

STAR POWER

Star Power is a game that simulates some things about society. You start with a number of chips (each worth a designated number of points) and trade chips with others throughout the game to try to get as many points as you can. At the end of several trading sessions, the three persons with the highest accumulated point scores will be declared the winners. A discussion will follow about the aspects of life that are illustrated by the game.

MATERIAL PREPARATION:

Chips:

1. You need chips of 5 different colors (see chart below) and you will need larger “bonus” chips.
2. Since each student needs 5 chips, for a typical class of 30 you will need a minimum of 150 chips.
3. Distribution of colors: There is no set rule for this, but you want a lot more blue chips than you do yellow chips. So you could consider something like: 60 blue chips, 40 white chips, 25 red chips, 16 green chips, and 8 gold chips.
4. 3 bags each with one third of the chips distributed fairly equally.
5. Bonus chips: 9 large white chips for the bonus session.
6. *Warning: chips get lost, so you will probably need 10% extra chips.*

Charts or Overheads:

1. Charts or overhead with the distribution and rules (see below) that all students can see.

White or Blackboard

1. Draw 3 columns: Head each column with the titles:
 - a. Triangles: 0-10
 - b. Circles: 11-16
 - c. Squares: 16 and above.

PROCEDURES:

1. Tell the class that they will play a game and that you will give them the rules at appropriate times.
2. Divide the class into 3 groups. Seat the groups in large circles as far away from each other as possible.
3. Once the groups have formed, place a bag filled with chips in the center and say: “Each group has a bag filled with chips. Without looking into the bag, and without telling your neighbors what you have, you need to take 5 chips. Close your fist once you have your chips and do not have anyone look at them. You can look at them yourselves, but it won’t make any sense. Once everyone has his or her chips, put the bag down in the center of the circle again.”
4. When all the groups have finished taking chips, collect the bags.
5. Tell the class: “I will now reveal to you the meaning of the different colors. Each color corresponds to a numerical value. You need to add up the total value of your chips—without sharing it with other students, nor by showing what you have.”
6. Project or hang up the chart with the distribution of chips.
7. Tell students that gold chips are scarce and blue and white chips are very common. Therefore the latter have less numerical value. Because it is less likely that someone might get 4 or 5 chips of the same color the red, white, & blue chips jump in value once someone has 4 or 5 of them. So someone with 5 blue chips will have a numerical score of 16 (rather than 5).

TRADING SESSION.

1. Tell students that everyone will have an opportunity to increase their points through trade.
2. Project or hang up the Trading Rule chart. Go over the rules.
3. Briefly, these are the rules (see also chart below).
 - a. Students increase chips through trading. They can trade with *anyone in class*: not just in their own group.
 - b. Students must stand when they trade; no one can be seated.
 - c. All chips must be hidden during the trading sessions (strictly enforced! If you are showing a chip during a trading session, I may take it from you).
 - d. **Only the best 5 chips count.** It is possible for someone to get more than 5, but they can only total up the 5 “best.”
 - e. Only one-for-one trades are legal. Two-for-one or other combinations are not legal.
 - f. To begin a trade, hide the chip to be traded in your hand, and find another person, from any group, who is willing to trade. Trading is allowed with all players, even ones in a different group than you.
 - g. The value of each person's chip must be concealed until after the trade is completed. Once participants touch hands, a chip of unequal value must be exchanged, chips of equal value cannot be traded. Unless two people can complete a trade (you can try again with a different chip), they may have to hold hands for the rest of the trading session.
 - h. Persons with folded arms do not have to trade with other persons.
4. Model one trade: Use 3 blue, one red, and one green chip. Your total value is 8 points. Ask students what they might trade in order to get more point (one possibility, is to trade a red for a blue and a green for a blue—5 blues then become 16 pts.)
5. *Do not explain too much since one way to “win” is to be quick to catch on and to be motivated.*
6. When students ask what the point of the game is, tell them that they will discover that once they are done, or ignore their question. Do not say that the point is to trade or to increase points: make a concerted effort to simply offer that option, but leave it to the students to decide what to do with the option. This will allow for more in-depth discussion afterwards.
7. Tell the students that you will begin the trading session in one minute. Everyone must stand. The trading session will last 7 minutes. (more or less: at your discretion). When students feel that they are done, they come to the board and write their new total in the appropriate column by writing their name and then the total behind their name.
8. Once students trade, watch the trading, but do not answer questions. Watch students and collect the chips. Put the chips in the bag. Here you might put higher value chips in one particular bag called the **squares** and a larger number of blue chips in the bag called the triangles. A third bag for the circles has a random distribution.
9. When you feel that the session is losing its momentum (after 7 or 8 minutes) stop the session and tell the students to record their scores if they have not done so already. Tell students to sit down again in their circles.
10. Now redistribute the students according to the columns. Here you might make sure that the triangles have the most students, the circles next, and the squares should have no more than 5 students. You might even need to change to numbers needed to fit into each group. So if too many students fit in the square category, raise the limit needed for a student to be part of that group. Do not say that one group is “better,” than the other, however. Once you have moved names on the board in the respective groupings, tell the students to now sit in the new groups. Make sure the squares, being a smaller group, are further removed from the rest.

