
War on Electric Scooters

Segment Length: 6:03 minutes

Lesson Description:

In some cities, electric scooters are becoming the hot new trend. Companies such as Lime and Bird allow people to conveniently rent scooters, providing easy, green transportation. But some politicians want to ban the scooters, claiming they are dangerous. Supporters point out that cars and bicycles are dangerous, too. This video takes a closer look at scooter sharing services and examines risks and rewards of this new trend.

Concepts & Key Terms:

Green transportation – Modes of transport that claim reduced, minimal, or no harm upon ecosystems or the environment.

Sharing economy – An economic system in which assets or services are shared between private individuals, either free or for a fee. Transactions generally take place through the internet.

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- discuss the pros and cons of the electric scooters.
- explain arguments used by the scooter sharing services and their opponents.
- evaluate the arguments for and against prohibiting scooter sharing services.

Preview Activity:

Read this aloud to the class: A new technology has just been developed that will allow people to move about our community more easily, but there are dangers associated with this new technology. Do you support or oppose this—or do you need more information? If you need more information, what do you need to know?

Use Think, Pair, Share to have students compare and discuss their answers. After a few minutes, ask the students to explain their answers to the class.

Viewing Guide:

We recommend that teachers show the video twice: once to allow students to view it and focus on the issues presented, and once to allow them time to complete the viewing guide. After they complete the viewing guide, allow students a few minutes to work in pairs sharing and verifying answers.

Answers to Viewing Guide

1. anywhere
2. safety
3. symptom
4. problems
5. alone

War on Electric Scooters

Viewing Guide

Name _____

Date _____

Class _____

Teacher _____

Directions: As you watch the video, fill in the blanks with the correct words.

1. For two bucks, I can jump on one of these things, go where I need to go, and then just leave it _____.
2. San Francisco said they endanger public health and _____.
3. Protestors say they think the deluge of electric scooters in San Francisco is a _____ of gentrification.
4. Whenever there's something new, the media always hype the _____.
5. Maybe, just maybe, the politicians will leave them _____.

Now, take a few moments to reflect on the video and answer the questions below:

Why do some people want to ban electric scooters? _____

What does the term "green transportation option" mean? _____

How are scooters a green transportation option? _____

In the video, John Stossel said that when customers are done with the scooter, they can just leave them anywhere. Can you see any potential problems with that? _____. If so, what problem(s) can you envision? _____

According to John Stossel, the media tends to focus on the risks of new products and technology. Why do you think that is? _____

Discussion and Analysis:

1. Do electric scooter sharing services solve any problems? If yes, what problems do they solve? If no, why don't they?
2. There have been accidents involving these scooters and people have been injured. Should we be concerned about this? Is banning the scooters a reasonable solution? Are there other possible solutions? Name some.
3. John Stossel said that "whenever there's something new, the media always hype the problems." Is he right? What are some other examples of this? Why?
4. Other innovations that we take for granted today were originally viewed as dangerous and unnecessary. Can you name any examples? What if they had been banned? How would life be different?
5. Lime and Bird are two examples of companies that are part of the sharing economy. What are some other examples? Have you ever used any companies involved in the sharing economy? If so, which one(s)? How was your experience?
6. The scooter companies pay people to find and charge scooters that have run out of power. What do you think of this idea? What is their alternative? Would you do it?
7. A small percentage of people who oppose the scooters have vandalized the vehicles. What do you think of this behavior? What are appropriate ways to protest something? Should a small number of people protesting something be able to stop it?
8. San Francisco granted permits to operate electric scooter sharing services to two companies, but not Lime and Bird. Is that fair? Should the government pick and choose which companies can operate within their community and which companies can't? If so, on what basis should they make that decision?
9. The scooter companies offer people eco-friendly transportation. Is this important? Why / Why not?
10. If you had the opportunity, would you use the scooters? Why / Why not?

Discuss These Lines from the Video:

1. It's a new twist on old technology that entrepreneurs found to give us something that works even better to solve needs in dense urban areas.
2. Who am I going to sue when I get knocked down?
3. In San Francisco and many other cities, scooter companies tried to escape destructive regulation by doing what Uber and Airbnb did: just put these out there, and hope that by the time the politician notices, the scooters would be too popular to ban.
4. [T]hey want these innovators to come ask for permission and go through the regulatory processes...which can take years and can also prevent consumers from accessing a transportation option that could be accessible now.

5. Some people get hurt, but we don't see ourselves banning bicycles because somebody might get hurt on a bicycle.
6. There will be social norms that evolve, just like we've seen with bike lanes.
7. When scooters lose battery power, scooter companies pay people, like this family, to find them, pick them up, and charge them at home, 5 to 20 dollars for every scooter they charge.

