

## The A, B, Cs of Teaching Economics: Advertising, Bi-Metalism, & Choices

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### ABSTRACT

For many of us, our first endeavor into the world of business is the lemonade stand at the end of the driveway and the first key decision is what to charge for a glass of lemonade. A nickel, a dime, or a dollar? The price will make or break the business -- charge too much and no one will buy your lemonade; charge too little and you will not have enough. Our business education starts at a much earlier age. Children's literature is ripe with economic metaphors and references to business. *Farmer Boy* teaches children about sustainability, while *The Lorax* forces us to consider how business activity interacts with environmental concerns. In this paper, we discuss our team-teaching of a first year program course that combined an introduction to children's literature with the study of core economic concepts. Specifically we focus on three course projects: a workshop on the use of marketing in *Charlotte's Web*; an analysis of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* as an allegory for the bi-metalism debate of the 1890s; and a group data analysis exercise culminating in a visual depiction of the possible choices a character faced on the basis of several economic factors in *Lyddie*.

Key words: Active Learning, Cooperative Learning, Conceptual Workshop, Children's Literature, Pedagogy  
JEL codes: A22, E52, E58

## *I. Introduction*

Active learning exercises, if structured well, can provide clear benefits for students in a wide range of in-class and experiential applications. In this paper, we present our ‘hands off’ approach to teaching economics principles through children’s literature. In our three interactive conceptual workshops, students discover on their own how many economic standards are embodied in our culture and in children’s literature. Through our evaluations and feedback received from students during the semester and beyond, we find that the course content and workshops were fruitful. Students were more engaged than in typical ‘chalk and talk’ lectures, had more fun, and acquired independence for research and future scholarship.

## *II. The Technique of Active (Cooperative) Learning and its Benefits*

There is a prolific literature on the benefits of active learning. While the techniques of active learning capture a wide range of activities, we developed our workshops as team-based interactive exercises where students learned through cooperative workshops. According to Starting Point, an online pedagogy resource for professors of economics, “cooperative learning involves structuring classes around small groups that work together in such a way that each group member's success is dependent on the group's success.”<sup>1</sup>

Nearly 700 studies have attempted to measure the benefits of cooperative learning in terms of 3 major outcomes (Smith (1995)). These are increased achievement productivity, the development positive relationships and enhanced self-esteem. Regarding productivity, studies show that students learn more, remember it more and develop better critical thinking skills with the use of cooperative learning. In one study, Barkley et al. (2005) note that students

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<sup>1</sup> Cooperative learning: Teaching and Learning Economics “involves more than students working together on a lab or field project. It requires teachers to structure cooperative interdependence among the students.” These structures involve five key elements: 1) Positive Interdependence, 2) Individual Accountability 3) Face-to-Face (Promotive) Interaction 4) Interpersonal and Small Group Social Skills and 5) Group Processing (Johnson et al. 2006).

demonstrate more higher-level reasoning and individual achievement is greater than with competitive and individualistic approaches. Regarding relationships and self-esteem, it has been found that students who participate in a cooperative learning exercise tend to enjoy it. Additionally, groups that are diverse across ethnic, cultural, language, social class, ability level and gender groups also reported positive experiences with this form of pedagogy and indicate the richness and potential for implementation of cooperative learning (Johnson, Johnson and Smith, 1998).

While there are many models to follow regarding cooperative learning, we aimed to follow the principles developed in *Teaching with your Mouth Shut*, by the late Donald Finkel (2000). In this work, he claims that "...education should aim at long-lasting learning that forever alters our grasp of the world, deepening it, widening it, generalizing it, sharpening it" (p.4). To this end, he recommends approaches designed to encourage student learning through collaboration and inquiry-centered teaching. A first year program course struck us as an ideal forum in which to explore these methods of teaching, given its multidisciplinary focus and its role in introducing students to the goals of a liberal arts education. The conceptual workshops were an essential part of this formula for generating ideas and arriving at new insights.

