
PRIVATE PARKS

Segment Length: 3:16 minutes

Lesson Description:

When we think of parks, we probably think of public parks, government owned, managed, and maintained. But are all public parks managed and maintained by the government? It seems as though some aren't maintained at all. This segment looks at the role entrepreneurs can play in public parks.

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- discuss problems associated with park maintenance.
- explain some people's preconceived notions of the private sector's involvement with public parks.
- evaluate the potential effects of private park management and maintenance.

Preview Activity and Questions:

Have students answer the following questions in their notebooks:

Name a park near our school. How would you rate the condition of it? What do you like about it? What don't you like?

Use Think, Pair, Share to have students answer the preview question. After a few minutes, poll the students. Ask the students to discuss their answers.

Viewing Guide:

It is recommended that teachers show the video segment twice: once to allow students to view the video 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. toilet
2. maintenance
3. successfully
4. cheaper

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Private Parks Viewing Guide

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

1. And although people love the idea of public, what comes to your mind, if I say the words “public _____”?
2. Park managers now say, we don’t have money for _____. In California alone, 150 state parks closed.
3. Most people don’t realize it, but many public parks, at all levels of government, are run _____ by private sector operators.
4. These private businesses depend on pleasing customers. If they don’t please you, the government can fire them. But government never fires itself. It’s why private management is almost always better. Better and _____.

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

Why might parks be managed differently by non-profit government and for-profit businesses? _____

What is your view of this issue? _____

Discussion and Analysis:

1. Why do parks exist?
2. Have you ever used bathrooms in parks? If so, how were they? Why?
3. What matters more, who maintains them or that they are well-maintained? Explain.
4. Why might businesses do a better job maintaining parks?
5. When the woman at the beginning of the video said that if parks were private, “they’d probably charge you a fee for looking,” did she have a misunderstanding of the role of private businesses in public parks? Explain.
6. If government doesn’t have enough money to maintain a park, how is it that a private business, being paid by the government, can maintain that park and still make a profit?
7. If parks are better maintained, more people might use them, and if more people used them, they would need more maintenance. Is this a problem?
8. What prevents the private business from charging the government too much money?
9. Why doesn’t government charge people to use parks and spend that money to better maintain the parks?
10. Why not just raise taxes and spend that extra money on parks?

Discuss These Lines from the Video:

1. People say maintaining parks and keeping them accessible to the public is a job for government.
2. Garbage everywhere, building covered with graffiti, fields bare of grass.
3. Park managers now say, we don’t have money for maintenance. In California alone, 150 state parks closed.
4. Yosemite’s streams were filled with raw sewage from a leaky sewer. The Grand Canyon’s only source of drinking water is an 83 year old pipe that breaks as often as 30 times a year.
5. Our biggest client is the U.S. Forest Service. They’re taking something that’s a financial loser for them, a real money drain, and by having us run it, change it from a money drain into a financial benefit because they’re actually getting paid rent.
6. People assume a private company, like that guy’s, will cut corners to make more profit. But the private company has an incentive not to cut corners. It makes more money if it does a good job.

Quotes for Discussion:

Preserving parks and open spaces is a winner because it doesn’t need to be explained to everyday Americans.

– **Frank Luntz**

If you let people own their land, they take care of it. That’s why privately owned land is always taken care of, and the parks look like cesspools. Nobody takes care of what everybody owns.

– **Grover Norquist**

Congress has an obligation to protect our country's natural beauty, embodied in our nation's parks, rivers, and breathtaking landscapes. — **Dave Reichert**

Much of what's called "public" is increasingly a private good paid for by users – ever-higher tolls on public highways and public bridges, higher tuitions at so-called public universities, higher admission fees at public parks and public museums. — **Robert Reich**

The parks are our national treasures, and they must be shown more respect, not only by visitors but also the people who run them. — **Michael Frome**

National parks are cathedrals of spirituality and emotion, and unfortunately, they are being loved to death by many of the same people who enjoy them the most. — **Michael Frome**

Activities:

1. Have students complete the PMI chart graphic organizer (page 29).
2. Have students, alone or in small groups, complete the Stakeholder chart (page 30).
3. Visit a neighborhood park and take pictures to demonstrate its condition. Is the park publicly or privately managed / maintained? If there are park workers stationed there, interview them about the park, the use it gets, and their efforts to maintain the park. Prepare a slideshow for the class. (See link in the Resources section for help in preparing a slideshow.)
4. Go to a local park to interview people for a "man-on-the-street" video about the cleanliness of the park. If they are critical of the cleanliness or maintenance of the park, ask them if they think a private company could keep the park in better shape for less money. (See links in the Resources section for help in producing man-on-the-street videos.)
5. Read one of the articles in the Resources section. Then write a summary using Cornell (two-column) notes. (See link in the Resources section for help in taking Cornell notes.)
6. In groups, research arguments for and against private park management for public parks. Then, conduct a classroom debate. Students should be given time to research their position prior to debating. (See link in the Resources section for a guide to conducting classroom debates.)
7. Research private park management and write a persuasive essay arguing your position. (See links in the Resources section for help in writing persuasive essays.)
8. Create a tri-fold brochure advertising a local public park. Be sure to include all the features at the park and upcoming activities for local residents.
9. Research a private park management or maintenance company. What parks does the company manage or maintain? Is the company doing a good job? Are there any criticisms of the company's performance? If so, what are the criticisms? Write a research paper that answers these questions.
10. Watch one of the videos listed in the Resources section. Then, write an essay about the video.