BONUS SESSION.

1. Tell students that they now can increase their scores a different way.
2. Each group will be given 3 chips, each worth 3 points.
3. Go over the bonus session rules: project or hang up the chart.
4. Reiterate that the decision must be unanimous.
5. If a group does expel a student, that student is no longer in the game and has to sit apart.
6. A group can give all chips (total value of 9) to one student, or it can give one chip to 3 different students, or give 2 chips to one and 1 to another. These students will increase their points accordingly.
7. When the bonus session is over, record the new scores for the respective students on the board. Then redistribute the groups: if one student in the triangles increased his or her points so that he or she might fit in the circle or square group you can move that student into that group. Make sure not to unbalance the groupings, however: always keep the square group to about 5 students. If too many enter, simply raise the limit for entrance.

TRADING SESSION 2

1. Tell students that they can now participate in a second trading session: go over the rules quickly.
2. Give each group a bag again, but this time without telling the students, the squares get the bag with fewest chips, but each of higher value (disproportionate number of gold, green & red chips and fewer white and blue), the triangles get the bag with most of the blue and whites, and the circles get the one with the more random distribution (but maybe 1 gold, 2 green, and 5 reds). However the distribution, it should not be too obvious to the students that the bags have been “rigged.”
3. Start trading session and record new scores by having students add the new scores on the board visibly: that is, if their old score was 10 and their new score is 12, they now must write “ $10 + 12 = 22$.”
4. When the session ends (after 5 to 7 minutes), students record their new scores.
5. You will now need to assign new numerical value limits to each group, depending on the distribution of scores. Always maintain a core of 5 or 6 students in the squares, and a triangle group that is slightly larger than the circle group.

BONUS SESSION 2

1. Go through the bonus session again.

BUT NOW . . .

2. While the groups are discussing how they want to divide up the chips, go to the “squares” and give them the following written message:
*The rules of the game are about to change. You are the group that is now in charge of the rules. You can change or **make up** any rule—any rule: do not ask me permission since you are now in charge of the game. Think about what that means. What rules will you implement? How will you enforce these rules? Do not turn to me to enforce the rules since you are now in charge. I suggest that you allow the other groups to give you suggestions for rules, but it is up to you what you want to do with them. Remember that you can also describe how you want the other groups to present their petitions and whether or not you will consider their petitions.*
3. When the bonus session is over, tell the class as a whole that the game’s rules are about to change. Tell the class that henceforth, the squares are in charge of the game. Then turn to the squares and ask them what it is they want to tell the rest of the class.
4. This is the point where you have to play it by ear. Generally the squares tend to make very

conservative changes: the point score increases for a certain color, etc. Rarely do they make radical changes. Watch and record in writing the dynamics and some of the comments. These will be needed for the discussion afterwards. While some of the triangles might say they want to combine with the circles, listen to what the circles say about this. Oftentimes there is lots of talk about combining and ignoring the squares, but generally, the class tends to obey the squares. Sometimes the squares humiliate the other groups through the ritual necessary in order to present the petitions. The dynamics of the game change a lot here and one can't predict how it will go. The one generalization that can be made, however, is that the triangles feel powerless (and have felt like that throughout the game), that the circles felt motivated until the new rules, but still hope to get into the squares, and that the squares tend to become arrogant. Oftentimes someone who has moved from a different group into the squares tend to be just as arrogant as the others.

