



SHIPWRECKED ROLE-PLAY

SETTING/FACT SHEET

In the year 3000, the world ran out of oil. No more gasoline, which meant no more cars, trains, planes, etc. All factories, stores, and places of work had to close down. Suddenly, millions of people were out of work. With no work, they earned no money. The economy collapsed and there were millions of hungry and desperate people. Soon riots and fighting broke out that eventually turned into a full scale civil war across every nation in the world.

The U.S. President decided to get a group of students together and take them out of the country and harm's way by ship. He wanted to save their lives and ensure that some of our citizens survived.

For a while, the ship carrying the students sailed smoothly. But a few weeks later, a storm came up. The ship hit a large sandbar. It started to sink. The students got into lifeboats. They swam to a near island. When they got to the island, the students listened to their radio. They learned that their homes had been destroyed. They learned that hunger and disease were spreading all over the world. They decided to spend the next 10 to 15 years on the island. They named the island *Terra*.

CAN YOU LIVE ON TERRA? DIRECTIONS:

Suppose that you are the students on Terra. Assume the number in your class is the number of students on the island. You have escaped the hunger, disease, and violence of the world. But you have a lot of work to do if you want to survive on Terra.

Every day brings a new problem. Work together in small groups to brainstorm different solutions to the issues/problems below and then share out with the class. Work to come to a class consensus for each issue in order to set up your own society on Terra.

☀️ DAY 1 – Leadership [How and why do humans organize their societies the way they do?]



LARRY: Now that we are all together, we must choose a leader. We need someone to make decisions. We need someone to tell us what to do so that we don't all die here.

SARAH: But, Larry, we know what we have to do. We know we all have to work together to build homes, find food, and everything. We don't need a leader to tell us that.

SAM: We need a leader who can tell each one of us what our job will be. We won't get anything done without a leader.

ALICE: We are all the same here on Terra. We don't want some people to be leaders and some people to be followers. Why don't we choose a new leader every day, or every week? That way, one person won't

get more powerful than everyone else.

SARAH: I still say we don't need a leader at all. Why don't we just choose someone to be in charge of building homes. And someone else to be in charge of building a fire. And someone else to be in charge of getting food.

LARRY: That's no good. I want to be leader. Anyone who wants me to be the leader, follow me!

This is a serious problem. Do you need a leader or not? You must decide. Make two lists. On one list, write down all the reasons you can think of for having a leader. On the other list, write down all the reasons for not having a leader. If the class decides you need a leader, then you must decide how to choose one. You must solve this problem as quickly as you can!

DAY 2 – Division of Labor [How and why do humans organize their societies the way they do? How does technology affect people's lives?]



There is much work to do to keep the group together – and to stay alive. For example, some sort of shelter must be built. How are you going to get fresh water? What sort of technology might you want to make or use? What other jobs must be done during your first few months on Terra? Make a list of all the jobs, things that need to be built, or technology to be used that you can think of. Then figure out how you decide who does which job(s)?

DAY 3 – Property [Why do people live and move where they do? How does the quest for resources shape human history?]



SAM: I am marking off this part of the beach. This is my land.

LARRY: If you're taking part of the beach, I want that hill over there. I claim it. It's mine.

ALICE: Wait a minute! Stop! We all own this whole island together. Let's not divide it up. There isn't enough good land to give everyone an equal share. So some people won't get any land at all. That will only lead to fights and trouble!

JOHN: I want that area over there with the most coconut trees. I love coconuts and want them for my own. I claim that area!

CRAIG: If Larry claims the hill, what will we do if there's a storm? If someone else claims the fresh water spring, will they let us all get water on their land? We all need to survive.

SAM: No. I want my own property. I may have kids some day. I want something that I will be able to pass down to them. I want something I can call mine. Something I can be proud of!

SARAH: But the whole island is yours. Let's all enjoy it together.

You must decide what to do about property. Should everyone own the entire island together? Should you divide it up? If you do divide it up, some people will not get good land. Where will they live? Will they have to work someone else's land in exchange for living on it? Will they have to pay rent for land they use? You must decide how to solve this problem.

 **DAY 4 - Currency** [How does the quest for resources affected human history? Why do people live the way they do?]



SARAH: Mmm, those oranges you picked look great, Larry. Can I have one?

LARRY: I'll trade you an orange for one of those coconuts you pulled down.

SARAH: Are you kidding? One coconut is worth at least four oranges!

LARRY: I'll give you two oranges for one – no more!

BOB: Does anyone want this rope I made? I'll take 10 coconuts for it.

SARAH: Ten coconuts? How about five coconuts and these bowls I made?

BOB: Bowls? I don't want bowls. I want coconuts.

LARRY: You know what we need? We need money. It's too hard to trade stuff all the time.

SARAH: Oh no! I'm glad we don't have to worry about money on Terra.