Quotes for Discussion:

We humans have a love-hate relationship with our technology. We love each new advance and we hate how fast our world is changing. – Daniel H. Wilson

Learning and innovation go hand in hand. The arrogance of success is to think that what you did yesterday will be sufficient for tomorrow. – William Pollard

Government's first duty and highest obligation is public safety. – Arnold Schwarzenegger

I cannot help fearing that men may reach a point where they look on every new theory as a danger, every innovation as a toilsome trouble, every social advance as a first step toward revolution, and that they may absolutely refuse to move at all. – Alexis de Tocqueville

Innovation is the calling card of the future. – Anna Eshoo

The advance of technology is based on making it fit in so that you don't really even notice it, so it's part of everyday life. – Bill Gates

Every once in a while, a new technology, an old problem, and a big idea turn into an innovation. – Dean Kamen

Technology is a useful servant but a dangerous master. – Christian Lous Lange

The solution to transportation inefficiencies lies at the intersection of collaborative consumption and the social graph: shifting transportation from ownership to access. – John Zimmer

Activities:

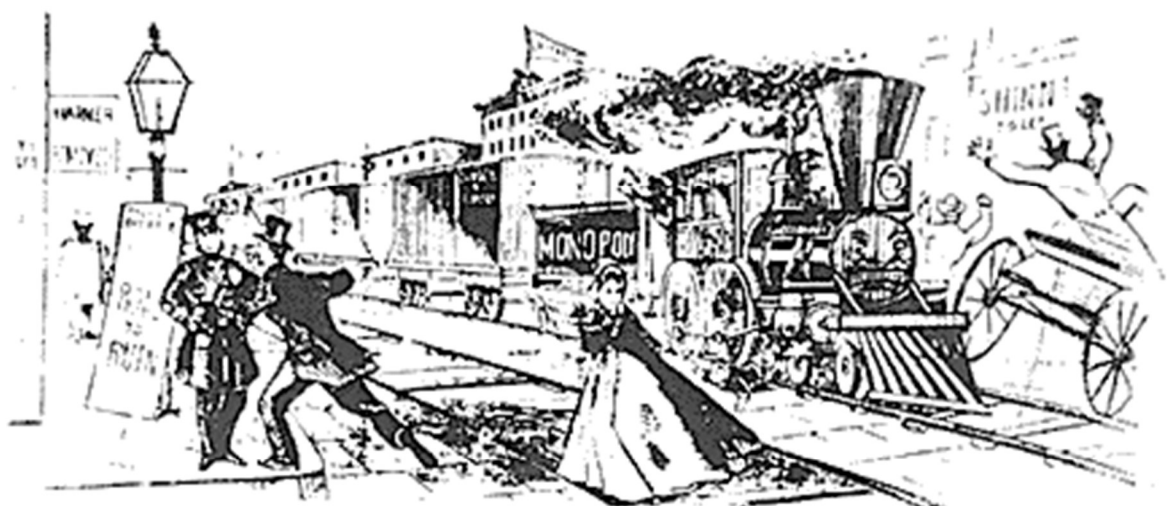
1. Have students complete the accompanying PMI chart.
2. Distribute copies of the anti-railroad poster located at the end of this guide. Have students write a comparative essay in which they compare and contrast the anti-railroad warnings to fears about electric scooters. Students should be encouraged to research for more information prior to writing the essay.
3. Read and write a summary of one of the following articles:
 - A) “San Francisco, Santa Monica Allow Electric Scooters in New Pilot Programs” by Brittany Shoot.
<http://fortune.com/2018/08/30/electric-scooters-san-francisco-santa-monica-dockless-bikes-pilot-programs/>

- B) “How Electric Scooters Are Reshaping Cities” by Joshua Brustein and Nate Lanxon.
<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-09-07/are-electric-scooters-the-future-of-urban-transport-quicktake>
- C) “Electric scooters’ sudden invasion of American cities, explained. Turns out there’s a lot of latent demand for a quick and cheap way to get around” by Umair Irfan.
<https://www.vox.com/2018/8/27/17676670/electric-scooter-rental-bird-lime-skip-spin-cities>
- D) “The electric scooter craze is officially one year old — what’s next?” by Andrew J. Hawkins.
<https://www.theverge.com/2018/9/20/17878676/electric-scooter-bird-lime-uber-lyft>

4. Conduct a classroom debate on the topic of electric scooter sharing services.
5. Research and report on accidents and safety concerns with electric scooters. Some questions you might want to answer are: Where are scooters in use? How many accidents and what kind of injuries have been reported? How do these accidents compare to other types of accidents on the roads? Who is liable if a scooter driver injures a pedestrian?
6. Write a persuasive essay in which you explain the arguments for and against electric scooter sharing services and take a position on whether or not they should be allowed to operate in your neighborhood.
7. Research and write a report about Lime or Bird or another electric scooter sharing service.
8. Have students develop and conduct a poll of fellow students about legalizing scooter sharing services in your community.
9. Pretend you are a politician and will soon speak to a community group about a scooter sharing service that wants to open in your community. You have five minutes to speak. What will you say? Write the speech you would make to that community group.
10. Show the class the video, An Orgy of Innovation, and ask the students to relate it to the War on Scooters video. Have the students pay careful attention to the section in the video in which Don Boudreaux discusses the change in people’s attitudes as the vital spark for innovation—the growing appreciation among ordinary people, of entrepreneurial innovators, and of the economic changes they unleash.

<https://www.mruniversity.com/courses/principles-economics-macroeconomics/hockey-stick-prosperity-innovation-and-entrepreneurship>
11. Show the class the video, The Vanishing Entrepreneur, and have the students relate this video to the War on Scooters video.

<http://www.learnliberty.org/videos/the-vanishing-entrepreneur/>
12. Read and write a book report on either *Anthem* by Ayn Rand or *The Law* by Frédéric Bastiat. How does this book relate to the video?
13. Write a tweet, poem, or song about electric scooters or scooter sharing services.



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