According to Fink (1999), he defined a conceptual workshop as follows:

"The focus is on the process whereby a puzzle or problem is given for students to solve together. The teacher distributes a set of questions and directions. Work is done in small groups. If the issue or problem is complex and /or the task is complicated, individuals may rotate groups. The process may take one or several class periods. After the groups have tackled the questions, they report back to the class-at-large. A student facilitates the larger class discussion."

### *III. What is the First Year Program at St. Lawrence?*

St. Lawrence's first year program is over 30 years old, one of the oldest in the country, and consists of approximately 24 residential colleges where 30-34 students live together in one dorm

space and attend at least one class together. These interdisciplinary, often team-taught courses focus on “contemporary issues and enduring questions,” while facilitating the development of students’ college-level communication skills (writing & speaking), critical reading and research, as well as information literacy (<http://www.stlawu.edu/fyp>). More specifically, the goal of the First-Year Program is to help students acquire the skills and self-reflection that are at the core of a liberal arts education. (see Appendix for the current SLU communication goals.)

For faculty within this program, there is an emphasis on modeling interdisciplinary collaboration, making connections across the curriculum, and sometimes even demonstrating collegial disagreement. For students, the emphasis is on learning the written, research, and oral communication skills they will need throughout their college experience—while also engaging in an interdisciplinary theme of their choice and interacting socially with other students in their college. Many courses also include a Community Based Learning (CBL) component in which students volunteer two hours per week for a local organization. This experience helps first year students get to know their new local community, a small town in one of the poorest counties in New York State.

Given the emphasis on team-teaching and developing critical communication, critical thinking, and research skills, many FYP courses include active learning exercises. As part of several training workshops before the start of the school year, professors discuss their tips and give specific examples of exercises that have worked for them inside and outside the classroom. Activities such as role playing, think-pair share, the 2-minute essay, fish bowl discussions, conceptual workshops and other dialogue-centered peer pedagogies were presented. For us, the conceptual workshops became the foundation of our active learning pedagogy.

#### IV. *Our Course: Children's Literature and links to Economic Concepts*

With these workshops as the capstone exercises in each segment of our course, we designed an interdisciplinary course that aimed to instill a deeper understanding of the many ways economic principles suffuse our lives and determine the choices we make, often on an unconscious level. For us personally (a labor economist who teaches courses ranging from econometrics to monetary policy; and a writing center director who teaches writing and tutor training courses, with a strong interest in literature) we hoped to combine our strengths to engage students in learning some basic economic concepts, as well as broadening their appreciation of children's literature. Together we designed a course titled "Children's Literature and its Life-Long Lessons in Business" and chose books and critical readings for the students.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the conceptual workshops discussed in this paper, other writing and oral communication projects for the course were varied and designed with the hope of preparing students for the in-depth analysis of texts that would be necessary for success in their other college courses. Writing assignments included journal entries, a book review, and critical analysis, as well as shorter assignments such as a collective annotated bibliography, several in-class essays, and an essay portion on their final exam. Oral presentations involved a short, initial presentation on their "Most Important" children's book (a book that significantly impacted them); a group project in which each member had to take on the role of author, teacher, or publisher of a children's book of their choice; and a final presentation in which they delivered a lesson plan based on a book they wrote themselves. All assignments were designed to draw

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<sup>2</sup> Given our course's emphasis on the imprinting of cultural values, we felt that re-reading children's classics from a more mature perspective would provide the most advantageous vantage point, and intentionally chose texts such as *Charlotte's Web* and *The Wizard of Oz*, knowing that students would share a basic familiarity of their plots at the outset. Other texts, such as *Lyddie*, were chosen for more specific reasons, such as their historical accuracy and realist style, which students could compare to less accurate, more myth-building depictions of early American life.

from and build on one another. For example, the journal entries required students to bring together ideas from their Community Based Learning (CBL) experiences, readings, and our class discussions, lectures, and workshops in a reflective manner that not only showed connections, but also arrived at new insights based on these interconnecting activities.

