

Game Theory for Elementary School

BRAVE games, including JAMs, are a Game Theory application called “repeated games” that explore the role trust plays in conflict and cooperation.

With JAMs, students use skilled reading to layer viewpoints, detect bias, diagnose and transform working dilemmas. Groups of 4 can use these 30-minute activities as prequels or sequels to BRAVE board game learning, or as stand-alone fun.

Each booklet in this series presents a unique schema designed to support students as they play through its correlating JAM.

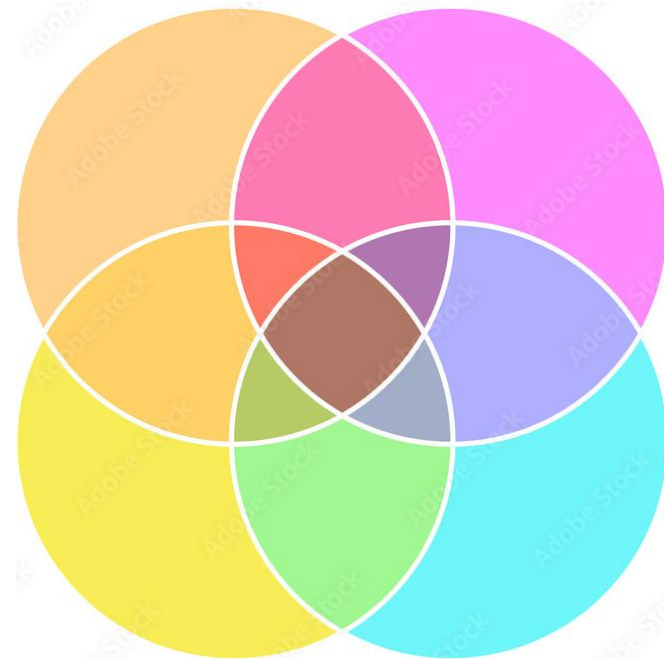
Explore one schema, or try them all:

Game Theory
context
perspective
change
conflict
rights
cooperation
connection
trust
creativity

Taken together, students build tools needed to navigate any social studies class with discerning minds.



Trust



For parents & teachers: Welcome!

BRAVE games, including JAMs, are consistent with Science of Reading instructional guidelines. Tightly-scoped, this inquiry-led method puts knowledge in the foreground to cut across a range of K4-5 standards, meeting all learners where they are to get everyone in the game!

We take learning seriously. *And for fun.*

JAMs break from typical programming insofar as they're consistent with cognitive science. First, human connection sparks intrinsic motivation, incentivizing skilled reading. The beauty of this method is that players *want* to grapple with embedded vocabulary, engage in healthy discussion, and solve group problems. It's fun. This means students embrace the thrill of collaborating, reasoning with facts, sequencing, and testing truths.

Writing extensions provide explicit instructions to support students as they process, integrate, and store new knowledge. This last step is key because, according to Cognitive Load Theory, it effectively clears one's working memory, laying a foundation of knowledge to excel in equivalent classes at higher grades.

Messy? R&D revealed students thrive with this inquiry-led approach because it's intriguing. At that rate, they're positioned to soar beyond our wildest dreams.

VOCABULARY



agreement coming to a mutual arrangement

conscience according to an inner sense of what's right

culture (verb) to grow (microorganisms, tissues, etc.) in or on a controlled or defined medium; **(noun)** behaviors and beliefs characteristic of a group of people

expectation degree of probability something will occur

explicit fully and clearly expressed or demonstrated; leaving nothing merely implied

forecast to predict (a future condition or occurrence); calculate in advance; foreshadow

honor the privilege of being associated with or receiving a favor from a respected person, group, organization

impulse influence of a particular feeling, mental state

integrity adherence to moral and ethical principles; soundness of moral character; honesty

patterns a combination of qualities, acts, tendencies, etc., forming a consistent arrangement

treaty a formal agreement between two or more states in reference to peace, alliance, commerce; agreement

trust firm belief in the integrity, ability, or character of a person or thing; confidence

4. SUMMARY ⊕

Trust is an inclusive process; everyone plays a part! Exploring the role you play in achieving and maintaining equilibrium in any relationship means striving to become trustworthy. Holding yourself accountable to norms, rules, laws or treaties depends on controlling your impulses. This personal habit not only makes a person trustworthy, it makes them powerful!

The second part of trust is using your power to find and work with trustworthy people. This process doesn't necessarily rely on words; it's revealed after careful analysis of patterns. Patterns are the culmination of all actions, a set of data points that accumulate over time and reveal whether someone can be trusted or not. The long-term goal, then, is to become a part of an honor system, whereby everyone can trust everyone.

The good news is that the overall trajectory of patterns can change over time. Meaning trust isn't guaranteed, but it is feasible. This is easier said than done. In fact, it's a never-ending process. If so, those involved have a culture that's capable of sustaining greatness.

