

Matching

Match the definition in Column A with the term in Column B.

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| _____ The costs a decision hides from view. | a. The Seen |
| _____ Law forcibly taking from one to give another. | b. The Unseen |
| _____ Rights people are born with, like liberty. | c. Opportunity Cost |
| _____ Immediate, visible effects of a policy. | d. Legal Plunder |
| _____ Value of the next best alternative that's given up. | e. Natural Rights |

Multiple Choice

- 1. What conditions in France helped prompt Bastiat's writings?**
 - a. Political stability, economic prosperity, industrial growth, and low unemployment.
 - b. Colonial expansion, military victories, growing trade, and population growth.
 - c. Political revolution, crop failures, rising prices, and unemployment.
 - d. Scientific discovery, religious reform, constitutional change, and educational expansion.
- 2. A factory in town burns down. A local official says rebuilding it will create jobs. According to Bastiat, what important fact is being overlooked?**
 - a. Rebuilding helps the local economy recover.
 - b. Rebuilding increases demand for construction workers.
 - c. Rebuilding shows the economy can recover from disasters.
 - d. Rebuilding leaves fewer resources for other opportunities.
- 3. The government taxes citizens to hire workers to repave roads that are already in good condition. What is the unseen cost?**
 - a. The citizens gain smoother roads throughout the community.
 - b. The citizens can employ more workers on more public projects.
 - c. The citizens lose opportunities to use that money to fix real problems.
 - d. The citizens lose all trust in government spending going forward.
- 4. What will neglecting the unseen lead to?**
 - a. Negative, counter-productive consequences.
 - b. Positive, productive benefits.
 - c. Neglecting has no effect.
 - d. More jobs and opportunities.
- 5. How did Bastiat view government intervention in the economy?**
 - a. He supported it because it protected workers and created lasting prosperity.
 - b. He discouraged it because it created hidden costs and reduced economic freedom.
 - c. He supported it because it increased production and reduced prices.
 - d. He discouraged it because government spending always causes inflation.



Application

Bastiat argued that every policy has effects we can see and effects we cannot. Choose one decision or policy you've heard about — in the news, at your school, or in your community — that is defended mainly by pointing to its visible benefits. In complete sentences, identify the seen benefit, then identify at least one unseen cost and who bears it. Explain why looking only at the seen effect could lead people to the wrong conclusion.

Historical Context

1. After the 1848 revolution, the French government created the "National Workshops" to guarantee jobs, but the program collapsed within months. Based on the episode, why did Bastiat argue that a program like this could not create real prosperity?
2. Bastiat wrote that the law should exist "to protect individual rights, such as life, liberty, and property." How does this view of government's proper role connect to the ideas behind the American founding?

Exit Ticket:

- What is the key idea Bastiat teaches about looking at any policy or decision?

Economic Game Changers: Frédéric Bastiat | Answer Key

Matching

Match the definition in Column A with the term in Column B.

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| b. The costs a decision hides from view. | a. The Seen |
| d. Law forcibly taking from one to give to another. | b. The Unseen |
| e. Rights people are born with, like liberty. | c. Opportunity Cost |
| a. Immediate, visible effects of a policy. | d. Legal Plunder |
| c. Value of the next best alternative that's given up. | e. Natural Rights |

Multiple Choice

- What conditions in France helped prompt Bastiat's writings?**
 - Political stability, economic prosperity, industrial growth, and low unemployment.
 - Colonial expansion, military victories, growing trade, and population growth.
 - Political revolution, crop failures, rising prices, and unemployment.**
 - Scientific discovery, religious reform, constitutional change, and educational expansion.
- A factory in town burns down. A local official says rebuilding it will create jobs. According to Bastiat, what important fact is being overlooked?**
 - Rebuilding helps the local economy recover.
 - Rebuilding increases demand for construction workers.
 - Rebuilding shows the economy can recover from disasters.
 - Rebuilding leaves fewer resources for other opportunities.**
- The government taxes citizens to hire workers to repave roads that are already in good condition. What is the unseen cost?**
 - The citizens gain smoother roads throughout the community.
 - The citizens can employ more workers on more public projects.
 - The citizens lose opportunities to use that money to fix real problems.**
 - The citizens lose all trust in government spending going forward.
- What will neglecting the unseen lead to?**
 - Negative, counter-productive consequences.
 - Positive, productive benefits.
 - Neglecting has no effect.
 - More jobs and opportunities.
- How did Bastiat view government intervention in the economy?**
 - He supported it because it protected workers and created lasting prosperity.
 - He discouraged it because it created hidden costs and reduced economic freedom.**
 - He supported it because it increased production and reduced prices.
 - He discouraged it because government spending always causes inflation.

Application

Bastiat argued that every policy has effects we can see and effects we cannot. Choose one decision or policy you've heard about — in the news, at your school, or in your community — that is defended mainly by pointing to its visible benefits. In complete sentences, identify the seen benefit, then identify at least one unseen cost and who bears it. Explain why looking only at the seen effect could lead people to the wrong conclusion.

Example Student Response:

California passed strict new regulations on oil refineries to fight pollution and control fuel prices. The seen benefit is what supporters like to point out: cleaner air. But Bastiat would look for the unseen. As the regulations continued to pile up, running a refinery in California became so expensive that companies decided to leave. Phillips 66 closed its Los Angeles refinery, Valero is closing its Benicia refinery, and Chevron has warned it may shut down its last two refineries if things don't get easier in California. The unseen cost is what leaves with them — jobs, tax revenue, and a large share of the state's ability to make its own fuel. California already has some of the highest gas prices in the nation, and losing this much refining capacity could drive them up further. Looking only at the seen benefit leads people to the wrong conclusion, because each regulation seemed reasonable on its own, but together they drove out an important industry the state depends on.

Guidance for Grading:

- ☐ The student identifies a real decision or policy and correctly names its seen (visible) benefit.
- ☐ The student identifies at least one unseen cost and explains who bears it.
- ☐ The student explains why judging the policy solely by its visible effect leads to an incorrect conclusion, as it ignores the resources or opportunities that could have been used elsewhere.
- ☐ The student reaches a clear, well-reasoned conclusion grounded in Bastiat's seen-and-unseen framework.

Historical Context

1. After the 1848 revolution, the French government created the "National Workshops" to guarantee jobs, but the program collapsed within months. Based on the episode, why did Bastiat argue that a program like this could not create real prosperity?

Example answer:

Because the program only moved money around instead of creating it, it could not produce lasting prosperity — and it collapsed within months. It seemed like the work those men did was productive, but taxpayers could have made real improvements with that money instead, and that was the unseen loss.

2. Bastiat wrote that the law should exist "to protect individual rights, such as life, liberty, and property." How does this view of government's proper role connect to the ideas behind the American founding?

Example answer:

Bastiat held that rights to life, liberty, and property are natural and inalienable to all men. The government's job is to protect them. This closely mirrors the principles behind the Declaration of Independence and the American founding, which hold that people are born with rights and that government exists to secure them.

Exit Ticket:

- What is the key idea Bastiat teaches about looking at any policy or decision?

Example answer:

The key idea is that every policy or decision has effects you can see and effects you can't. Good thinking means looking past the obvious, visible result to find the hidden costs and the opportunities that were given up.