

## Using Children's Literature to Teach Economics

### **Wilma's Way Home: The Life of Wilma Mankiller**

Author/Illustrator John Rocco by Doreen Rappaport  
Disney/Hyperion 2019

**STORY SYNOPSIS:** This picture-book biography of Wilma Mankiller, the first female chief of the Cherokee Nation, begins with her early life in rural Oklahoma. The sixth in family of eleven children, she grew up in a poor, but loving family. Her life in a supportive rural community is disrupted when a new government policy relocates her family to suburban San Francisco. There she faces many challenges, but eventually finds a new community at the Oakland Indian Center, returns to Oklahoma and finds her calling as a leader. Direct quotes from Wilma Mankiller's autobiography are included in the blank verse narrative.

### **Lesson**

#### **A Matter of Perspective**

**INTRODUCTION:** Wilma Mankiller life was full of challenges and accomplishments. She was the first woman elected principal chief of the Cherokee Nation and an activist for Native American and women's rights. As a young girl her family was moved from Oklahoma to a housing project in California where she experienced poverty, racism, and culture shock. As a young woman, she returned to the Cherokee Nation. There she successfully headed community water systems projects. In 1983, Principal Chief Ross Swimmer named her his running mate. When they won, she became the first woman to be elected deputy chief of the Cherokee nation. Wilma went on to be elected chief in her own right in 1987. Under her leadership she tripled the tribe's enrollment, doubled employment, and built housing, health centers, and child care facilities. In 1998, she received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from Bill Clinton. This is the highest honor given to civilians in the United States. She was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame in 1993.

**GRADE LEVEL:** 4-8

**TIME ALLOCATION:** 25-30 minutes

#### **MATERIALS:**

- Book- *Wilma's Way Home: The Life of Wilma Mankiller* by Doreen Rappaport
- Visual – Economic Concepts
- A Matter of Perspectives Information Sheet (Run off on cardstock for reuse)
- A Matter of Perspectives Activity Sheet
- Writing Tools
- Document Camera

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### OBJECTIVES:

- The student will listen to or read a picture book biography based on the life of Wilma Mankiller and apply the learned content to a writing activity.
- The student will review related economic concepts and integrate them correctly in a writing activity.
- The student will apply provided information to write short narratives from various perspectives.

### ECONOMIC CONCEPTS:

- **Barter** - Exchanging goods and services without the use of money.
- **Capital Resources** - Goods made by people and used to produce other goods and services.
- **Choice** – selecting something over another thing.
- **Goods**- Things people make or use to satisfy needs and wants.
- **Human Resources** – the quality and quantity of human effort directed toward producing goods and services.
- **Human Capital** – labor resources that can be improved through investments in education, training, and health care.
- **Money** - Anything commonly accepted in exchange of goods and services.
- **Natural Resources** - Materials that come directly from nature.
- **Opportunity Cost** - The next best choice that is given up when a decision is made.
- **Scarcity** – the condition of limited resources-- because resources are limited, people must make choices.
- **Services** - Activities that satisfy people's needs and wants.
- **Wants** - Things people would like to have.

### VIRGINIA STANDARD OF LEARNING- HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

- 2.10 The student will explain that scarcity (limited resources) requires people to make choices about producing and consuming goods and services.
- 3.8 The student will demonstrate an understanding of different cultures and the natural, human, and capital resources they used in the production of goods and services.
- 3.10 The student will identify examples of making an economic choice and will explain the idea of opportunity cost (what is given up when making a choice).
- CE.10 The student will apply social science skills to understand how public policy is made at the local, state, and national levels of government by
- b) describing how individuals and interest groups influence public policy.
- CE.11 The student will apply social science skills to understand how economic decisions are made in the marketplace by
- a) explaining that because of scarcity, consumers, producers, and governments must make choices, understanding that everyone's choice has an opportunity cost.

