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Title: Barren Fields



Title: Barren Fields

Description:

Education, Topic: Agriculture

Grade Level: 6-12

Curriculum: Science, Social Studies

Keywords: Drought, Culture, Indigenous, farming

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Introduction

Welcome!

You have been selected for service in the Peace Corps Challenge. You have been assigned to the tiny village of Wanzuzu, where the villagers have big hearts – and even bigger problems.

For this challenge the village is turning to you to help understand why almost all the crops in Wanzuzu have failed this year and what they should do next. In this web quest you will play a vital role in a team that will uncover the true cause. Is it the result of weather? Are indigenous farming practices to blame? What will you and your team recommend the village do now?

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Task

- Individually you will choose one of the following roles:
 - an Indigenous Farmer
 - an Agronomist
 - a Climatologist
 - a Cultural Anthropologist
- Research and answer specific questions and use knowledge gained to provide input as your team plays the Barren Fields Challenge.
- Play the Barren Fields Challenge as a team and through the Peace Corps Volunteer's perspective, try and solve the challenge of why the crops in the village of Wanzuzu have failed and decide what steps the village should take to recover.

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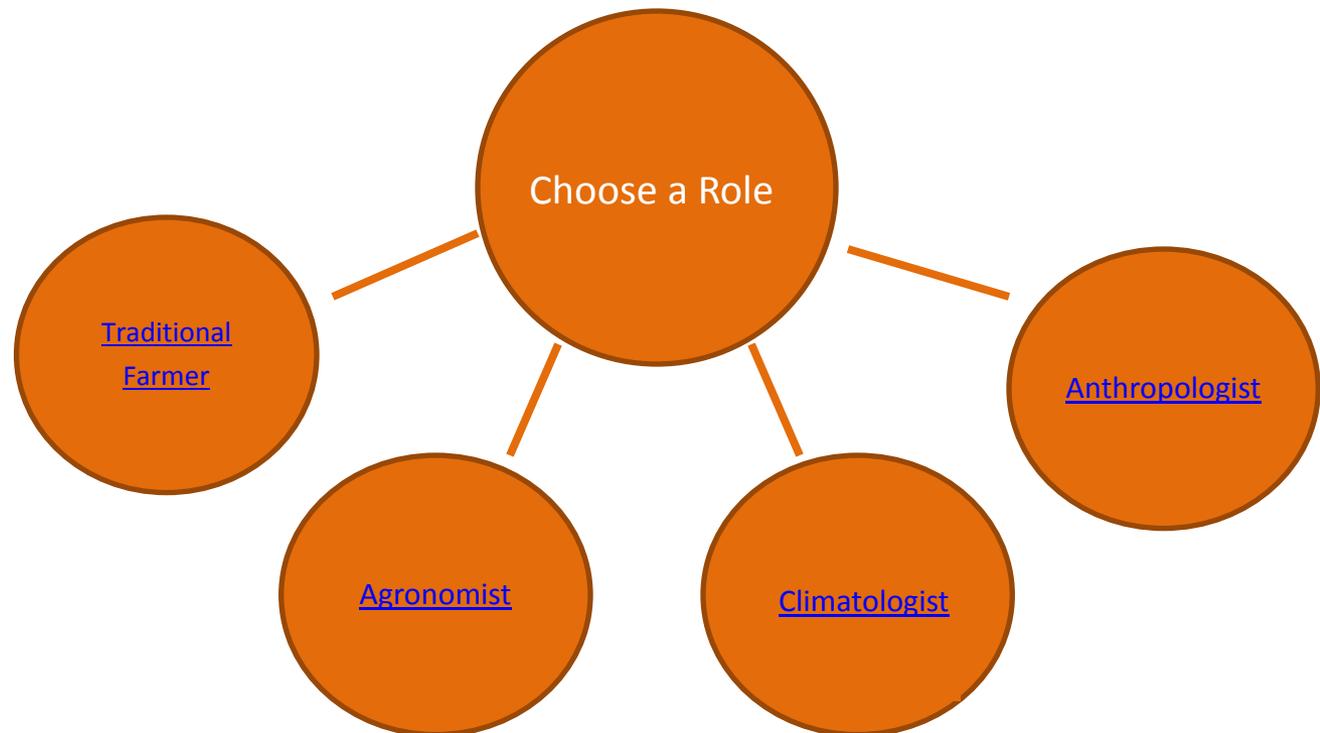
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Process

1. Within your group decide which of the following roles you each will be assuming. Answer the questions appearing under each role using the websites provided.



