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TRUE PRICE

Grades: 6 and up

Time: 20-60 minutes, or several days

Materials: Items for analysis (see below); black/white board and chalk/markers

Relevant Subjects: Social Studies, Language Arts, History, Health, Science, and, with modifications, Mathematics

Preparation: True Price offers an interesting way to analyze products. Bring in a variety of products, such as a can of Coke, a wool sweater, a container of ammonia, a fast food hamburger (or a facsimile of one, available from science/nutrition supply companies).

1. Write several questions down on the board:

a) Is this product a want or a need?

b) What is the effect of this product on:

- you
- other people
- animals
- the environment

c) Was the product available 100 years ago, and if not, what did people use instead?

d) What alternative(s) might do more good and less harm?

e) How can we find out these answers?

2. If you want the activity to be short, choose a couple of products and assess them during the class, writing down answers to the questions above based on what students and you already know. Discuss what information you would need to have to fully assess the product's true price, that is, its effects on you, other people, animals, and the environment.

Alternative: For a longer version, have students research and analyze an item as a homework assignment and then report about their product to the whole class.

3. Discuss how analyzing items in this way can help people become more conscious consumers. Invite students to consider how willing they are to think about their choices, using the criteria developed during this activity.

Activity from *The Power and Promise of Humane Education*