### VIRGINIA STANDARD OF LEARNING- ENGLISH

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- 4.6 The student will read and demonstrate comprehension of nonfiction texts.
  - e) Draw conclusions and make inferences using textual information as support.
- 4.7 The student will write in a variety of forms to include narrative, descriptive, opinion, and expository.
  - m) Revise writing for clarity of content using specific vocabulary and information.
- 6.1 The student will use effective oral communication skills in a variety of settings.
  - d) Ask questions to clarify the speaker's purpose and perspective.
- 6.6 The student will read and demonstrate comprehension of a variety of nonfiction texts.
  - e) Draw conclusions and make inferences based on explicit and implied information.
- 6.7 The student will write in a variety of forms to include narrative, expository, persuasive, and reflective with an emphasis on narrative and reflective writing.
  - j) Select vocabulary and information to enhance the central idea, tone, and voice.

### PROCEDURE:

1. Introduce the lesson by telling the students that they will be learning about past leader in the Cherokee Nation named Wilma Mankiller. **Note:** If the students ask about her unique last name share that she was proud of it. Her ancestors were guards and when enemies attacked, these warriors fought back, protecting the village.
2. Show them the cover of the book, *Wilma's Way Home: The Life of Wilma Mankiller* by Doreen Rappaport. If time allows read it to the class. This takes about fifteen minutes. A YouTube read aloud can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-seTLtE44>
3. Tell the students that Wilma Mankiller's life was full of challenges and accomplishments. Explain that education was important to her and she continued to not only advocate it for her people, but to invest in her own human capital. She completed her college degree in 1976 and, after stepping down from a leadership role, accepted a position to teach at Dartmouth College in 1998.
4. Explain that throughout Wilma's life she struggled with poverty, ill health and lack of resources. Display the Economic Concepts visual, review the words and definitions while emphasizing that these words factored in Wilma's life. Note: The students will need access to this visual while working on the Matter of Perspective Activity Sheet.
5. Display and/or distribute the A Matter of Perspectives Information Sheet. Review the information with the students. Students will need access to this sheet to complete the activity.
6. Display a copy of the A Matter of Perspectives Activity Sheet and read the introduction and instructions to the students. Introduction: *"Events are often seen differently by those who experience them. How might Wilma Mankiller's leadership role in the Cherokee Nation been viewed by others?"* Directions: *"In each box, write what you think the noted person may have thought concerning the social and economic issues experienced by the Cherokee Nation. Include at least one of these concepts in each statement: barter, capital resources, choice, goods, human resources, human capital, money, natural resources, opportunity cost, scarcity, services, wants."*

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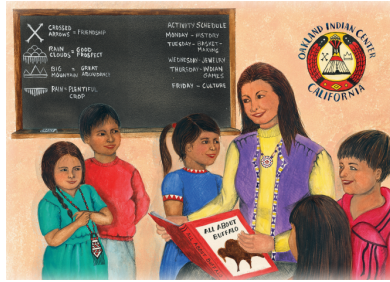
7. Distribute the A Matter of Perspectives Activity Sheet and writing tools. Students may work independently, in pairs, or in small groups.
8. Remind students that there are no right or wrong answers to this activity. They are to respond as if they were someone else reflecting on Wilma's achievements. However, each statement should contain at least one economic concept, used correctly.
9. Allow students time to complete the A Matter of Perspectives Activity Sheet.
10. Encourage students to share their statements with the class.

### **Additional Resources:**

- Wilma Mankiller was featured in the 2022 U.S. Mint's American Women Quarters Program. Information on this four-year program can be found at this website: <https://www.usmint.gov/learn/coin-and-medal-programs/american-women-quarters>
- The publisher provides a seven-page teacher guide here: [https://www.hachettebookgroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/PR5881\\_WilmasWay\\_EG\\_Final.pdf](https://www.hachettebookgroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/PR5881_WilmasWay_EG_Final.pdf)

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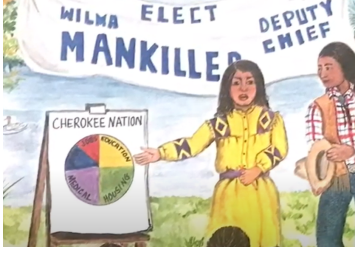
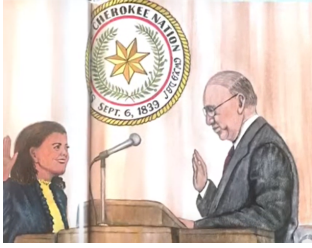


