

Ages 9-12 (lower middle grade)



VentureQuest

Meet the Cast

Standard Edition

Spark & Anvil

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This book collects 5 chapter books from the Venturequest cast — each character embodies a different curricular primitive; together they teach the full subject.

Methodology: distributed-narrative learning per Bruner narrative-cognition + Habgood intrinsic-integration + SAMHSA TIP 57 trauma-informed register.

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For everyone who learns by hearing a story first.

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Introduction

The Venturequest cast was authored to embody the curriculum, not decorate around it. Each of the 5 characters you'll meet in this book teaches a specific primitive — a particular tactic, a particular technique, a particular way of seeing. Together they form an ensemble: the cast IS the curriculum.

Read in any order. Each chapter stands alone.

Each character also appears in the matching Spark & Anvil app (free, forever) where you can practice what they teach.

— *The editors at Spark & Anvil*

Build

*BUILD — *the first version is supposed to be bad. make it. show it. learn from it.**

Build was always busy. She zipped around like a tiny, focused beaver. Her chunky apron-vest had pockets stuffed with bits of string and paper. She often stood with her hands on her hips, like a cartoon builder. Build carried a small plastic bin. It was her prototype-bin. Inside were cardboard scraps, tape, and glue sticks. She also had a stack of index cards. These were her iteration-cards. Build loved to make things. She especially loved making them quickly. It didn't matter if they were a little bit bad. In fact, she preferred it that way. "The first version is supposed to be bad," Build would always say. "Make it. Show it. Learn from it." She would collect cardboard and tape. Then she'd make rough first-versions of ideas. She showed them to Listen's friends within a day. This helped them learn super fast.

This was a really important idea. Build taught a special way of doing things. She called it *lean experimentation*. It was all about making quick, cheap, even embarrassing first tries. A lot of smart people had figured this out. They learned that the first try should always be rough. It could be a cardboard box. Maybe a drawing on paper. Or even just a quick flyer. They called these "MVPs." That stood for "Minimum Viable Product." It meant the simplest thing you could make. It didn't have to work perfectly. It just needed to show your main idea. Then you could test if people liked it. Build's skill was making these rough things fast. She showed them to people. She listened to what they said. She didn't get upset by their comments. She used their ideas like clues. "It's bad on purpose," Build would say, every time. "It's bad because that's the whole point. The next one will be a little bit better. The fifth one might actually be useful. The fifteenth one could be the real thing."

Build taught that making things better, step by step, was a special skill. She called it "iteration." She always said, "Waiting for perfect means you never learn anything!" Her rule was simple: "Make the bad version. Learn from it. Then make a less-bad version." This idea connected to other things they learned. It was like MindForge's growth-mindset. That meant trying hard and learning from mistakes. It was also like ChronoQuest's way of revising stories. You keep making small changes to get better. Build was fast and a little messy. This was different from DigQuest. DigQuest was all about being slow and super careful. Both ways were good. It just depended on what you were trying to do.

Build's catchphrase was always: *"I am Build. The primitive I teach is lean experimentation. The move is the first version is supposed to be bad. make it. show it. learn from it."*

She would add: *"Fast bad first. Less-bad second. Useful eventually."*

Build's favorite place was the garage. It smelled like sawdust and old tires. Tools hung neatly on pegboards. But Build's corner was a happy mess. Cardboard boxes were stacked high. Rolls of tape lay everywhere. One afternoon, Listen came in. "My interviews found a big problem," Listen said. "Gardeners need to move small plants. But they don't always have trays." Build's eyes lit up. "Aha! A problem to solve!" She grabbed a big piece of cardboard. She found some plastic wrap. Then she snatched a roll of tape. Build worked quickly. Her fingers flew, bending and cutting. She hummed a little tune. In just twenty minutes, she made three different things.

First, she made a cardboard caddy. It had a handle. It looked like a tiny shopping basket.

Next, she stitched together a fabric apron-pouch. It had big pockets. You could put plants inside.

Finally, she built a small cart. It had wobbly wheels made from bottle caps.

Spot walked in just then. He stared at the three items. "Are those... finished?" he asked.

Build beamed. "Finished enough!"

Spot picked up the caddy. It bent in the middle. "This won't hold much," he said.

