

EXPERIMENT 1

The story remained on the screen while participants read the test question. The comprehension questions then appeared on a new blank screen.

STORIES

Note: text varying between important and unimportant conditions appears in brackets.

Clock, means version.

It is orientation week at the Precious Gears factory. To get to know one another, the new employees each bring in one inexpensive item that is personally [unimportant/important] and [has no/has] sentimental value. After discussing the items, the employees leave them in the orientation room and go out to lunch.

One employee, Liam, has returned to the warehouse to get his wallet and sees that a loading dolly has come off its brakes and is speeding towards five of the items. If nothing is done, the dolly will crash into the items and crush and wreck them.

Liam sees that he can throw an orientation item from the table beside him at the dolly, knocking it off its wheels before it crushes the five items. However, the item is a clock that Colin [built in his first year at engineering school and is important to him./recently bought at a novelty shop and is unimportant to him]. Using the clock to knock the dolly off its wheels will save the five items, but it will completely destroy Colin's clock.

Is it acceptable for Liam to use Colin's clock to stop the dolly?

Clock, side-effect version.

It is orientation week at the Precious Gears factory. To get to know one another, the new employees each bring in one inexpensive item that is personally [unimportant/important] and [has no/has] sentimental value. After discussing the items, the employees leave them in the orientation room and go out to lunch.

One employee, Liam, has returned to the warehouse to get his wallet and sees that a loading dolly has come off its brakes and is speeding towards five of the items. If nothing is done, the dolly will crash into the items and crush and wreck them.

Liam realizes that he can throw a small stool at the dolly, redirecting it away from the five items. However, doing so will redirect the dolly towards the item that another employee Colin brought. It is a clock that Colin [built in his first year at engineering school and is important to him./recently bought at a novelty shop and is unimportant to him]. Redirecting the dolly will save the five items, but it will completely destroy Colin's clock.

Is it acceptable for Liam to use the stool to redirect the dolly?

Poster, means version.

Professor Digby teaches an excellent art class. For this week's assignment, students each bring in one inexpensive item that is personally [unimportant/important] and that [has

no/has] sentimental value. After discussing items, the students leave them in the classroom and go out for lunch.

One student, Candice, has returned to the empty classroom to get her phone and sees that a canister of paint has just been tipped over by a gust of wind and is spreading rapidly towards five of the items on one of the tables. If nothing is done, the paint will seep into the items and ruin them.

Candice realizes that she could put down something to stop the paint flow from reaching the five items. However, the only thing she can reach in time is the item that another student Janet brought. It is a large poster that Janet [painted when she was a child and is important to her/she recently bought at a novelty shop and is unimportant to her]. Stopping the paint flow will save the five items, but it will ruin Janet's poster.

Is it acceptable for Candice to use Janet's poster stop the paint?

Poster, side-effect version.

Professor Digby teaches an excellent art class. For this week's assignment, students each bring in one inexpensive item that is personally [unimportant/important] and that [has no/has] sentimental value. After discussing items, the students leave them in the classroom and go out for lunch.

One student, Candice, has returned to the empty classroom to get her phone and sees that a canister of paint has just been tipped over by a gust of wind and is spreading rapidly towards five of the items on one of the tables. If nothing is done, the paint will seep into the items and ruin them.

Candice sees that she could put down a piece of plywood to redirect the paint flow away from the five items. However, doing so will redirect the paint flow towards the item that another student Janet brought. It is a large poster that Janet [painted when she was a child and is important to her/she recently bought at a novelty shop and is unimportant to her]. Redirecting the paint flow will save the five items, but it will ruin Janet's poster.

Is it acceptable for Candice to use the plywood to redirect the paint?

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What is happening in the story? [Paint has spilled at an art school/A car is about to have bleach spilled inside of it/A retirement home is undergoing fumigation/A dolly has come off of its brakes]
2. What kind of items are in the story? [Personal and sentimental/Bizarre and unknown/Useless and disposable/New and interesting]
3. Who owns the object that can be sacrificed to save the five others? [Liam/Colin/Candice/Janet]

EXPERIMENT 2

In this experiment, the three paragraphs of the story appeared sequentially—after participants read each paragraph, they had to select “next” with their mouse to cause the next paragraph to appear. After all three paragraphs were revealed, the test question appeared below the entire story. It was followed by three story comprehension questions which each appeared on a new blank screen. After the comprehension question, participants also filled out the Saving Cognitions Inventory (SCI; Steketee et al., 2003). We included this measure to explore if individual differences in attachment to objects influence people’s judgments regarding property damage to personally important objects. However, judgments were not predicted by the SCI, so we do not discuss it in the paper.

STORIES

Text varying between importance conditions appears in brackets; text varying between expense conditions appears in bold in brackets; text varying between direct/indirect conditions appears in italics in brackets.

Employees at Harmon & Co often eat their lunch in the conference room. Six mugs, each belonging to a different employee, are sitting in the conference room. Each mug is [**inexpensive/expensive**] and personally [unimportant/important] to its owner.

Liam the custodian is cleaning up the conference room when he notices that a dolly has come off its brakes and is rolling towards a tray holding five of the mugs. If nothing is done, the dolly will crash into them and destroy them.

Liam realizes that he can throw [*a small stool at the dolly, redirecting it away from the five mugs. However, doing so will redirect the dolly towards a tray holding another mug/something at the dolly, redirecting it away from the five mugs. However, the only thing he can reach in time is another mug*], which belongs to the employee Colin. This will save the five mugs, but it will completely destroy Colin’s mug.

Is it acceptable for Liam to use [*the small stool/Colin’s mug*] to redirect the dolly?

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- 1) What is happening in the story? [Paint has spilled at an art school/A car is about to have bleach spilled inside of it/A retirement home is undergoing fumigation/A dolly has come off of its brakes]
- 2) Are the items in the story personally important? [Yes/No]
- 3) In the story, were the items described as expensive or inexpensive? [Expensive/Inexpensive]