

# Settlers of Catan: Social Studies Lesson Plan

**Learning the game:** Settlers of Catan (also known as “Catan” or simply “Settlers”) is a resource management game for 3-4 players, ages 10 and up. There is an expansion for 5 and 6 players as well as a Catan Junior version available for younger players. In Settlers of Catan, players are rolling dice and trading to gather resources from the island of Catan and then using those resources to expand their presence on Catan. That presence is measured in victory points and the first person to 10 points is declared the winner! Here is a quick explanation on [how to play Settlers of Catan](#).

## Topics Covered:

- Economics:
  - Supply & Demand
  - Specialization and Trade
- Geography:
  - Resources and early settlements

## Lesson Objectives:

- Grades K-5: Students will be able to demonstrate concepts of bartering and settling by answering questions based on a game of Settlers of Catan.
- Grades 6-8: Students will be able to analyze the supply and demand chain of economics by answering questions based on playing a game of Settlers of Catan.
- Grades 9-12: Students will be able to construct a Production Possibility Frontier chart to answer questions based on a game of Settlers of Catan.

**Academic Language and Vocabulary:** Robber, sheep, wheat, brick, wood, ore, road, settlement, city, development cards, victory points, trading, supply & demand, production possibility frontier, opportunity cost, colonialization, settlements, goods, economic reasoning,

## Questions/Activities:

- What does the island of Catan have that would make a country want to build a settlement there? Explain how the game Settlers of Catan demonstrates geography and colonization.
- The robber can represent many things that have occurred in history resulting in an inability to produce crops. Research one instance of this occurring in history and write one page analyzing how the event impacted crop production. Instances can include but are not limited to the Dust Bowl and the phylloxera blight in France. Be sure to connect elements from playing at least one game in your paper (i.e. impact of not being able to produce crops).
- Watch these short videos discussing Adam Smith’s [first](#) and [second](#) chapters of *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* after playing at least one game of Settlers of Catan. Now answer the following questions:
  - Define supply and demand and elaborate on how Settlers of Catan reflects this in its gameplay.
  - How does Settlers of Catan present division of labor? Explain using elements from playing the game.
  - Adam Smith says bartering is a “fundamental characteristic of humankind and which is going to drive a lot of economic reasoning.” Define bartering by analyzing the Smith quote and connecting it to playing Settlers of Catan.

- After playing one game, describe the economy of your game by answering the following questions:
  - Where were your starting locations? Would you have chosen different starting positions? Why or why not.
  - Describe the factors that led to a resource being in high demand.
  - How was this handled throughout the game?
  - How did the economy impact who won the game?
  - What would differ if you played multiple games? Take that into consideration and describe your ideal starting position and why.
- Construct a Production Possibilities Frontier chart that measures your production of wood and brick. For determining quantities, use the likelihood of producing that good on one turn by considering all possibilities of the dice rolls. Answer the following questions about the chart you constructed and the most recent game you have played:
  - Analyze your curve and determine if you have an efficient production of brick and wood overall? How did this impact your game?
  - What would an ideal production look like on a PPF chart? Is this reasonable for a player to obtain? Why or why not.
  - Compare your chart to others, what do you notice about your chart compared to others? Does this properly reflect who won the game?

### **Lesson Modifications:**

- Before playing a game of Settlers of Catan, create an 6x6 chart that displays the chance of each dice roll (column and row should display numbers 1-6). Answer the following questions about your chart:
  - Why does this chart contain important information that aids with the gameplay of Settlers of Catan?
  - After playing one game, describe how your chart impacted decision making in the game. If you were to play again consulting the chart, what would you do differently?
- In one paragraph, explain why it is important that the numbers on the board are distributed the same for each game. In your answer explain number distribution and the role of dice and probability in the game.
- Retell the events of your game through multiple diary entries, a short story, or a report. You may choose the perspective you are writing from.
- Cities & Knights Expansion: The Cities & Knights expansion take the game in a new direction with the addition of commodities such as coins, cloths, and books that are used to develop cities into metropolises including libraries, markets, town halls, and abbeys! [Here is a full overview of how to use the Cities & Knights expansion with Catan.](#)
  - Explain the purpose each building has in history. Are there any buildings today that hold a similar importance to society? Why or why not.
  - Create another role you think fits in historically with Cities & Knights. Explain its function in the game and how it is prevalent in pre-technological era.
  - Barbarians are defined historically as non-roman persons. Choose one of the barbarian routes from [this article](#) and research the goals for the invitation. In 1-2 pages, discuss the barbarian invasion you chose and similarities and/or differences from the representation of barbarians in the expansion.