## Economic Concepts



1. **Barter** - Exchanging goods and services without the use of money.
2. **Capital Resources** - Goods made by people and used to produce other goods and services.
3. **Choice** – selecting something over another thing.
4. **Goods**- Things people make or use to satisfy needs and wants.
5. **Human Resources** – the quality and quantity of human effort directed toward producing goods and services.
6. **Human Capital** – labor resources that can be improved through investments in education, training, and health care.
7. **Money** - Anything commonly accepted in exchange of goods and services.
8. **Natural Resources** - Materials that come directly from nature.
9. **Opportunity Cost** - The next best choice that is given up when a decision is made.
10. **Scarcity** – the condition of limited resources-- because resources are limited, people must make choices.
11. **Services** - Activities that satisfy peoples' needs and wants.
12. **Wants** - Things people would like to have.

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## A Matter of Perspective Information Sheet

<p><b>Wilma Mankiller</b></p> 	<p><b>Wilma Pearl Mankiller</b> (November 18, 1945 – April 6, 2010) was a Native American activist, social worker, community developer and the first woman elected to serve as Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation.</p> <p><i>“Prior to my election, young Cherokee girls would never have thought they might grow up to be chief.”</i></p> <p>Quote by Wilma Mankiller</p>
<p><b>Cherokee Chief Ross Swimmer</b></p> 	<p><b>Ross O. Swimmer</b> (born October 26, 1943) served as the Special Trustee for American Indians at the U.S. Department of the Interior from 2003 to 2009. He was formerly the Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation.</p> <p><i>“Cherokee Chief Ross Swimmer hired Wilma to work for the Cherokee Nation government. When he saw how hard she worked, he gave her more responsibility. She went back to finish college.”</i></p>
<p><b>A Non-Cherokee living in Bell Oklahoma</b></p> 	<p>In the early 1980s, the Cherokee Nation, under the direction of Wilma Mankiller put together a project to build a 16-mile waterline to Bell, where many of the residents still had no indoor plumbing. The tribe provided equipment while Bell residents contributed most of the labor on a volunteer basis.</p> <p><i>“There was no grant money for plumbing for the non-Cherokees in Bell, so their Cherokee neighbors raised it.”</i></p>
<p><b>President Bill Clinton</b></p> 	<p><b>William Jefferson Clinton</b> (born August 19, 1946) is an American politician who served as the 42nd president of the United States from 1993 to 2001.</p> <p><i>“1998-Wilma is awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Bill Clinton.”</i></p>

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## A Matter of Perspective

Activity Sheet-



Events are often seen differently by those who experience them. How might Wilma Mankiller's leadership role in the Cherokee Nation been viewed by others?

In each box, write what you think the noted person may have thought concerning the social and economic issues experienced by the Cherokee Nation. Include at least one of these concepts in each statement: barter, capital resources, choice, goods, human resources, human capital, money, natural resources, opportunity cost, scarcity, services, wants.

Wilma Mankiller	Cherokee Chief Ross Swimmer
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A Non-Cherokee living in Bell Oklahoma	President Bill Clinton

## Using Children's Literature to Teach Economics

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### Elementary Discussion Questions

**Introduction:** Show the students the cover of the book *Wilma's Way Home: The Life of Wilma Mankiller*. Tell them they will be listening to a story about a Native American who was the first female of the Cherokee Nation.

1. Where was Wilma Mankiller born? [Oklahoma] How many children were in her family? [There were eleven. She was right in the middle at number six.]
2. The first illustration in the book shows Wilma's large family working in their garden. (Display the illustration.) Can you identify the different resources being used? Natural resources. [vegetables, soil, trees, water, sun] Human resources. [Family members planting, chopping, weeding, fetching water] Capital resources. [shovels, axes, pails, rakes, hoes.]
3. What were these productive resources used for? [The garden and chickens helped the family grow their own food.] How else did the family put food on their table? [They hunted and fished.]