#### *V. Our Three Conceptual Workshops*

Our conceptual workshops were designed intentionally to shake first year students out of their academic comfort zones and force them to develop new learning strategies, or at least recognize that the old strategies may not always work for the best outcome.<sup>3</sup> Past familiar patterns of learning such as memorization, reading for straight content and rote note taking during lecture were discouraged and replaced with team-based workshops without the detailed instructions they may have received prior to entering college. In terms of content, we wanted students to recognize the prevalence of economic concepts in our lives and how they affect us, even as young children.

Each conceptual workshop was the culmination of several weeks of mini-lessons with critical readings and the final outcome included a writing assignment and oral presentation project.<sup>4</sup> On the day when the workshop instructions were first explained, students were given a worksheet that set up the groups and asked them to problem solve with peers while drawing from various sources and viewpoints. The guidelines had the intent to foster social interactions among the students, to lead to a richer understanding of the subject matter, and to develop critical thinking and communication skills. The problem or question created an inquiry-centered approach where

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<sup>3</sup> There would be less ‘hand-holding’ and ‘step-by-step’ instructions and there would be no ‘one right answer’.

<sup>4</sup> The lead in to the course was a short oral presentation that asked students to think about the children’s book that had impacted them the most growing up, and why. Mini-lessons during these first few weeks focused on criteria for evaluation of children’s books (Grenby and Immel 2009), the balance between instruction and entertainment that children’s book authors attempt to achieve (Huss 1973, Sebasta 1979), and key economic concepts and principles (Mankiw 2011).

students were expected to engage with the idea or concept, report back, and learn the subject matter as a tool along the way.

*a. A – Advertising*

*Charlotte's Web*, the text for our first workshop (see Appendix #1) seemed a particularly apt starting point for the type of inquiry we hoped to introduce. From its first sentence, “Where’s Papa going with that ax?” to Wilbur’s final bargain with Templeton and the stories he eventually tells to Charlotte’s children, the book showcases the many trades, marketing ploys, and economically based choices that comprise rural life. As students began to focus on this aspect of the text, the central question we were asking students to answer was “How do you market a specific product to an initially skeptical audience, whether it is a runt pig or a bucket of slop?” The actual project they worked on together for the conceptual workshop was designed to be fun and creative, and the students had plenty of motivation to pursue this line of thinking. Around the same time, students were working on two other projects for the class: a book review aimed at a specific audience (child, parent, teacher, or potential publisher), and a group oral presentation in which each member of the group would either pose as the author or publisher of the same book, or act as a teacher delivering a lesson based on the book. Background reading, which we discussed in class, included Linda Flower’s classic essay, “Writing for an Audience” (Composition), Bill Bryson’s essay, “The Hard Sell: Advertising in America” (popular culture/social history), and Sagoff’s article “Zuckerman’s Dilemma: A Plea for Environmental Ethics” (Economics/Philosophy), which explores product valuing from an economic/environmental perspective.

We spent one class period delivering a mini-lecture on advertising terms, discussing the Bryson essay, and watching a BBC video on advertising (“Analysing printed adverts”). The

second class in this sequence introduced the Think, Pair, Share section of the assignment in which students shared their initial ideas with one another and pared them down to two or three agreeable options. The actual assignment was to create a marketing campaign for a product from the book (Wilbur's 'feast' of slop, Mr. Arable's ax, Fern's doll carriage, Dr. Dorian's doctor services, Zuckerman's barn or Lurvy's hired help services) to an unlikely audience (city dwellers, college students, the elderly, Olympic athletes, or vegetarians). Each group drew a random product and audience and worked together to create a name for their product, to draw a potential magazine advertisement (including a slogan), and to write and deliver a 3 minute radio promo on the product. The jingles they developed and the artwork they created were memorable, engaged the students in a team-based exercise, and allowed them to give a presentation in a low-stakes friendly environment. Examples of their products were: 1) a doll carriage marketed as a shopping cart for vegetarians at a farmer's market and 2) an ax to use as a workout tool for Olympic Athletes. The students who created these products are seniors now and still remember this exercise vividly and with fondness.