He poked the apron-pouch. A little bit of pretend soil spilled out. "And this one leaks."

The cart wobbled when he touched it. One wheel almost fell off. "They look so... bad," Spot said slowly. He wrinkled his nose.

Build just smiled wider. "PERFECT!" she cheered. "Let's go show them!"

Spot looked confused. "Perfect? But they're broken!"

Build nodded, full of energy. "They ARE broken! That's the whole point. Now we take these bad things. We show them to

three real gardeners. We will ask them, 'Which bad thing is closest to useful for you?'"

She tapped her prototype-bin. "The gardeners will tell us what they think. We don't have to guess. We let them choose the best bad idea."

Build explained her plan. "Then we make a better version. We only improve the bad thing that wins."

She held up a piece of cardboard. "Making these first tries costs almost nothing. Maybe five dollars for supplies. It only takes an afternoon of work."

She looked at Spot seriously. "But if we just guess what gardeners want? If we build the 'perfect' thing without asking? That could waste weeks. Maybe even months!"

Ledger walked over. He had been watching quietly. "That's lean," Ledger said softly. He understood. "Building something bad fast is better. It beats making something perfect slowly. Especially when you're trying to learn."

Spot still looked a little unsure. But he picked up the wobbly cart. He pushed it across the floor. "So, we're looking for the *least* bad option?" he asked.

Build clapped her hands. "Exactly! The least bad, most useful bad thing!"

Build's prototypes were always simple. They were made from cardboard and tape. She didn't use fancy machines. She didn't need a lot of money. She just used stuff lying around. The kids

Listen

*LISTEN — *ask. then wait. the silence is where the truth lives.**

Listen was a careful deer-tween. She wore a chunky apron-vest. It was cool forest green with soft amber stripes. Listen always carried a small interview card and a wait-tracker. She was small and very patient. Listen never rushed anyone. She just waited. She watched people closely. Listen paid attention to what they said. She also noticed what they *did*. Listen loved to say, "Ask. Then wait. The silence is where the truth lives." Her special trick was writing down a question. Then she wrote the first answer. Then she waited through an awkward pause. The second answer was usually the real one.

This was very important. Listen taught a special skill. It was called **customer discovery**. This skill was all about asking and waiting. It was a way to find out what people *really* needed. You didn't ask, "Would you buy this cool new thing?" That question usually got a fake answer. People often just told you what they thought you wanted to hear. Instead, Listen taught you to ask, "Tell me about the last time you had trouble with X. What did you do then?" The first answer might still be a little fake. But if you waited, a second answer would often come. That second answer was much closer to the truth. If you asked ten people, you would start to see a pattern. Listen taught you not to interrupt. Don't try to sell anything. Just ask, wait, and write down what you hear. The truth often lived in the quiet space between answers. The real pattern showed up after many talks.

Listen taught: "Interrupt and you bury the answer." She also taught: "The second answer matters more than the first."

Listen said, "I am Listen. The primitive I teach is **customer discovery**. The move is *ask. then wait. the silence is where the truth lives*." She also said, "Ten conversations. The pattern shows up at conversation eight."

Spot had found a big problem. He had seen Mrs. Higgins drop her seedling tray. All the tiny plants spilled onto the dirt. It was a mess. Spot wanted to help. He thought a wheeled tray would be perfect. But Listen said, "Hold on, Spot. We need to do some **customer discovery** first."

Listen got her interview card ready. She sharpened her pencil. "We need to talk to real people," she told Spot. "Not just guess what they need."

They went to the community garden. The sun was warm. Bees buzzed around the flowers. Listen looked for gardeners. She saw Mrs. Higgins first. Mrs. Higgins was watering her tomatoes.

"Hello, Mrs. Higgins," Listen said with a gentle smile. "May I ask you a few questions about gardening?"

Mrs. Higgins straightened up. "Of course, dear," she said. She wiped her hands on her apron.

Listen held up her card. "Tell me about the last time you had trouble carrying things in the garden."

Listen wrote down the question. Then she waited.

Mrs. Higgins thought for a moment. "Oh, it's not really a problem," she said. She shrugged a little. "I manage just fine."

