

"The Tragedy of the Commons" Summary Worksheet

Go to www.garretthardinsociety.org and click on his famous essay. You can also find a link to the essay on my website. Answer all questions on a separate piece of paper, either typed or neatly written. This assignment will be graded on accuracy as well as depth of explanation. Do not simply quote long excerpts from the essay. As always, your answers should be YOURS alone, written in YOUR own voice. This will be accepted NO LATER than MONDAY, AUGUST 29, 2011.

1. Hardin begins his essay by quoting an article by Wiesner and York. How does Hardin describe and define the conclusion Wiesner and York came to?
2. What analogy does Hardin use to prove #1?
3. What is Hardin's thesis?
4. Describe the idea of the "invisible hand" in your own words.
5. Hardin gives two scenarios with regard to the "invisible hand" and population. What are they? (Hint: is the assumption correct or not)
6. Describe, in your own words, the "tragedy" example of a pasture and herdsman.
7. How does "freedom in a commons bring ruin to all"?
8. Hardin mentions several examples of the commons found in modern-day society. Describe one.
9. Hardin argues that our National Parks are commons that should not be treated as such. The author gives several options of how to control the Parks so that they are not ruined permanently. Pick two of his suggestions and describe what ethical questions might arise from such actions.
10. Why was the myth "flowing water purifies itself every 10 miles" almost true in the past but false today?
11. Hardin makes the bold statement that "freedom to breed is intolerable."
 - a. Why would overpopulation not be a problem if each family only relied on its own resources?
 - b. What is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as Describe by the U.N. in 1967?
 - c. In your opinion, is the U.N. correct?
 - d. What is the alternative to the U.N.'s ideal?
12. Why does Hardin believe that it "is a mistake to think that we can control the breeding of mankind in the long run by an appeal to conscience"?
13. What is mutual coercion? Give examples that our found in our society today.
14. Hardin uses taxes to illustrate that coercion is better than conscience. How so?
15. Hardin mentions the "commons in matters of pleasure." In your opinion, can this be regulated? (Hint/idea: smoke-free cities)
16. Hardin argues laws = freedom. What example(s) does he give?
17. Hardin affirms that "no technical solution can rescue us from the misery of overpopulation." He delicately makes this argument yet avoids moral and ethical questions that arise from this discussion. List at least 3 that you can think of.
18. Other than any ideas mentioned in this article, list another instance in which "no technical solution" can be applied to solve the problem. Explain your idea fully, using examples.