Students enjoyed entering into the fun spirit of the activity, but beyond this, we believe it also engaged them with their peers in an interactive manner that was new to them. While many group projects end with one or two students taking the lead and doing much of the work, this project required participation from all group members as they brainstormed and narrowed their choices, and finally through delivery of their radio promo. It also fostered an independence among the students that was new to them, but that forms the basis of so much college-level work. Working together to devise a creative solution to a problem and to share that solution with their peers created a classroom environment of interdependence that can be difficult of achieve in a less

interactive classroom. This first activity was fairly simple, but it set the stage for the most complex conceptual workshops to follow.

**b. B – Bimetallism:**

*The Wizard of Oz* has been discussed and debated in numerous textbooks and academic journals regarding its references to the political economy, bi-metalism, and monetary policy of the period. While some researchers feel that the story is a clear allegory where the characters depict various politicians or members of American society, others feel that these linkages may be merely coincidental. At best, some feel these ties between the yellow brick road and the silver shoes are solely symbols of the times. The fact that this debate is lively and unresolved makes for productive teaching opportunities. Through our discussion of the *Wizard of Oz*, we were able to create several exercises, lectures, quizzes, and assignments around this novel that enhanced students' critical research and technology skills, deepened their knowledge of economic history, and encouraged them to be critical readers of literature.

Regarding our conceptual workshop, our approach was multifaceted. Students read peer-reviewed articles, created a wiki with economic terms, and completed an in-class writing assignment about their stance on the monetary allegory debate in the *Wizard of Oz*. The culmination of the conceptual workshop was a role playing presentation where the research findings were presented to the class and students were asked to come dressed as the characters they portrayed in the book or the time period of the 1890s. Appendices 2 and 3 include the handout and the in-class writing assignments, respectively, that led the students through this conceptual workshop. Students read the original work and two peer-reviewed economic journal articles by Rockoff (1990) and Hansen (2002). They were also guided through a chapter of an economics textbook with core macroeconomic concepts and introduced to the history of the

1890s metal debate. Other resources were provided in and outside of class to explore the difference between allegory and symbolism as literary techniques.<sup>5</sup>

The debate format of this particular mini-lesson, followed by the writing assignment, motivated students to perform a closer reading of the text than they would for a class discussion. It also required a fairly sophisticated application of both literary and economic concepts, as they developed their own arguments and compared them to Rockoff's and Hansen's. Beyond that, it allowed us, as instructors, to model and encourage friendly interdisciplinary disagreement and debate.

#### VI. C-Choices: (Appendix #3).

For our last conceptual workshop, we challenged students to address historical accuracies portrayed in children's literature with a focus on the choices the characters made. In addition, students were asked to demonstrate quantitative literacy by visually displaying and quantifying some of the realities of the time period. To prepare students, we assigned articles and books that delve into the issue of historical accuracy in children's literature and demonstrate how literature can play a key role in children's understanding of their nation's cultural heritage. In particular, we asked students to read Daniel Hade's essay, "Lies my children's books taught me: History meets popular culture in "The American Girls" books" to introduce them to a critical view on the Pleasant Company's American Girl series. We also asked them to read an American Girl doll book, find a work of historical fiction that they read as a child, and to read Katherine Patterson's *Lyddie* as a class. *Lyddie* was selected since it presents a realistic and stark vision of early

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<sup>5</sup> Any literary dictionary or encyclopedia can be used to supply standard definitions for terms such as Symbolism and Allegory. This YouTube lecture by Dr. Tim Shonk at Eastern Illinois University is another excellent way to provide students with this information ( <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=48PsGOAJimM>).

American life, including child labor, poverty, illness, and hints of the limited choices available to young women, which was often in contrast to the other books selected by students. Structuring the inquiry for this particular assignment included a mini-lecture on historical accuracy in literature for children, a class discussion of the Hade article, an Excel workshop, and interactive library/research workshop, during which students identified their theses for an upcoming critical analysis essay and an in-class research session for the *Lyddie* workshop.