- Seafarers Expansion: The scope of Catan grows with this expansion as your quest for expansion takes you to the seas! Instead of a single island, Catan is an archipelago where roads and ships are used to connect settlements.
  - Research archipelagos around the world. In one paragraph, describe any similarities or differences between the geography the game presents and your research. You may deliver your findings in writing or orally.
  - After playing, build your ideal successful trade route and settlements on the map. Describe the decisions you made for your layout and why it you think it would be successful. You may deliver your findings in writing or orally.
  - Play the Fog island or New World scenario and respond to the following:
    - How did it feel exploring into an unknown area?
    - Relate your gameplay to explorers who would travel from Europe to the Americas not knowing what they would encounter.
    - Did you find the game being more competitive when establishing settlements in the middle? How did this aspect of the scenario impact your decisions in the game?
    - Relate your expedition and conquest for contested land to a historical event or period you have previously studied.
  - If you played the Fog scenario, how do you think the New World scenario would be similar or different and why? Or if you played the New World scenario, how do you think the Fog scenario would be similar or different and why?

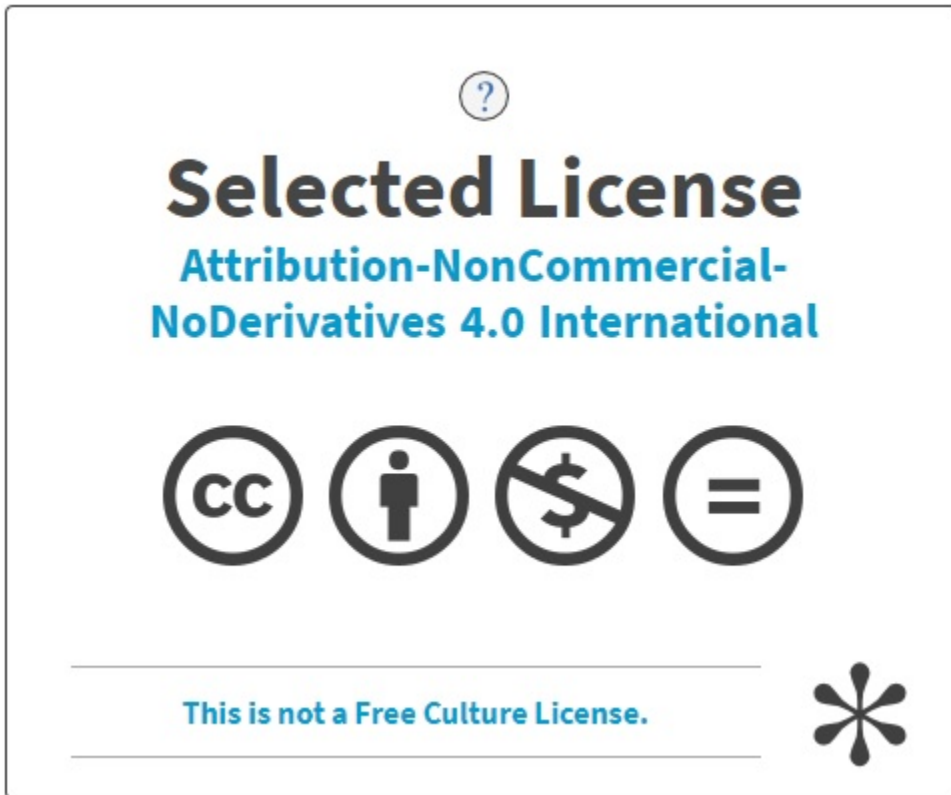
#### **Content Background Knowledge:**

- [Crash Course: Specialization and Trade](#)
- [Crash Course: Supply and Demand](#)
- [How to graph a PPF](#)
- [Typology of Colonialism](#)
- [History of Barbarian Conquests](#)

#### **Lesson Standards:**

- Grades K-5:
  - D2.Eco.2.3-5: Identify positive and negative incentives that influence decisions people make.
  - CCSS.ELA-Literacy.3-5.W.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- Grades 6-8:
  - CCSS.ELA-Literacy.6-8.7: Integrate quantitative or technical information expressed in words in a text with a version of that information expressed visually.
  - D2.Eco.15.6-8: Explain the benefits and the costs of trade policies to individuals, businesses, and society.
- Grades 9-12:
  - CCSS.ELA-Literacy.11-12.RST.7: Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information resented in diverse formats and media (e.g., quantitative data, video, multimedia) in order to address a question or solve a problem.
  - D2.Eco.2.9-12. Use marginal benefits and marginal costs to construct an argument for or against an approach or solution to an economic issue.

- D2.Eco.4.9-12. Evaluate the extent to which competition among sellers and among buyers exists in specific markets. <sup>i</sup>



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<sup>i</sup> Christopher Gibbs is currently on track to receive his Master's in Teaching in May of 2020 from Central Connecticut State University. He has been playing tabletop and role-playing games for over 20 years.