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Process



A farmer who often uses agricultural practices that have been passed down from generation to generation and can be unique to their own culture.

- What are some practices that traditional farmers use that do not rely on modern technology?
 - <http://dp.biology.dal.ca/reports/kazimirstt.html>
- Why would farmers use techniques like slash and burn farming?
 - <http://yosemite.epa.gov/r10/airpage.nsf/webpage/agricultural+burning>
- Soil erosion can be difficult for farmers to overcome. Why is it important for farmers to address the causes and how can Peace Corps Volunteers help find simple solutions?
 - http://www.peacecorps.gov/www/multimedia/slideshows/gna_jacobs.cfm

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Process

Agronomist

A scientist specializing in plants and soils who works to improve crops and agricultural productivity.

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- Why is soil important to farming?
 - <http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/cropsystems/DC7399.html>
- What are some ways to repair damaged soil?
 - http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/cropsystems/components/7399_01.html
- Why is crop rotation an important part of farming?
 - http://www.oisat.org/control_methods/cultural_practices/crop_rotation.html

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Climatologist

A scientist who studies the causes and effects of climate change over a long period of time and how those changes impact our lives.

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- Why is weather important to farmers?
 - <http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/effects/agriculture.html>
 - http://www.nwas.org/committees/smos/ag_wx_svc.php
- How could times of drought affect farmers?
 - <http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/fgz/science/drought.php?wfo=fgz>
- How could wind affect a farmer?
 - <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/crops/00518.html>

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Process

Cultural
Anthropologist

A scientist who studies human cultures - how they grow, develop and interact

- How are culture and farming practices linked?
 - <http://www.scn.org/cmp/modules/cha-agr.htm>
- What challenges do you think Peace Corps Volunteers may face living and working within a new culture?
 - <http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/problem/cultrbar.htm>

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2. Together with your team, have each member discuss their chosen role and share the answers they researched and found to the web quest questions.
3. As a team play the [Barren Fields Challenge](#) in the Peace Corps Challenge Game
 - a. Look at the issues from the perspective of your chosen role
 - b. As you and your team play the game pay attention to what the community members are telling you. Discuss after each encounter your reactions.
 - c. Together choose the solution your team feels is most appropriate.
4. Write a short team summary highlighting the main challenges you identified in the Barren Fields Challenge, what recommendation you as a group chose, the process you used to decide on this solution and why you felt it was the most appropriate.

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Evaluation

Indicators of Quality	1 - Weak	2-Moderately Weak	3-Average	4-Moderately Strong	5-Strong
Has articulated the causes leading to crop failure					
Provided clear explanation from own point of view.					
Used knowledge gained in web quest to recommend solution?					
Was an integral part of the team discussions?					
Took an active role in completing the final summary.					

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Conclusion

After researching and playing the Barren Fields Challenge you should have a much clearer picture of the agricultural challenges being faced all over the world in villages like Wanzuzu. Here are some additional questions to consider.

- How do you think this challenge could have been avoided?
- Why do you think it is sometimes challenging for Peace Corps Volunteers to help communities solve similar challenges?
- How could where you are placed as a Peace Corps Volunteer impact the way you interact with community members and find solutions to other agricultural challenges?
- What are some ways our own choices can have positive or negative effects on those in the future?

To learn more about Peace Corps and how Peace Corps Volunteers are working within their host communities, visit the Peace Corps Website at www.peacecorps.gov

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Teacher

Essential Questions:

- How do environmental changes affect the way we live?
- How can we strive to adapt and overcome environmental challenges?
- What role does culture play in agricultural practices?

Enduring Understandings:

- The choices we make today, can affect us and our environment in positive and negative ways.
- Challenges we face can often times be eased or even avoided by careful planning.
- The way we do things is often influenced by our cultural norms and may be difficult to change.

Standards met:

- Social Studies

Thematic Strand I: Culture – patterns of behavior reflect cultural values and beliefs, ways cultures respond to human issues.

Thematic Strand III: People, Places, and Environments – relationship between humans, climate, vegetation, and natural resources. Human modifications of the environment

- Geography

Essential Element V: Environment and Society – human actions modify environment

- Science

Content Standard F: Science in Personal and Social Perspectives – environmental quality, changes in environment, natural hazards.

Extensions:

- [The Growing Challenge in Senegal Webquest](#)

Explore the issue of soil fertility and its impact on agriculture. Working in teams, students take the role of Senegalese farming families who must design an optimal rotation for their crops in declining soil conditions.

- Fighting Soil Erosion