The conceptual workshop itself required students to bring this information together to help Lyddie answer one of the many choices she must grapple with in the novel: Should she work? Should she save? Should she go to school? Should she move (or migrate)? Should she marry? Should she help Ezekial? The students were expected to complete historical research to support their answers to each question. The inquiry began with the group generating a list of costs and benefits, followed by creation of one time-series graph and one pie chart drawing from their research and supporting their argument. This evidence was then presented to the class, along with their analysis of the data and their recommendations for Lyddie.

Again, bringing together diverse sources to answer a specific real-life question was a new experience for many students. In addition to collective problem solving and utilizing research skills, students were asked to use skills gained from the Excel workshop to present the relevant information to their classmates.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The 2015 Horizon Report (Higher Education Edition) mentions the importance of facilitating students' digital literacy through hands-on experiential learning exercises: "Current definitions of literacy only account for the gaining of new knowledge, skills, and attitudes, but do not include the deeper components of intention, reflection, and generativity...digital literacy is an iterative process that involves students learning about, interacting with, and then demonstrating or sharing their new knowledge."

## *VII. Empirical Evidence*

Our evaluations demonstrated a clear upward trajectory as we taught this class over a three year period. While we were all outside of our comfort zone in the first year, our pedagogy style developed into one that guided students through the challenges of team-based teaching and team-based learning. Students recognized the benefits of having inter-disciplinary instructors and the value of the interactive workshops in allowing them to see familiar children's books in a new light.

For Bansak, evaluations in the Fall 2014 were above the university mean and were particularly high for effectiveness of the course and the instructor. Students strongly felt that the course was a valuable educational experience and the instruction was conducive to learning. Given that these evaluations are above the university average and above some of Bansak's own evaluations in other courses, the pedagogy technique in particular, appears to be successful. Gibson's evaluations were also higher than those for previously taught FYP classes, and indicated that students felt engaged throughout the semester. We also felt, in general, that students were more independent in their work. At least for the interval of the workshops, students' incessant question asking and seeking of specific direction and approval from instructors appeared to be minimized, and the degree of independence seemed to increase in a positive trajectory across the three workshops.

## *VIII. Incorporating into your classes*

While a course in Children's Literature and Business is an unlikely topic for many instructors of economics, any course could be adapted to include a conceptual workshop. For example, instructors teaching economic principles may want to use the Charlotte's Web exercise as a way

to ‘break the ice’ and get students to see how economics is fun, real-world, and linked to books they have read as children.

Economic history courses or Money and Banking could easily use the Wizard of Oz workshop as it is currently presented. Students are familiar with the story through the movie and possibly through reading of the classic, and many textbooks now reference the possibility of the allegorical tie to the era of proposed bi-metalism.

Lastly, the Lyddie workshop could be adapted to reflect any assigned reading, both fiction and non-fiction, where individuals are forced to make tough decisions in a historical context. One idea would be to assign ‘The Big Short’ by Michael Lewis to show how rational decision makers ended up creating the financial crisis and Great Recession. Showing data series plotted around the 2007 recession point would be dramatic as many have a clear trend break as markets melted, housing prices plummeted and household in the US lost \$16 trillion in net worth in a matter of months.

Careful structuring of these activities is key to their successful implementation. Ideally, the instructor will design the activity with the intention of stepping out of students’ way once the workshop is underway. While constructive intervention may be necessary at times, it should be minimal at the workshop stage so that students are free to pursue the assignment goals in their own way through interaction with peers, rather than the instructors.

#### *IX. Conclusions*

In conclusion, adding conceptual workshops to a class can be rewarding on many levels. They are fun to teach and students enjoy them during the semester. They create lasting memories and start a path towards non-traditional pedagogy. Furthermore, academic research

and our anecdotal evidence suggests that these exercises are impactful and develop skills that benefit students in their coursework and beyond.

