



Reading Comprehension Worksheet

Grade 12

Name: _____

Date: _____

On the Ethics of Convenience

We do not choose our conveniences the way we choose our values, deliberately, after reflection, with some sense of what we are trading away to get them. We simply accumulate them, one small surrender at a time, until we wake up one morning living inside a set of compromises we never consciously agreed to make. The overnight package. The disposable everything. The app that knows, with unsettling precision, exactly what we want before we have finished wanting it. Each convenience arrives quietly, reasonably, almost apologetically, and each one asks so little of us individually that refusing it would feel like a strange, almost embarrassing overreaction.

And yet. Individually reasonable choices, multiplied by millions of individually reasonable people, do not necessarily add up to a reasonable whole. This is not a new observation, but it remains one we resist believing about our own particular convenience, the one delivered to our own particular doorstep, ordered from our own particular device. We are skeptical of aggregate harm in the abstract and strangely, stubbornly credulous about our own individual innocence within it.

Consider the question honestly, without the comfortable distance of speaking about "society" instead of yourself: when was the last time you declined a convenience specifically because of what it cost someone or something you could not see? Not because it was inconvenient to decline, which is a different matter entirely, but because you had weighed the unseen cost and found the convenience not worth it. If the honest answer is rarely, or never, you are not a uniquely callous person. You are a perfectly ordinary one, living inside a system engineered, quite deliberately, to make the ethical calculation invisible at the exact moment you would otherwise be required to make it.

I am not arguing for austerity, or for a return to some imagined simpler age that, on closer

historical inspection, was rarely as simple or as innocent as nostalgia insists. I am arguing for something more modest and, frankly, more achievable: a willingness to occasionally make the calculation visible again, on purpose, even when it costs us something to do so. Not because doing so will fix the aggregate problem through individual virtue alone, a comforting but largely false promise. But because a person who has never once made the invisible cost visible to themselves has not actually declined to participate in the ethics of convenience. They have simply never been asked to notice that they were participating at all.

Circle the Correct Answer

1. According to the author, how do most people acquire their conveniences?

- a) Through deliberate, values-based reflection
- b) Gradually, through small, individually reasonable surrenders that accumulate without conscious choice
- c) They are forced upon people by the government

2. What does the author say about individually reasonable choices made by many people?

- a) They always add up to a reasonable collective outcome
- b) They do not necessarily add up to a reasonable whole, even though each choice seems fine alone
- c) They have no cumulative effect whatsoever

3. What does the author explicitly say they are NOT arguing for?

- a) Austerity or a return to an imagined simpler age
- b) Any form of ethical reflection at all
- c) Convenience itself being inherently evil

4. What is the author's actual, more modest proposal?

- a) A willingness to occasionally make the hidden cost of convenience visible on purpose
- b) Banning all forms of modern convenience immediately
- c) Relying entirely on government regulation to solve the problem

True or False

5. The author argues that individual people are uniquely callous for embracing convenience. _____

6. The author claims that systems are designed in ways that make ethical costs invisible at the moment of choice. _____

7. The author believes individual virtue alone will fully solve the aggregate problem of convenience. _____

Fill in the Blank

8. The author says we are skeptical of aggregate harm in the abstract and strangely, stubbornly _____ about our own individual innocence.

9. The author says a person who has never made the invisible cost visible has simply never been asked to _____ that they were participating at all.

Think and Explain

10. Analyze the author's use of syntax in the essay, particularly the short, fragmented sentence "And yet." that opens the second paragraph. What rhetorical effect does this abrupt shift in sentence length create, especially following the longer, more measured sentences before it?

11. This essay avoids proposing a dramatic solution, instead calling for something the author describes as 'modest.' Evaluate whether this rhetorical choice, arguing for a small, achievable action rather than a sweeping one, makes the essay more or less persuasive, and explain your reasoning.