BOB: We have to have money, Sarah. If I make a rope, I should be paid for it. Then I'd have the money to buy your bowls.

SARAH: No. We all work for the fun of it – and because we have to. We don't need money as a reward. We will share everything.

LARRY: I don't agree. Money isn't a reward. It's a way to help us trade the things we grow and make. The person who works the hardest should get the most money. It's only fair. If we share everything, some people won't work at all.

SAM: Money only leads to stealing. We don't want rich people and poor people on Terra. We all want to be the same.

BEN: That's stupid. Sam. If we don't have money, people will just steal the goods we grow and make. We need money. I won't work unless I get paid for it.

You must decide what to do about this problem. Should you have money or not? What problems would you have with money? What problems do you have without money? If you decide to have money, who will get the money? Will everyone get the same amount each week? What will you use for money? You must decide.

 **DAY 5 - Civil Unrest** [How does conflict and cooperation shaped human history?]



Five members of your group disagree with the decision you made about money. They say they will not go along with your decision. You must decide what to do about them. Should they be punished? Should they be put in prison? Should you just leave them alone? You must decide.

DAY 6 – Law [How and why do humans organize societies the way they do?]



ALICE: Someone has been leaving banana peels by the main camp fire. We need a law against people who litter.

BOB: That's right. We don't want litter or pollution on Terra. We need a law against littering.

SARAH: Are you crazy? We don't want any laws like that. We don't want any laws at all. Once you start making laws, you can't stop. First thing you know, everything is against the law!

ALICE: We have to have laws. But the problem is, how will we enforce the law? Maybe we need to assign some people to be the police and judges?

BENNY: No, we don't need police. Not on Terra. If we draw up a list of laws, we will all obey them. Those who don't obey the laws will be punished by all of us.

SARAH: Maybe we just need laws about important crimes – like murder or stealing. Maybe we should just have a few laws against big crimes like those.

Now you must solve this problem. Do you need laws or not? If so, what laws? Who will make the laws? How will you enforce the laws? You must decide. After you decide, act out what happens next to the litterers.

DAY 100 - Culture [Why do people live the way they do?]



LARRY: I'm bored. We all have our jobs to do to make sure all runs smoothly around here, but I need more!

SAM: We need entertainment! I miss the movies and going out to have fun. What do we do here when we're not doing chores or working to get by?

JOHN: My parents used to bring me to church every weekend. Should I start praying?

There's no church or anything like that here? I'm not sure what I'm supposed to do?

BEN: Yeah. I went to temple. No clue about what I should do on the island really?

ALICE: What if we are the last people on earth to survive? If we're the last, who will rebuild or know how to do that?

Now you must solve this issue. What should you do when you are not working? What can be done to make life more fun? Is there more to life (even on the island) than just working and having fun? Should you pray to a god(s) or worship the supernatural in some way? You must think of what should be done with "free time" and how to keep the group content on the island.

YEAR 1 – War [How does conflict and cooperation shape human history? Why do people live and move where they do?]



You have been on Terra for a year. Everything has been going smoothly. Then one day, three boats appear. A group of 20 people have come to Terra. You greet them. “We are going to live on Terra.” their leader says. “But we do not wish to live with your group. We want to stay by ourselves. We can live in peace. Just give us half of the island.”

“No.” you say. “We don’t think there should be two groups on Terra. We welcome you. But you must live and work with us. We have worked hard here. We don’t want to give away half of our island. Stay with us.”

“No.” their leader says. “We don’t want to be with you. If you do not give us half of Terra, we will fight you for it.”

You must solve this problem. Do you give them half of Terra? Do you try to talk them into staying with you? Do you have a summit meeting – your leader talking to their leader? Or do you go to war to keep them from taking half the island? You must decide. Then act out what happens next.

YEAR 5 - Collapse [Why do civilizations rise and decline? Why do people live and move where they do?]



There was a major hurricane that wrecked your shelters and, more importantly, knocked down the majority of fruit and coconut trees. Moreover, there was much soil erosion that washed away a lot of the top soil needed to grow new trees or plants. You have all survived, but you also witnessed the destruction of what you’ve worked so hard to build up for five years. Do you stay on Terra and work to build it back up? Do you build a boat and sail to find another island or go back

home? You must decide what to do?

YEAR 1000+ - Archaeology [How do we know what we know about history?]



Given many storms, past fighting, and other catastrophic events on the island, you (humans) ceased to live there for hundreds of years. In time though, the human race did survive and built up their societies in other parts of the world. If an archaeological team visited Terra a thousand or so years after you left the island, what might they uncover? What would they think life was like on Terra way back when you lived there? What evidence would they find or use to put the pieces of the puzzle together to figure out what all of you did on the island? Make a T-chart of a list of artifacts they might find and on the other side describe what the artifacts would tell them about the way you lived.