5. Should you allow the third session based on what the squares want.
6. The session should at least be started, but it depends on what will happen. If you suspect things might become chaotic (anarchy, revolution), see how it goes, but keep an eye out until you feel you need to pull back the class. Rarely does a "communist" system develop, although the triangles and circles have talked about it.

What do you do with students who were tardy and entered the game late?

They watch and can only participate until they are given chips. They are automatically located in the triangle group. It is unlikely that these "latecomers" will ever move into the squares or even the circles, although they might be given the bonus points by triangles so that they could possibly move into a higher group.

DISCUSSION OF THE GAME

After the session you need to spend time discussing the game. If there is not enough time give the students questions to write about:

How might this game be like real life? (Here ask students to explain their answers fully).

Describe some of your strategies you used to get more points.

Describe some of your feelings as a member of a group and your feelings towards other groups.

Describe some historical situations that are similar to that what you just experienced.

Some possible questions for discussion:

Begin with the questions above and extrapolate accordingly.

Some more pointed questions if they aren't raised in the discussion are:

What were some options that the squares (and circles) had? Did they follow up on these options? Why or why not?

Who told you that you had to make more points? (This is why it is important that you were not the one who told them that during the game!)

What happened if you didn't quite understand the trading? Did you give up? Did you cheat? Did you catch on fast? Were you aggressive? Were you comfortable being aggressive? Do these feelings and attitudes have a counterpart in real life?

What happened if you came in late? If you gave up trading too early? If you didn't care about trading at all?

Why were the squares so excitable and energetic and the squares not at all during the last session? Could you, as squares move up once you were in the "square" group?

Why is it that the people on the lower socio-economic scale tend to be the ones who are least involved in the political process?

What historical situations or events could be understood with the emotions and attitudes that you experienced in the game?

What do you think the objective is of the game? What is the objective of life? Is life like a game?

Homework extension:

Students write 3 generalizations about human nature that they experienced in the game.

When the students return the generalizations, collate them and return them. Attached is a list of generalizations made by 9th grade world history students.

GENERALIZATIONS ABOUT SOCIAL POWER

(Ninth Grade Class)

1. YOU' CAN ONLY POSSESS POWER IF OTHER PEOPLE (LOWER CLASSES) ABIDE BY YOUR RULES
2. IT HELPS TO HAVE MONEY TO GAIN POWER
3. PEOPLE ONLY HAVE POWER BECAUSE OTHER PEOPLE GO ALONG WITH IT.
4. MIDDLE CLASS PEOPLE DON'T WANT TO JEOPARDIZE WHAT THEY DO HAVE BY BOTHERING TO TRY TO OVERTHROW THE UPPER CLASS.
5. MOST LEADERS DON'T GIVE A LOT OF OPPORTUNITIES TO THE LOWER CLASSES
6. LOWER CLASS IS NOT ACTIVE BECAUSE IT FEELS POWERLESS.
7. THE RICH GOT THE POWER WHEN THE FIRST PERSON DID WHAT THEY TOLD HIM TO DO.
8. THE UPPER CLASS GETS RESPECT BECAUSE THEY HAVE MONEY
9. REVOLUTIONS START BECAUSE OF THE POOR REBELLING AGAINST THE UPPER CLASS OR THE ONES WITH POWER.
10. THE RICH USUALLY GET RICHER AND THE POOR GET POORER.
11. THE RICH WOULD FORGET WHERE THEY CAME FROM AND WOULDN'T HELP THE POOR OR MIDDLE CLASS.
12. POWER IS ADDICTIVE
13. PEOPLE WANT TO BE LED
14. THE MIDDLE AND LOWER CLASS ALSO DON'T REBEL BECAUSE THEY NEED THAT "SOMEONE" TO LOOK UP TO, TO MAKE THE DECISION, AND SOMEONE TO BLAME THINGS ON.
15. ALAN APPEARED TO BE THE "RINGLEADER" AND LIKE IN REAL LIFE THE PEOPLE PICK ONE PERSON—PRESIDENT—TO BE IN CHARGE.
16. IF THE LOWER CLASSES WANTED TO REBEL, THEY COULD.