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Appendix #1:

Children's Literature & Its Life-long Lessons in Business

**Charlotte's Web – Advertising Exercise**

**The Essential Question**

Many bargains are struck in *Charlotte's Web* as characters struggle to get what they want while also giving up something in return. Driving this trade are the special marketing ploys invented by characters like Fern and Charlotte as they try to save Wilbur's life. How does Fern convince her uncle to buy Wilbur and keep him on his farm? How does Charlotte try to market Wilbur?

How might you sell a good or service from Zuckerman's Farm? Create your own advertising campaign to sell a product (good or service from *Charlotte's Web*) to a target market.

**Advertising Activity:** Examine the product that has been given to your group. Your group is to give the object a **catchy name**, make a **chart**, and write and deliver a **quick promo** in 2-3 minutes. You must create a new advertising campaign using a different marketing angle than those you have already seen in the media for a similar product.

**Brainstorm about your answers individually**

Write up to ten ideas you have to sell this product.

- |    |     |
|----|-----|
| 1. | 6.  |
| 2. | 7.  |
| 3. | 8.  |
| 4. | 9.  |
| 5. | 10. |

**Join your group to discuss your ideas**

Discuss your ideas with your group members. Check any ideas above that your partner also wrote down. Write down your favorite 'top five' ideas.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.



Appendix #2:

Children's Literature & Its Life-long Lessons in Business

<b>Wizard of Oz – Conceptual Workshop, Part I</b>
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**1. Read:**

- 1) *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, L. Frank Baum
- 2) Rockoff, H. (Aug. 1990). The “Wizard of Oz” as a monetary allegory. *Journal of Political Economy*, 98. 4, 739-60.

As you complete the above two readings consider your **character** and its **role** in the Monetary allegory.

Your Character: \_\_\_\_\_ Represents:\_\_\_\_\_

- 2. Research** your character and its role in the political battle of the time.  
Summarize in a paragraph the role of your character in the time period 1890s.

Write three examples from the book that link your character to this representation.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

- 3. Wiki Activity:** You will be given an economic term discussed in the Allegory reading. For each term, write a definition, an example of how to use the term, and a discussion of its importance.

**Term:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. Definition:
2. An example of its use:
3. A discussion of the importance of this term:

Enter one of the above 3 in the class wiki and put your name after your entry in brackets. (e.g. [Cynthia]). Note: you can only put one of the three and can't repeat an entry from a classmate.

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Characters as allegory:

- 1) Scarecrow – Western farmer
- 2) Dorothy and Toto – Traditional American Values
- 3) Wicked Witches of East and West – Grover Cleveland and William McKinley
- 4) Tin Woodman – Industrial Workers
- 5) Lion – William Jennings Bryan

Terms:

- 1) Deflation
- 2) Unemployment rate
- 3) Monetary policy
- 4) Fiscal Policy
- 5) Money supply/high powered money
- 6) Business cycles
- 7) Gold standard
- 8) Banking panic
- 9) Gross Domestic Product (Real Income)
- 10) Inflation
- 11) Quantity Theory of Money

## *The Wizard of Oz: Allegory or Symbolism?*

Do you believe there is enough evidence to support Rockoff's claim that *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* functions as an allegory? There is no right or wrong answer to this question, but whichever way you answer, you must support your claim with at least three pieces of evidence from the book. Refer not only to the book, but also to the definitions of symbolism and allegory (given out at the end of class yesterday) as you formulate your answers. Also remember that we expect to see your best writing, including clear, concise sentences and evidence of proof-reading.

**Ford & Herrick Colleges**

**Lyddie – Conceptual Workshop**

**Read:**

- 1) *Lyddie*; Katherine Paterson
- 2) “Lies my children’s books taught me: History meets popular culture in ‘The American Girls’ books”. *Voices of the Other: Children’s Literature and the Postcolonial Context*. (R. McGillis, Ed.) New York: Taylor & Francis.