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4. Wilma's family and community members used barter to help them get a variety of goods. What are some examples of things that were bartered? [They bartered (traded) eggs for milk, and homegrown vegetables for store-bought goods.]
5. Why did Wilma's family move to San Francisco, California when she was eleven-years-old? [Her father could not find work in Oklahoma and he hoped city life would give his children a better future.]
6. The students in her new school made fun of Wilma's last name. But she was proud of it. Why? [Her family was given this name because her ancestors guarded the village homes and when enemies attacked, they fought back.]
7. When Wilma was eighteen, she got married and had two daughters. However, she kept investing in her human resources. How did she do this? [She started college, went back to the Indian Center, and got a job at the Oakland Indian Center working with children.]
8. After a long recovery from a car accident, Wilma went to help the 350 people living in Bell, Oklahoma. They were very poor but helped each other survive by sharing fish, meat, and firewood. What natural resource did they request from her to help them? [They wanted running water.]
9. When Wilma became a leader in the Cherokee Nation, she helped the tribe achieve financial success and gain pride in their accomplishments. What were some achievements gained during her ten years of leadership? [The Cherokee Nation revived a tribal high school, built four health clinics, two day-care centers and a job corps training center. New businesses were created, such as a cattle and poultry ranch, gift shops, and a motel. These businesses generated millions of dollars.]

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10. In 2022 Wilma Mankiller was selected as one of the featured women for the new U.S. Mint's American Women Quarters Program. This is a four-year program that celebrates the accomplishments and contributions made by women to the development and history of our country. Why do you think she was selected for this honor? [Answers will vary but her leadership skills and support for the people of the Cherokee Nation will likely be mentioned.]

### Middle School Discussion Questions

1. Wilma Mankiller was born in 1945 to a large family in Oklahoma. She was a member of the Cherokee Nation. Can you name three American Indian language groups that are indigenous to Virginia? [The Algonquian, the Siouan, and the Iroquoian]
2. Her family struggled to put food on the table and did not have indoor plumbing or electricity. How did they manage to feed to get food and other resources? [They survived through *Gadugi*, the philosophy of helping each other by bartering goods and services. This philosophy states, "We are all interdependent. Do things for others rather than just yourself."]

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3. When Wilma was about eleven-years-old the federal government created a new policy to relocate Indians from their lands to cities. Wilma's father decided to take his family hoping for a better job and a brighter future for his children. Do you think this was a good policy? Why or why not? [Answers will depend on the students' background and prior knowledge.]
4. All choices have costs (negatives) and benefits (positives). What were some of the costs Wilma incurred by leaving her family and living with her grandmother when her family relocated to San Francisco? [She missed her family, went to a different school, and could no longer go to the Indian Center.] What were some of the benefits? [She no longer felt out of place and enjoyed the hard work and fresh air.]
5. The 1960's was an era of protests. What were some of the protests referred to in the book? [Black Americans marched for equality. Latino farm workers went on strike for higher wages. Citizens demonstrated against the war in Viet Nam. Women formed groups concerning their equal rights. Native people protested the taking of their tribal lands.]
6. When Wilma moved back to Oklahoma with her two daughters, she was hired to work for the Cherokee Nation Government. She helped her people by applying for grants, organizing work teams, and inspiring others to help themselves and improve their lives. In 1983 she ran for a position on the Cherokee nation council. How did some people show their resentment of her because she was a woman? [They sent her hate mail, slashed her tires, and refused to attend her rallies.]
7. Wilma was elected and during her ten years of leadership the Cherokee Nation experienced economic growth and brought positive attention to her people. Do you think being a woman hurt her leadership abilities? [Answers will vary.]

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### **Enrichment Question:**

Challenge the students brainstorm a list of what, besides money, may have motivated Wilma Mankiller to become a community leader. [Possible Responses: having pride in her heritage, helping others, getting to know new people, developing additional skills, contributing to society, learning to be independent, providing a purpose for oneself.]