

IR-24: Resources Cards

Display or duplicate and prepare one set of cards for each group of students.

Human Resources	Natural Resources	Labor	Intuition
Thinking	Planning	Problem Solving	Coal
Crude Oil	Uranium	Aluminum	Fertile Soil
Air	Freshwater	Salt	Land

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IR-25: Resources—Reading to Learn

Read the “Resources” section one paragraph at time. After you read each paragraph, identify key words and ideas. Use that information to create a one-sentence summary. The first and second paragraphs have been completed as an example. Do not copy directly from the text; create original summary sentences.

Paragraphs 1 and 2

Key Words and Ideas	One-Sentence Summary
resource, human resources, thinking, planning, problem solving, natural resources, coal, oil, uranium, aluminum, fertile soil, air, freshwater, survival	Two categories of resources are human resources, such as thought processes, and natural resources, such as minerals and water.

Paragraph 3

Key Words and Ideas	One-Sentence Summary

Paragraph 4

Key Words and Ideas	One-Sentence Summary

Paragraph 5

Key Words and Ideas	One-Sentence Summary

Paragraph 6

Key Words and Ideas	One-Sentence Summary

Paragraph 7

Key Words and Ideas	One-Sentence Summary

Resources

What is a resource? Is it something to eat? Is it something used to produce energy? Are there different kinds of resources? In a sense, the answer to each of these questions is “Yes.” Let’s work backward through the questions for a more detailed explanation of each answer.

Resources can be broken down into two main categories: human resources and natural resources. **Human resources** refer to human beings as a source of labor and intuition (i.e., thinking, planning, and problem-solving). **Natural resources**, however, are things that occur in the natural or physical world. For example, coal, oil, uranium, bauxite, fertile soil, air, and freshwater are all considered to be natural resources—the last three being the most critical ones to human survival.

In a general sense, a **resource** is anything that people need and to which they have assigned a value. Hypothetically, consider that it is summer, you have gone to a theme park, and you were not allowed to bring your own food and drinks into the park. How much would you be willing to spend on a cold bottle of water? Because you have been outdoors and you will probably get hot and tired, you might be willing to spend \$3–\$4 for a small bottle of water. You have made an economic decision to pay more than three times what you would normally pay for the same bottle of water because, at that point in time, you place a high value on freshwater. There is a restricted supply of it, and you are willing to pay a very high price for it.

The same situation is true around the world and throughout time. Resources have value because human beings have decided that they are important. However, a resource’s value can change over time. For example, salt was so valuable in Tibet in the late 13th century that it was used as a form of currency. Salt is still used as a form of currency today by some nomadic people in Ethiopia. However, most people do not use salt in this form anymore. Salt has also been used historically to preserve food at a time when refrigeration was not available. The value of salt has changed due to changes in its use.

Another example related to the changing value of a resource is the use of crude oil. Oil has been around for millions of years. The Babylonians used oil that bubbled to the surface as a fuel for portable lights. The Chinese used oil as a fuel to heat water and extract salt. It was not until the late 19th century, however, that humans started to use refined crude oil on a massive level, primarily to fuel industrial development.

IR-26: Resources

Technology was developed to access oil in the ground and to refine the oil for use in the combustible engine. The automobile industry has had the greatest influence on how we value oil today. However, there is a great variety of petroleum-based products that people enjoy and/or depend on every day, such as balloons, compact discs, crayons, deodorant, footballs, lipstick, telephones, and toothpaste. In an earlier era, oil was perceived as something that did not have much value. Now it is one of the most critical resources for countries that are fully developed and industrialized. Their dependency on petroleum-based products pushes people to continually research and develop new technologies that will allow us to extract more oil in less expensive and more efficient processes.

Natural resources are unevenly distributed throughout the world. As you have already read, only 1% of all the water in the world is freshwater suitable for humans. With more than 7 billion people in the world, not every person has access to fresh clean water on a daily basis. The land underneath and immediately surrounding the Persian Gulf, the Gulf of Guinea, the North Sea, the Bay of Campeche, and around Lake Maracaibo in Venezuela is where some of the world's largest oil deposits can be found. Consequently, countries like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iran, Mexico, and Venezuela have a tremendous amount of wealth related to the location of oil. Likewise, not every country has the ability to grow and produce their own food supplies in sufficient quantities to feed their own people because they do not have an adequate amount of arable land, or land that is capable of being plowed for the cultivation of crops, as you will read in the next section.