

2024-2025 Middle School Ethics Bowl Case Set

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Cases Written by the Writing Committee:

Asha Jani (student), Ayushi Wadhwa (student), Charlie Ford (student),
Claire Cherill (student), Erik Kenyon (committee member),
Katie MacKay (student), Maya Medeiros (student),
Nicholas Machado (teacher), Noura Kalife-Pacheco (student),
Paul Athanasiou (student), Sally Zeiner (teacher),
Sebastian Linscott (student), and Sonia Nikhil (student)

**And edited for final approval by the Middle School Ethics Bowl Executive
Committee:**

Erik Kenyon, Roberta Israeloff, and Karen Rezach

Case 5: The Invasive Species Plan

Cara, a 14-year-old entrepreneur, wants to launch new, innovative startups. She is mainly interested in environmental issues. Her philosophy is that to make money, you must do so responsibly; this means that you have to think about the community and the environment, not just your wallet.

During a recent trip to Maine, Cara learns that an invasive species, European green crabs, is causing colossal damage to the native flora and fauna of the northeast's coastline. These crabs aren't tasty, and they are dirty. In addition, they are decimating species important to the region's economy: filter-feeding oysters, native clams, mussels, and baby lobsters. The crabs also destroy eelgrass beds that not only filter water but also prevent erosion.

Cara has an idea: use the crabs to create an organic, all-natural fertilizer product. This would solve two problems: it would stop the invasion of the crabs, and it would create a natural alternative to synthetic, chemical-based fertilizers. Win-win, right? Unfortunately, the process of turning crabs into fertilizer requires blending them whole in an industrial liquidizer-shredder. To do this humanely, Cara would need to stun the crabs first. Her first thought is to freeze the crabs before shredding, but there is little evidence that this method spares them any suffering (according to the ASPCA, RSPCA and other sources). The only sure option she finds is the CrustaStun, a device that costs \$3500. Cara's budget is \$50. She searches for investors to purchase the CrustaStun, but turns up empty-handed. There are no other options, so Cara is at a stalemate.

Cara doesn't know what to do, and knows that the longer she waits, the worse the crisis will become. According to some sources, each female European green crab breeds about 4.7 million offspring in her lifetime.

Match Questions

1. Should Cara go ahead with her fertilizer business even if she cannot humanely kill the crabs?
2. Is it wrong for Cara to walk away from this problem now that she has found a solution to it?
3. What is more important, the method in which Cara kills crabs, or the integrity of the ecosystem which they are destroying?

Study Questions

1. If a certain amount of suffering cannot be avoided to bring about a worthy end, does that justify it?
2. How should we balance the welfare of individual animals and the health of an ecosystem?
3. How far do animal rights extend to invasive species?

References

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