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VOCABULARY ✨

The only person's behavior
I can control is...

What are you waiting for?! Dig in!

1. WILL YOU TRUST YOURSELF?

Have you ever acted on **impulse**, or had a “knee jerk” reaction to something that wasn’t consistent with your goals, or how you want to be seen? Maybe you took something without asking or said something rude, then thought, “WAIT! *Why did I just do that?!*” You forgot to **forecast**, predict, the consequences of your actions.

If this sounds familiar, it’s likely you value your **integrity**, adherence to a set of morals or ethics. The problem is you forgot to use **metacognition** to “watch yourself think” in the seconds before you acted. Our sense of integrity is guided by our **conscience**, an inner sense of doing the right thing. This self-governed aspect of humanity is something we develop over time. For example, if we respect ourselves, we learn to practice self-care. Similarly, we take care of our relationships by upholding **agreements**, mutual arrangements that aim to protect boundaries. Agreements might be informal like unspoken truce, a handshake or promise; or formal, such as rules or laws we’ve **explicitly** stated.

In both cases, we strive to control our impulses so we can strengthen our accountability and therefore trust in ourselves. Because trust is one of life’s greatest gifts. Yet the cornerstone of trusting, is becoming trustworthy.

MAY WE TRUST EACH OTHER?

GUIDING QUESTIONS CLASS DISCUSSION

1. **RE-TELL** Explain how the honor system works.
Is an honor system easy to implement? What does it take to make sure it runs smoothly?
2. **REVIEW** The honor system is a circular system, but is it a closed system? Or does it need tending?
3. **REASON** Is the honor system a difficult concept for a young person to agree to, since children rarely make the rules, yet they must abide by them? Explain if it’s possible for children to turn this power dynamic around and feel good about sharing trust, honor, and power with adults on an equal basis.

3. MAY WE TRUST EACH OTHER?

The honor system is a casual term that implies “everyone trusts everyone.” Cool. But should you trust everyone? NO. *Absolutely not!* But can YOU be trusted? Mmmm...

Honor is a privilege we earn from a respected person, group, or organization. Creating and maintaining an honor system, the honor system, is a long-term commitment that fosters everyone’s integrity. Hard work, honesty, generosity. *But who honors who first? Where does honor originate?*

Consider this famous experiment: an adult puts one marshmallow in front of a child, tells them not to eat it, then leaves the room—but only after explaining they’ll give the child *two* marshmallows upon returning if the child hasn’t eaten the first marshmallow. The question is: Will the child gobble the marshmallow in the adult’s absence? Or will the child refrain from eating it and therefore earn two marshmallows when the adult returns? This experiment appears to measure a child’s impulse control, *but what if the child knows the adult has a pattern of not returning?*

Honor is a trust system we **culture**, behaviors and beliefs characteristic of a group of people. Like making sourdough, yogurt, kimchi, or kombucha. This fragile yet powerful give-and-take transforms everyone over time, whereby the more trustworthy we are, the more others trust us.

WILL YOU TRUST YOURSELF?

GUIDING QUESTIONS CLASS DISCUSSION

1. **RE-TELL** Explain the term impulse control. What does it feel like to lose control of your impulses? Is it fun? Is it dangerous?
2. **REVIEW** What is meta-cognition? Explain how using metacognition supports increased impulse control.
3. **REASON** Explore why meta-cognition is hard work. Also, what can you do to blow off steam after keeping your cool all day long besides hanging out on technology?

2. CAN YOU TRUST ME?



How can you tell if you should trust someone or not? In JAM 7, we talked about understanding systems as a basis for setting **expectations**, gauging the probability that something will happen. This is similar to trust insofar that systems help us outline objectives (what we do) and goals (why we do something). If so, we're more likely to manage outcomes by adjusting actions and pacing. If we trust ourselves, we're likely to trust our systems because we or they've demonstrated a pattern. But do people demonstrate patterns?

Patterns, repeated interactions that illustrate a consistent arrangement, are often more important than a person's words or their promise that they're "trustworthy" because patterns are illustrated by data points that reveal if a person has a track record of being trustworthy, or not.

Sure, your gut might signal when a person is suspect—think stranger danger—in that case, go with your gut! Otherwise, study the data and look for patterns that a relationship will teeter on chaos, or balance on trust.

If all else fails, remember that being trusted and trusting others are two separate things. Others may falter; you do you. Just remember that being trustworthy delivers infinite power.

CAN YOU TRUST ME?

GUIDING QUESTIONS CLASS DISCUSSION

1. **RE-TELL** What's a pattern? How do patterns reveal themselves?
2. **REVIEW** Think of an adult you trust. What data points contribute to the pattern that reveals you can trust that person?
3. **REASON** Are patterns permanent, or do you have the capacity to make tweaks to your behaviors that could create new data points that shift the overall pattern? If so, what does that look like?