

ETHICAL DILEMMAS

ETHICAL DILEMMA #1

Yen Lee is a street vendor in Hong Kong who sells a variety of wares, including pieces of ivory. She caters mainly to tourists who seem to really want to buy what she has to offer. She doesn't get ivory pieces very often, but when she does, she sells them quickly for a good price (good for her and her family!). She gets the ivory from her brother (Weeza Lee) who works at the Hong Kong International Airport, in the Baggage Handling Department. She never asks him how he obtains the ivory, but she does pay him a percentage of the profits from their sale. One day two tourists stop by her stand and inquire about a piece of ivory. They ask many specific questions about the ivory. As it turns out, the tourists are part of a scientific team sent out by the United Nations to investigate the trafficking of endangered animals (and their body parts). They have the authority to report any violations of international laws concerning the trafficking of endangered animals to local authorities.

If you were one of the members of this investigative team, what information should you gather next?

What are the possible outcomes for Yen Lee? What about her brother?

Is it illegal to sell any ivory on the international market? Is it unethical?

ETHICAL DILEMMA #2

Bawt Swana wakes up in the middle of the night and joins his father as they prepare for the hunt. They need to have a successful hunt tonight because his seven brothers and sisters haven't had a decent meal in several days. His responsibility as the oldest brother is to help provide for his siblings. Just a few years ago he and his father could provide food and clothing very easily by growing and selling vegetables from their small parcel of land, but drought had occurred and driven the elephant herd across their land in search of water. This damaged their ability to grow and sell crops, as well as to provide for their family. They turned to the only other skill that they had: hunting. Tonight they would hunt the animal that caused them so much trouble, the elephant. Although it is against the law to hunt elephants, two tusks would give them enough money to provide for their family for several months. They travel several miles and finally spot their quarry. A huge female is walking away from them several meters ahead. Bawt's father raises his rifle and prepares to shoot.....

What are the issues that Bawt and his father must confront regarding their plan?

Should Bawt's father shoot the elephant?

What should be done with Bawt and his father if they get caught poaching?

ETHICAL DILEMMA #3

Jim Sharp loves nature, all parts of the natural world. His love of nature is part of the reason why he became a fly fishing guide in Washington state. He loves to see the look on a person's face when they catch their first trout using a fly rod. The Pend Oreille River is a beautiful place to fish, and take new fly fishermen to, on a bright summer day. Unfortunately it is also becoming a political battleground. There are several groups, including some in the Canadian province of British Columbia who are working hard to reintroduce grizzly bears into Washington, Idaho, Montana, and British Columbia. Their reasoning is very straight-forward: grizzly bears used to be in these areas until humans began hunting them and drove them off, so grizzlies should be reintroduced to their rightful environment. Jim likes the idea of seeing grizzlies back in Washington, but he doesn't like the potential negative effects on his business. He's afraid that many people won't hire him to guide their fishing trips in areas where grizzlies might be.

What are some points that could be made on each side of this issue?

Should grizzlies be reintroduced into Washington and other areas?

ETHICAL DILEMMA #4

"What am I going to do? How am I going to make a decision that will make both parties happy?" thinks Amy Brown. She is the Commissioner of the Klamath Basin Water Conservation District. Her job is to determine how much water can be allowed to be diverted from the Klamath River for agricultural use each spring and summer, and yet keep enough water flowing in the river so that the endangered salmon runs can survive and reproduce. This is hardly ever a tough decision because there is enough rainfall during the winter to accommodate both uses of the river. However, this year it is not such an easy decision. It has been an extremely dry year; in fact, many people are calling it the worst drought that anyone can remember in the past thirty years. Amy has held several meetings with local farmers who have explained how desperately they need the irrigation water for their fields, and to support their families. She has also held several meetings with local environmental groups and sport fishermen who have explained how important it is for the current river level to be maintained so that the salmon populations can survive.

If you attended one meeting for each group, what are some arguments that you would probably hear?

What should Amy decide to do about the water uses of the Klamath River for this year?