Star Power Chip distribution and Rules

NUMBER OF CHIPS (MAKE A CHART OR OVERHEAD)

	1	2	3	4	5
Gold:	8	16	24	32	40
Green:	4	8	12	16	20
Red:	3	6	9	12+2=14	15+3=18
White:	2	4	6	8+5=13	10+7=17
Blue:	1	2	3	4+8=12	5+11=16

TRADING RULES (MAKE A CHART OR OVERHEAD)

1. Players must clasp hands to make a trade
2. Only the best five chips count.
3. Chips of unequal values must be traded once hands are clasped.
4. No trading or talking unless hands are clasped.
5. If arms are folded, you do not have to trade.
6. All chips are to be hidden at all times.

BONUS SESSION RULES (MAKE A CHART OR OVERHEAD)

1. Each bonus chip is worth 3 points
2. Bonus chips distributed by unanimous vote.
3. Bonus chips given to 1, 2, or 3 persons in group.
4. Persons may be expelled from group by majority vote.
5. Undistributed bonus chips returned to director.

Star Power

Set Up:

- 3 circles of chairs
- Post scoring and trading rules around the room
- Have participants grab 5 chips as they are entering

Activity:

Introduce yourselves and do a quick ice breaker (name and hometown)

Reminder about being respectful—no cell phones!

“Welcome Privilege Workshop participants to Star Power! Let’s introduce ourselves (Name/Organization).” Once everyone has introduced themselves continue with the introduction:

“This is an activity which requires trading and bargaining. The people with the highest scores will be declared the winners. The scoring is as follows (direct participants to scoring sheets around the room.) Remember that only your best 5 chips will be scored regardless of how many chips you have. Pay attention to bonus points of having 4 or 5 red, purple or blue chips.”

(GO SLOW!)

I will now explain the rules for trading. Once the trading round begins, you will have approximately 6 minutes to improve your score. You improve your score by trading with others. It does not matter which group of seats you are currently sitting in. You are able to trade with anyone who is willing to trade with you. In order to trade, you must clasp hands with another person. (Raychel and Rachel will show an example of what this looks like). Once you clasp hands, a trade MUST be made. If you cannot agree on a trade, you must stand with your hands clasped until the trading round is over. There is no talking unless trading is taking place and your hands are clasped. You cannot trade chips of equal value, for example you cannot trade 2 blue chips for 1 purple chip, because the scoring post shows, that would be an equal trade. If you do not want to trade with anyone, simply fold your arms over your chest. Once you are happy with your chips you can go to the table and turn them in to be scored. Finally, do not let other people see your chips, even during a trade.”

Questions to ask:

- Does this activity sound familiar to anyone? *If yes, pull them aside and have them speak with Raychel.
- Check to see if anyone has questions. When answering the question, be sure to include the question in the answer.

Enter First Round of Trading

**Debrief and Lead: Remove two circles of chairs

**When all of the scoring is done...

“Good job trading everyone! Give yourselves a round of applause. It appears that some people did better than others but that is ok. Let’s give our top scorers a round of applause! They will get to sit here. Good Job to our middle scorers as well. You will sit here and if you scored in the lowest category, sit here.”