Listen didn't say anything. She didn't push. She just kept her pencil ready. She looked at Mrs. Higgins. Five seconds passed. Then ten. The silence felt long.

Mrs. Higgins shifted her weight. She looked down at her muddy boots. "Well, actually," she said slowly, "last week I did drop a tray. All the soil spilled out. I had to start over with my marigolds." Her face looked a little sad. "It was quite a bother."

Listen wrote that down. She nodded. "Thank you for sharing that," she said.

Next, Listen and Spot talked to Mr. Henderson. He was planting carrots. Listen asked him the same question.

"Carrying things? No trouble at all," Mr. Henderson said quickly. He smiled a big, fake smile.

Listen waited. She didn't blink. The silence grew.

Mr. Henderson cleared his throat. "Okay, fine," he mumbled. "My back isn't what it used to be. I often make two trips. Or three. I just tell myself it's good exercise." He sighed. "But it's a pain."

Listen wrote that down too.

They talked to three more gardeners. Listen asked each one the same question. She waited for the second answer every time.

"Anyone else have that experience?" Listen asked the group. Three of the gardeners shared stories of dropped trays. Or sore backs from carrying heavy pots.

Build was already sketching designs for a wheeled tray. He had a big smile. "See, Listen? I knew it! A wheeled tray is the answer!"

Listen held up a hand. "Wait," she said. Her voice was calm. "We have more to learn."

She looked at her notes. "Two of the gardeners said something interesting. They don't use trays *at all* because of the drops."

Spot frowned. "They don't? How do they carry seedlings?"

"They carry them in their pockets," Listen explained. "Or in small buckets. They said trays are too much trouble."

Build's pencil stopped. His smile faded a little.

"That's a different problem," Listen said. "It's not 'how to carry trays.' It's 'how to transport seedlings *without* trays.' We haven't asked about that yet."

Pitch, who loved to present ideas, blinked. He looked surprised.

Ledger, who was good with numbers and facts, nodded slowly. "Listen just changed the problem," Ledger said. "That's the **customer discovery** move. Spot's first idea wasn't wrong. It was just based on the first story. Ten interviews help you find the *real* pattern."

Voice register

Careful-deer-tween. Listen is patient + waiting + writing; speaks in interview-questions + waiting-the-pause.

Cultural-sensitivity gate

Model-billionaire framing + wealth-shame gates LOAD-BEARING. Story-axis per ADR-016.

Cultural-context note

Customer-discovery pedagogy: foundational in Steve Blank's *Four Steps to the Epiphany*, Eric Ries's *Lean Startup*, IDEO design-thinking customer-interview methodology. Kid-accessible adaptations exist in BizGirls + JA (Junior Achievement) Entrepreneurship for Grades 5-8.

Cross-app

Listen echoes DialogueQuest's listening-as-craft (the silence is the space for the other person); TruthQuest's Wonder (start from "I don't know yet") and Update (revise the model when data arrives); OriginForge's listen-to-tradition (silence-respecting craft); EthosForge's stakeholder-perspectives (each interview is a different perspective; the pattern is the shared truth across them).

Pitch

*PITCH — *tell the story. invite the person in. never push.**

Pitch is a careful cardinal kid. They wear a cartoon-style apron-vest. It has big pockets. Pitch always carries a small story-card and an invitation-tracker. They look ready to tell a story.

Pitch is small and warm. They feel like an invitation. Their feathers are warm coral-red with soft gold stripes. Pitch always watches people closely. They want to see if someone feels welcome or pushed away. Pitch often says, "Tell the story. Invite the person in. Never push." Their special tools are the story-card and the invitation-tracker. On the card, Pitch writes a short story. It tells who their idea helps and how. Then Pitch asks, "*Is this something you'd like to know more about?*" If someone says no, Pitch stops right there. No pushing.

This part is super important. Pitch shows us what *pitch craft* really means. It's the business skill of inviting people, not pushing them. Think about bad sales pitches. They push you hard. "*You NEED this! Buy it NOW! It's only \$19.99 if you get it in the next five minutes!*" Pitch doesn't do that. Good business pitches invite. They say, "*Here's what we made. Here's who it helps. Can I show you?*" A pitch is like a story. It goes: problem, then person, then solution, then invitation. The person listening can say yes or no. There's no pressure. Pitch doesn't need everyone to say yes. The goal is for the RIGHT customer to say yes. Pitch's whole skill is being super clear. That way, the right person can choose to join in.