In *Lyddie*, a number of the individuals face choices and make decisions regarding work, savings, education, migration, and

In particular, *Lyddie* faces the following choices:

- 1. Should she work?**
- 2. Should she save?**
- 3. Should she go to school?**
- 4. Should she move (or migrate)?**
- 5. Should she help Ezekial?**

You are given one of the 5 questions above to assess, research, and discuss in class next Tuesday.

Your Question: \_\_\_\_\_

Other group members: \_\_\_\_\_

To begin, please list the costs and benefits (both monetary and non-monetary) that *Lyddie* faces if she chooses to make the decision to \_\_\_\_\_. Note: there are no ‘correct’ answers and you may decide there are more than 5 answers. Please put 5 as a minimum.

**Costs:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

**Benefits**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

As a **group**, complete the following:

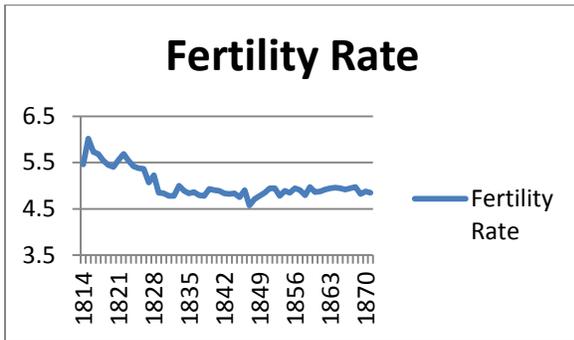
Use Excel ,

- 1) Create a **time series graph** of a variable related to the question.
- 2) Create a **pie chart** of the distribution of a variable related to your question.
- 3) Type a **one-paragraph** explanation of Graph #1.
- 4) Type a **one-paragraph** explanation of Graph #2.

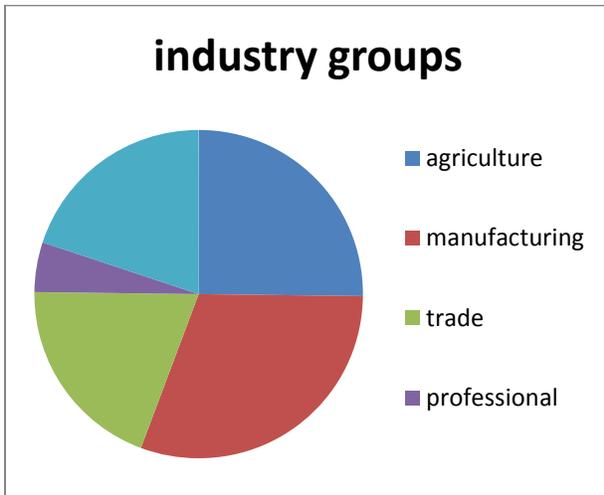
Put both graphs into a **Powerpoint document** to present to the class on Tuesday.

For example, if the question pertained to family size and the decision to have children, you might want to find data on fertility in that time period.

**Time series graph** – source: [gapminder.org/data](http://gapminder.org/data)



**Pie Chart:** <http://www.demographicchartbook.com>



## Communication Skills Learning Goals for the First-Year Program

Passed by the SLU FYP Faculty on February 1, 2011

At the conclusion of the first semester, first-year students will have increased their ability to:

- Engage in critical reading, analysis and interpretation of various kinds of texts, including their conventions and rhetorical strategies.
- Differentiate among and evaluate different kinds of sources and the various ways information is produced and presented.
- Engage in sustained evidence-based discussion of texts and issues by:
  - identifying and articulating one's own ideas;
  - listening carefully to others, demonstrating an understanding of their ideas and responding respectfully; and
  - identifying and exploring any areas of disagreement.
- Develop a focused and arguable thesis, supported by appropriate evidence which is cited in an ethical manner.
- Produce written work with coherent and cohesive structure and content appropriate for its purpose.
- Prepare oral presentations with structure, content and delivery appropriate for their purpose.
- Consider what effect they intend their writing and speaking to have on their audience.
- Produce writing characterized by a mature prose style that conforms to conventions of standard English.
- Revise their written and oral work.