Resources:

Guides

A good explanation of K-W-L, with a sample chart, and a chart for downloading:

<http://www.readingquest.org/strat/kwl.html>

Also helpful for K-W-L:

<https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/structured-learning-teaching-tip>

Think, Pair, Share

A brief explanation of the Think, Pair, Share instructional strategy, with examples:

<http://www.readingquest.org/strat/tps.html>

A video explanation of Think, Pair, Share:

<https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/think-pair-share-lesson-idea>

Conducting classroom debates:

<http://712educators.about.com/cs/lessonsss/ht/htdebate.htm>

http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/socstud/frame_found_sr2/tns/tn-13.pdf

<http://busyteacher.org/7245-conducting-class-debate-essential-tips.html>

How to write a persuasive essay:

https://www.scribendi.com/advice/how_to_write_a_persuasive_essay.en.html

<http://www.infoplease.com/homework/writingskills7.html>

How to produce a man-on-the-street interview:

<http://onemarketmedia.com/2009/02/16/seven-ideas-to-help-get-the-most-out-of-a-man-on-the-street-interview/>

<http://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Man-on-the-Street-Interview>

http://www.ehow.com/how_2283844_do-man-street-interviews.html

For a clear, simple explanation of the Cornell note-taking system:

<http://coe.jmu.edu/learningtoolbox/cornellnotes.html>

<http://www.bucks.edu/~specpop/Cornl-ex.htm>

Preparing effective slideshow presentations:

http://www.ehow.com/how_5032561_prepare-effective-powerpoint-presentation.html

<http://www.microsoft.com/en-us/showcase/details.aspx?uuid=22f09a63-cecb-4260-a44f-8223d07dd031>

<http://blog.synapsiscreative.com/the-info/7-big-powerpoint-mistakes-you-just-cant-afford-to-make>

Articles

“As Trump moves to privatize America’s national parks, visitor costs may rise”

by Mary Catherine O’Connor

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/jun/25/us-national-parks-privatized-trump-administration>

“Breaking the Backlog: 7 Ideas to Address the National Park Deferred Maintenance Problem” published by the Property And Environment Research Center

https://www.perc.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/BreakingtheBacklog_7IdeasforNationalParks.pdf

“California Union Bill Looks to Ban Outsourcing Public Services” by Steven Greenhut

<http://reason.com/archives/2017/07/28/california-union-bill-will-drive-up-coun>

Case Study: Private vs. Public Park Operations

<http://parkprivatization.com/2012/01/case-study-private-vs-public-park-operations/>

“City Parks Become Privatization Battlegrounds” by Jim Carlton

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/city-parks-become-privatization-battlegrounds-1473448450>

“From Public to Private: Five Concepts of Park Management and Their Consequences”
by Thomas A. More

<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.637.708&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

“It’s Time To Let Somebody Competent Run National Parks (Hint: Private Enterprise)”
by J.D. Tuccille

<http://reason.com/blog/2013/10/16/its-time-to-let-somebody-competent-run-n>

“Making Parks Decent Again: How the private sector can save public parks” by John Stossel

<http://reason.com/archives/2010/12/02/making-parks-decent-again/singlepage>

“NYC Government Spends \$2 Million on a Park Bathroom” by John Stossel

<http://reason.com/archives/2017/07/26/nyc-government-spends-2-million-on-a-par>

“Parks 2.0: Operating State Parks Through Public-Private Partnerships”

by Leonard Gilroy, Harris Kenny, and Julian Morris

http://reason.org/files/state_parks_privatization.pdf

“Private funds spark a ‘Golden Age’ for public parks” by Drew Lindsay

<https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Making-a-difference/Change-Agent/2015/0211/Private-funds-spark-a-Golden-Age-for-public-parks>

“Privatization and Private vs. Public Profits” by Warren Meyer

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/warrenmeyer/2013/05/21/privatization-and-private-vs-public-profits/#4cd552a0582d>

“Public Private Partnerships: New York and the Central Park Conservancy” by Kathy Blaha

<http://www.smartcitiesdive.com/ex/sustainablecitiescollective/public-private-partnerships-new-york-and-central-park-conservancy/111581/>

“The Ups and Downs of NYC’s Privately Funded Public Spaces” by Laura Vanderkam

<http://www.thirteen.org/metrofocus/2011/09/parks-and-re-creation-the-ups-and-downs-of-nycs-privately-funded-public-spaces/>

“Why privately-financed public parks are a bad idea” by Felix Salmon

<http://blogs.reuters.com/felix-salmon/2013/11/21/why-privately-financed-public-parks-are-a-bad-idea/>

Videos

John Stossel ~ Corporate Parks

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D6rN5s2L7xM>

MYTH: Gov’t MUST Manage Parks

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YzM8wd3HLXI>

Why, What, & How to Privatize City Services

<http://reason.com/archives/2010/03/16/why-what-how-to-privatize-city>

Websites

Park PPP’s: Public-Private Partnerships in Recreation

<http://parkprivatization.com/>

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Private Parks PMI Chart

- P = Plus:** List some potential effects of private park management that you see as positive.
- M = Minus:** List some potential effects of private park management that you see as negative.
- I = Interesting:** What are some interesting aspects of private park management?

+ Plusses +	- Minuses -	I

Trade-offs are what we give up for what we gain. What are the trade-offs in the debate over private park management? _____

Which option do you think is better? Why? _____

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Private Parks Stakeholder Chart

Directions: Fill in the chart below based on the video and on your perceptions of the stakeholders, those impacted by private park management.

Stakeholders	Possible Point of View	Your Reasoning / Explanation
Park Users		
Park Department Employees		
Park Management Employees		
Taxpayers		
Elected Officials		
What conclusions can be drawn about the debate over private park management?		