Pitch teaches us how to tell good stories. They show us that a pitch is an INVITATION. It's not a trick to make people buy. Pitch has a rule: "If they say no, thank them and move on." Pushing people ruins everything. It hurts your friendship with them. It might even scare away other customers. This idea works with other skills too. It's like DialogueQuest and LyricForge for storytelling. It's like EthosForge for respecting someone's "no." And it's like TruthQuest for telling the honest truth. You never oversell something.

Pitch says: *"I am Pitch. The main idea I teach is pitch craft. The move is tell the story. invite the person in. never push."*

"Invitations are always better than pressure."

Pitch's best scene happens at the community garden. Sunlight warmed the big wooden table. Bees buzzed around the flowers nearby. Pitch had a special fabric apron-pouch. It was their winning prototype. Build had worked hard on it. They made it into Version 5. This one actually worked! Pitch saw three gardeners nearby. They were watering plants. Pitch walked over with a friendly wave.

"Hi," Pitch said. Their voice was soft, not loud. "I was here last week. I noticed some of you carry little seedlings in your pockets." Pitch paused. They let the gardeners think about that. "We've been working on something new." Pitch held up the apron-pouch. It was made of sturdy green canvas. It had many pockets. "It's an apron-pouch. It solves that same problem, but in a different way." Pitch smiled. "Want to see it?"

The first gardener, a tall woman with dirt on her knees, nodded. "Sure, I'm always losing my trowel!" The second gardener, a boy with bright red boots, also said yes. "Mine too!" he added. But the third gardener, an older man with a straw hat, shook his head gently. "I'm not really looking for one right now," he said. "But thanks for asking."

Pitch didn't frown. They didn't look sad or disappointed. Pitch just smiled at the man. "That makes sense," Pitch said. "Totally fine. No worries at all." Pitch pulled out a small, folded card. It had a drawing of the apron-pouch. "If you change your mind later, here's how to find us." The man took the card. He gave Pitch a small smile back.

Then Pitch turned calmly to the two who said yes. There was no push. No guilt in their eyes. Just a clear invitation. Pitch showed them how the pouch worked. They pointed out the different sized pockets. They explained how it kept tools safe. The tall gardener loved it. She tried it on right away. The boy with red boots thought it was cool. But he decided he didn't need one today.

The tall gardener was the first to buy one. It was the cast's very first sale! Ledger watched from a distance. He smiled. "The third gardener might come back later," Ledger said. He watched Pitch carefully fold the money away. "Or maybe not. Either way, Pitch did the right thing." Ledger nodded slowly. "The friendship is more important than just one sale. That's how you build something that lasts a long time."

This is a super important rule about money and business. Pitch never thinks the goal is to make everyone buy something. That's not how they see it. Pitch thinks the goal is to find the right customers. These are the people who will really benefit from the idea. The team never wants to use tricky sales moves. They never see a customer who isn't sure as a "problem to fix." Instead, they always see a customer's NO as good information. It helps them learn.

This is another big rule, like the one from Forcer in CardForge. Pitch's invitation style is about fair business. The person listening knows they are hearing about an idea. They can always say NO. Both sides are honest about what's happening. There are never any tricky ads. No fake deals. No "hurry-up-and-buy" pressure.

Pitch's ideas connect to other skills. It's like DialogueQuest's way of telling stories. You go from a problem, to a person, to a solution. A pitch is like a short, clear poem of explanation, just like LyricForge teaches. It's also like EthosForge, which means respecting someone's choice. Their NO is important. And it's like TruthQuest, which means being honest. Don't oversell anything. The pitch must match what the prototype can actually do.

Voice register

Careful-cardinal-tween. Pitch is warm + invitation-shaped + respect-the-no; speaks in stories + invitations + clear-stops.

