

Handout 7-3-3

The Hatfields and the McCoys

The Hatfields and the McCoys don't talk to each other very much. They would rather shoot at each other than smile. The Hatfields are better off than the McCoys in every way. Why, it takes only eight hours for one Hatfield to grow one bushel of corn and only 10 hours for one Hatfield to make one yard of cloth. It takes a McCoy more time to produce both the corn and the cloth.

The McCoys aren't any more (or less) shiftless than the Hatfields. It's simply that their land is worse and their tools aren't as good. It takes 15 hours for one McCoy to grow one bushel of corn and 12 hours for one McCoy to make one yard of cloth. The McCoys are worse off than the Hatfields because they have to work longer for everything they want.

Now, old Ma Hatfield is a sly one, and she's been sitting and rocking and thinking for years and years. One day she said, "Pa! Pa! I've been cogitating. You know what I think? I think we'd be a whole lot better off if we stopped fighting the McCoys, spent more time raisin' corn, and tradin' with the McCoys when we need cloth."

Pa spat, "Darnit, woman," he said. "We are better farmers than those varmints and better weavers, too! Besides, I don't want to be dependent on that poor excuse of a family for my clothes."

Can you help Ma and Pa settle this? Using the following worksheet, try to figure out who is right.

To produce corn and cloth, the Hatfields must spend:

_____ hours for 1 bushel of corn

_____ hours for 1 yard of cloth

Total hours = _____ hours for total production of 1 bushel of corn and 1 yard of cloth

To produce corn and cloth, the McCoys must spend:

_____ hours for 1 bushel of corn

_____ hours for 1 yard of cloth

Total hours = _____ hours for total production of 1 bushel of corn and 1 yard of cloth.

If the Hatfields produced only corn and traded 1 bushel of corn for 1 yard of cloth, they would spend:

_____ hours for 2 bushel of corn

Total hours = _____ to have 1 bushel of corn and 1 yard of cloth through trade.

If the McCoys produced only cloth and traded 1 yard of cloth for 1 bushel of corn, they would spend:

_____ hours for 2 yards of cloth

Total hours = _____ to have 1 yard of cloth and 1 bushel of corn through trade.

If the Hatfields and McCoys specialize in the lowest cost of production, how much time would each family gain?

Hatfields = _____ hours McCoys = _____ hours

What would be two reasons that they may choose not to trade?