LOCATIONS:

- Top scorers = couch
- Middle = circle of chairs
- Low = on the floor in the corner

Leave awkward silence

Bonus Round #1

“You will now all have another opportunity to improve your scores through the use of a bonus round. The bonus round rules are as follows. Each group will receive 3 bonus chips. Each bonus chip is worth 3 points. Each group must unanimously decide who receives the bonus chips.”

**Give them 3-4 minutes to decide.

**The people who receive bonus chips should turn them into the counter.

“Now that round one is completely over, let’s see how everyone did. These people here represent our top scorers. Let’s give (read names) a round of applause for how well they have done this round! These people did fairly well. Let’s give (read names) a round of applause as well. Then final group did alright, but there is definitely room for improvement, which we will get to in a minute. Now, in order to recognize these difference skill levels and allow everyone to see how everyone did during the first round, we have badges for you all. The top scorers will be represented by squares. The middle scorers will be represented by circles and the lowest will be represented by triangles. **Pause for Rachel to hand out badges** Everyone have a badge? All right. Let’s move to round two which will be exactly like round one. Please take 5 chips out of the bag when it goes around.”

Enter Second Round of Trading

**Review trading rules and scoring if needed.

Update Scores.

“Now as a reward for the squares doing so well, we would like to give you some snacks. (Pass out Oreos, twizzlers and ice water.) Circles, you have done alright as well. Here is something to drink. (Give room temperature water and small cups).”

Bonus Round #2

**Same as bonus round #1

“You will now all have another opportunity to improve your scores through the use of a bonus round. The bonus round rules are as follows. Each group will receive 3 bonus chips. Each bonus chip is worth 3 points. Each group must unanimously decide who receives the bonus chips.”

**Give them 3-4 minutes to decide.

**The people who receive bonus chips should turn them into the counter.

Rule Creation

“How is everyone doing? Some well, some not so much? Well, now we will have an opportunity to change or add rules. Everyone will have the opportunity to add in developing the rules. Because the squares have done so well and they seem to understand trading and scoring best, they will have the final decision on any rules that are to be made. Circles, you will have the ability to send a delegate up to the squares in order to make requests and suggestions. Triangles, you will have the opportunity to write down any suggestions that you have which will then be presented to the squares.”

**At this point the squares can make up any rules.

**Allow 2-3 minutes for each group to begin discussing.

You will then go to first the circle group and then the triangle group and read this statement, remembering to get on their level when sharing.

“You have the same alternatives as anyone who is a part of a system. You can obey the rules without question, try to change the system by working within the rules, or, you can try to overwhelm or sabotage the system.”

***“Yes we can break rules, but remember there are consequences.”*

Allow the squares to read off the rules.

Move into trading round 3.

Continue trading rounds and bonus rounds until CHANGE occurs or after they have been going to 60-70 minutes.

POINT VALUE CHART

CHIPS	1	2	3	4	5
GOLD	8	16	24	32	40
GREEN	4	8	12	16	20
RED	3	6	9	$12+2=14$	$15+3=18$
PURPLE	2	4	6	$8+5=13$	$10+7=17$
BLUE	1	2	3	$4+8=12$	$5+11=16$

TRADING RULES

- 1) PLAYERS MUST CLASP HANDS TO MAKE A TRADE.
- 2) ONLY THE BEST FIVE (5) CHIPS COUNT.
- 3) ONCE HANDS ARE CLASPED, A TRADE MUST TAKE PLACE.
- 4) NO TRADING OR TALKING UNLESS HANDS ARE CLASPED.
- 5) IF ARMS ARE FOLDED, YOU DO NOT HAVE TO TRADE.
- 6) ALL CHIPS ARE TO BE HIDDEN AT ALL TIMES.

BONUS SESSION RULES

- 1) EACH BONUS CHIP IS WORTH 3 POINTS.
- 2) BONUS CHIPS ARE DISTRIBUTED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE.
- 3) BONUS CHIPS CAN BE GIVEN TO 1, 2, OR 3 PERSONS IN A GROUP.
- 4) UNDISTRIBUTED BONUS CHIPS ARE RETURNED TO THE COUNTERS.