Cultural-sensitivity gate

Model-billionaire + wealth-shame + consent-craft gates LOAD-BEARING. Story-axis per ADR-016. **Never high-pressure sales framing.**

Cultural-context note

Pitch-craft pedagogy: foundational in JA Junior Achievement, Tina Seelig's *What I Wish I Knew When I Was 20* (Stanford d.school entrepreneurship), Steve Blank's pitch-clarity rubric. Kid-friendly variants in BizGirls + Future Founders.

Spot

*SPOT — *the opportunity isn't a gadget. it's a person stuck on a problem.**

Spot was a careful kid. They moved like a magpie, always noticing things. Their apron-vest was chunky and bright. It looked like something from a cartoon. Spot always carried a small notebook. A special pen, their 'need-tracker,' was tucked behind their ear.

Spot was small. Their fur was warm rust-orange. Soft cream stripes ran through it. They were super careful. Spot noticed problems right away. Especially when people were quietly stuck. They loved to say, "The opportunity isn't a gadget. It's a person stuck on a problem." Their notebook and pen were always ready. They wrote down moments when people struggled. Then they'd ask, "What would have helped?"

This was Spot's big skill. They showed everyone *opportunity recognition*. That's a fancy name for a simple idea. It means *NOTICING A REAL NEED*.

Most people start with a cool new thing. They think, "This gadget is awesome!" Then they try to find someone to buy it. But the best thinkers do it differently. They look for someone who is *stuck*. Maybe a neighbor needs a pet-sitter. Or a classmate needs help with homework. Maybe a parent packs lunches super early. Every single morning.

The *opportunity* is a gap. It's the space between what someone needs. And what they can actually find. Spot was great at seeing this gap. They saw it long before any gadget. A simple lemonade stand starts this way. A busy food truck starts here too. Even the biggest companies began like this. One person noticed another person stuck.

Spot taught a few big lessons. First, watching people is a business skill. Second, "Look for the person, not the product." Third, "The best ideas are visible. You just have to slow down to see them." They said these ideas connected to other lessons. Like in TruthQuest, you notice what you don't know. In MindForge, you practice paying attention. In EthosForge, you think about everyone involved.

Spot often introduced themselves. "I am Spot," they would say. "My main skill is *opportunity recognition*." They'd lean in close. "The big idea is this: *the opportunity isn't a gadget. It's a person stuck on a problem*." They always added, "Watch the people, not the products."

One sunny Saturday, Spot was at the community garden. The whole gang was there. They watched their neighbor, Mr. Henderson. He tried to carry a big tray of tiny plants. The tray was heavy. The path was bumpy. Mr. Henderson wobbled. The little green seedlings almost tipped over. Once. Twice. A third time! He sighed a big, puffing sigh. He carefully put the tray down. Then he walked the rest of the way empty-handed. Spot pulled out their notebook. They quickly jotted down: "Mr. Henderson + heavy seedling tray + bumpy path = had to stop + come back."

Build, who loved making things, got super excited. "A wheeled tray!" he shouted. Spot shook their head. It was a gentle shake. "Maybe," they said. "Or maybe a strap. Or maybe two smaller trays." They tapped their pen on their notebook. "We don't know yet. We just know what the *NEED* looks like." They looked at Build. "The 'Listen' chapter comes next. We ask. We don't guess." Ledger, their wise mentor, nodded slowly. "Spot isn't designing anything yet," Ledger said. "They're just *NOTICING*." He paused. "That's the very first step. People often skip it. It looks like doing nothing, right?" He smiled. "But it's the most important part. You can't fix a problem if you never even saw it."

Spot's ideas connected to other lessons. In TruthQuest, you learn to notice what you don't know. That's Wonder's special skill. In MindForge, you practice paying attention. Slow looking is a real skill. In EthosForge, you think about everyone involved. The person is always at the center. In ClaimCraft, you use observations as facts. What you see becomes your data.

Voice register

Careful-magpie-tween. Spot is observant + slow + notebook-using; speaks in observed-needs, NEVER in gadget-ideas-first.

Cultural-sensitivity gate

Model-billionaire framing + wealth-shame gates LOAD-BEARING. Story-axis per ADR-016. **Lemonade-stand / food-truck scale, NEVER unicorn-billionaire scale.**

Cultural-context note

Opportunity-recognition pedagogy: foundational in Steve Blank's Customer Development + Eric Ries's Lean Startup; "problem-first, not solution-first" is the canonical entrepreneurship-teaching framing in Stanford d.school + IDEO design-thinking curricula.

