

After a few weeks Survivor A has been able to build a huge house and has too many fish to know what to do with. The fish in the lake are no longer plentiful but are now low in numbers. Those who made or borrowed nets have managed to build houses but are finding it difficult to catch enough fish. The survivors who are catching the fish by hand are really struggling to catch any fish now. A lot of them are starving and have no houses to live in.

### **Task Question 5**

- ✓ Is it their fault? Why/Why not?
  
- ✓ What should be done?

I got answers such as:

It's not their fault because you (the facilitator) chose that they were going to catch fish by hand.

Survivor A should share his house with the ones who are starving because if they lived in the same house they would also share the food.

Survivor A deserves the fish and house because he was the cleverest and he made the net. Everyone could have made a net.