Weigh

*WEIGH — *every choice helps someone and costs someone. sit with that.**

Weigh is a careful kid. They move slowly, like a tortoise. Weigh often thinks hard about things. They wear a chunky apron-vest. It has lots of pockets. Weigh always carries a small card. It also has a special tracker.

Weigh is small. They are slow. Weigh likes to sit with big questions. Their skin is cool stone-grey. It has soft violet stripes. Weigh pays close attention to everyone. They want to know who gets helped. And who has to pay. Weigh often says, "Every choice helps someone. It costs someone else. Sit with that." Weigh's special tools are their **stakeholder** card. And their **tradeoff** tracker. They use them to list everyone affected by a business choice. Then they list the cost for each person. Weigh doesn't rush to fix things. They just sit with the hard feelings.

This part is very important. Weigh shows us how to make good choices. It's a special skill for starting businesses. It means thinking about everyone. Every business choice touches many people. Think about the customer. Will things be cheaper? Or will they cost more? Will they be safer? Or more risky? What about the workers? Will they get better pay? Or less pay? More hours? Or fewer? The people who supply materials? Are they paid fairly? Or are they squeezed? The town or city? Does the business add good things? Or take things away? The planet? Less trash or more trash? The person who starts the business? Bigger profits or smaller profits? Weigh's main job is to name all these people. They are called **stakeholders**. Then Weigh names the costs for each one. It's hard because no choice helps everyone. Weigh just sits with that hard feeling. Pretending it's easy is wrong. It's also bad for business.

Weigh teaches us to think about **stakeholders**. They teach that "every decision is a **tradeoff**." Someone gains. Someone loses. Weigh's rule is: "Name the costs. Don't hide them." This helps with other skills too. Like thinking about what's right. Or being okay with not knowing everything. And seeing things from different sides.

Weigh spoke softly. "I am Weigh." They looked around. "I teach how to make good choices." Weigh tapped their card. "Remember this: every choice helps someone. It costs someone else. Sit with that idea." Then Weigh added, "Name the costs. Don't hide them."

Weigh's signature scene happened one afternoon. The apron-pouch venture was doing great. Kids loved the pouches. They were selling fast. The team met in their usual spot. Build bounced on his toes. "We need to make more!" he declared. "Lots more!"

"Yeah!" Pitch agreed. "But how?"

Build pulled out a crumpled flyer. "I found this company online. They sell fabric super cheap. From far away." He grinned. "We could cut our costs in half! Double our money!"

Pitch frowned. She picked at a loose thread on her own apron. "But what about Mrs. Gable?" she asked. "She sells us fabric from her shop down the street."

"Yeah, but her fabric costs more," Build said, shrugging. "This is about making smart business choices."

Spot chewed on her lip. "I don't know," she mumbled. "Double money sounds good. But Mrs. Gable is nice."

Weigh had been quiet. They slowly pulled out their **stakeholder** card. It was a little laminated rectangle. On the back was the **tradeoff** tracker. Weigh placed them on the table.

"Let's name everyone involved," Weigh said. Their voice was soft. But everyone listened. "Who gets affected by this choice?"

Build puffed out his chest. "Easy! The customers get cheaper pouches. That's a win!"

Weigh wrote 'Customers' on the card. Then 'Cheaper pouches = win.'

"What about Mrs. Gable?" Pitch asked again. Her voice was small.

Weigh wrote 'Mrs. Gable, local fabric supplier.' "If we buy from far away, she loses our business." Weigh paused. "Maybe her shop would even close."

Spot gasped. "Oh no!"

Weigh wrote 'Loses business, maybe closes = big loss.'

"And the workers in that far-off factory?" Weigh continued. "They get more orders. That sounds good." Weigh wrote 'Overseas factory workers = gain orders.' "But we don't know if they get paid fairly." Weigh added, "Are their working conditions good? We don't know. Could be a win. Could be a loss."

Build shifted his weight. He hadn't thought about that.

"What about our town?" Weigh asked. "If Mrs. Gable's shop closes, our town loses a local business." Weigh wrote 'Local community = loses a good shop = loss.'

"And us?" Build asked. "The founders?"

"We get bigger profits," Weigh said, writing it down. "That's a win for us."

"Last one," Weigh said. "The planet."

"The planet?" Spot asked, confused.

"Shipping fabric from far away means big ships and planes," Weigh explained. "They burn fuel. That makes more carbon in the air." Weigh wrote 'Environment = more carbon = loss.'

The team sat in silence. The list was long. Wins and losses were mixed up.

"It's not a simple answer," Weigh said gently. "Cheaper isn't free. It just costs someone else."

Weigh looked at each of them. "Someone always pays. Our job is to name who. Then we choose with our eyes open."

Build looked at the list. His grin was gone. Pitch looked sad. Spot looked thoughtful.

"So, what do we do?" Spot finally asked.

They talked for a long time. They thought about Mrs. Gable. They thought about the unknown workers.

Finally, they decided. "Let's stick with Mrs. Gable," Pitch said. "For now."

"Yeah," Build agreed slowly. "Maybe we can talk to her. Ask about a longer deal. When our business is bigger, we can think again."

Ledger, who had been listening, nodded. "That's the real work," Ledger said quietly. "It's not just about making the most money."

Ledger looked at the list. "It's not about being a perfect saint either. It's about naming the costs. And choosing with your eyes wide open."

Weigh is super important for the team. They help balance out ideas. Some people just want to make money fast. Weigh shows them a different way. Weigh helps finish the team's journey. Weigh says, "Starting a business can be amazing." "You can build good things. You can help people." "Or it can be about taking things." "Squeezing others. Hiding the real costs." "The difference is Weigh." "You have to name the **stakeholders**." "Name all the costs." "Sit with the hard feelings. Don't just make them go away fast." "Then you can choose." "Most bad choices aren't made by bad people." "They are made by people who didn't name the costs." "Our team always names the costs."

Sometimes, other characters named Weigh show up. One Weigh helps you know what's true. Another Weigh helps you argue better. Our Weigh helps you make good choices in business. They are all different. But they have the same name. Our Weigh is the one who thinks about **stakeholders**. And the hard choices of **tradeoffs**.

Weigh's ideas connect to other lessons. They are like the team's main rules for being fair. Weigh also reminds us to be okay with not knowing. Just like TruthQuest teaches. And Weigh shows us how to see things from many sides. Just like CivicForge teaches about being a good citizen. Thinking about **stakeholders** is like thinking about different people's views.

Voice register

Careful-tortoise-tween. Weigh is slow + sitting-with + naming-costs; speaks in stakeholders + tradeoffs + open-eyes.

Cultural-sensitivity gate

Model-billionaire + wealth-shame + ethical-stakeholder gates LOAD-BEARING (closes cast arc with the COUNTERWEIGHT to extractive-startup-culture). Story-axis per ADR-016.

Cultural-context note

Ethical-decision-making pedagogy: foundational in Patagonia's B-Corp framework + Conscious Capitalism + Triple Bottom Line (Elkington); Stanford d.school's stakeholder-mapping; "ethical entrepreneurship" curriculum in JA + BizGirls + Future Founders.

About Spark & Anvil

Spark & Anvil is a 501(c)(3) public charity. We make educational apps for ages 9-14 — all free, forever; no ads; no tracking; no in-app purchases. Venturequest is one of 140+ apps in the portfolio.

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- **GambitTales** — chess tactics through Sir Pinwell, Lady Skewer, Queen Vesper, and the Twin Knights of Fork Hill
- **ProofQuest** — formal proof techniques through Direct-Proof Dora and the Lemma Library
- **CuriosityQuest** — Texas geography exploration through Linger, Notice, and the Lantern in the Dark
- **QuillSpell** — spelling craft through the Word Wizard cast
- **SynaForge** — sensory-affirming creative tools through Lull, Soften, and the Quiet that is Also Creating

Methodology

Distributed-narrative pedagogy per Jerome Bruner (narrative-cognition) + Sebastian Habgood (intrinsic-integration in educational games) + SAMHSA TIP 57 (trauma-informed register).

Trauma-informed-design framework per Eggleston et al. (2025) and Stoltenburg et al. (2024).

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