



# The Top Job

By Marsha Masters, Economics Arkansas

## Lesson Description

In the children's book *The Top Job*, Mrs. Feeny asks each student to stand up and share about their parents' jobs. Emma's dad is a UFO hunter, Elizabeth's mom is a jeweler, and Aidan's mom is a NASCAR driver. When the main character shares that her dad changes light bulbs, everyone laughs. This interactive lesson allows students to identify specialists and discover interdependence first hand.

## Grades 2-4

### Concepts

- **Specialists:** People who produce a narrower range of goods and services than they consume. Also called specialized workers.
- **Interdependence:** Dependence on others for goods and services, occurs as a result of specialization.
- **Human Resources:** The quantity and quality of human effort directed toward producing goods and services. Also known as labor. Examples: people at work, teachers, bus drivers, doctors.

## Standards

### *Arkansas Economics Standards*

- E.5.2.2: Describe goods and services that people in the local community produce and those that are produced in other communities D2.Eco.3, 4.K-2
- E.5.3.1: Examine the relationship between human capital and productivity (e.g., division of labor, specialization) D2.Eco.6.3-5

### *Arkansas English Language Arts Standards*

#### Grade 2

- RL.2.1 Ask and answer questions such as who, what, where, when, why and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.
- RL.2.3 Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.
- SL.2.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 2 topics with peers and adults in smaller and larger groups.
- L.2.6 Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading, and being read to, and responding to texts, including adjectives and adverbs to describe.

#### Grade 3

- RL.3.1 Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.
- RL.3.3 Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how

their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

- SL.3.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 3 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and experiencing their own clearly.
- SL.3.4 Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace.
- L.3.6 Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate conversational, general academic, and domain-specific words and phrases, including those that signal spatial and temporal relationships (e.g., After dinner that night we went looking for them.)

## Objectives

Students will be able to

- Define specialization and give an example of the term
- Define interdependence and give an example of the term
- Identify 5 specialists

## Time required

1 class period, plus 30 minutes of preparation time

## Materials required

- *The Top Job*, by Elizabeth Cody Kimmel, 1 classroom copy
- Activity 1
- Hole punch
- Ball of yarn, plus extra to cut strings, about 1 yard in length, 1 per student
- Assessment sheet

## Teacher Preparation

- **Prior to class**, copy Activity 1 on cardstock, laminate and cut out. You need one card for each student. Hole punch upper corners and tie pieces of yarn to make necklaces.
- Make 1 copy of the Assessment sheet for each student.

## Procedure

1. In class, show students the book cover *The Top Job*. Ask students to share what they think the “top job” would be. (Allow students to share.)
2. Read the book.
3. After sharing, ask students to identify jobs mentioned in the story. (UFO hunter, jeweler, NASCAR driver). Tell students that people specialize when they produce a narrower range of goods and services than they consume. For example: John is a mechanic. He gets his hair cut at Joe's Barber Shop. Joe goes to John to get his car fixed. John and Joe earn more by specializing, but they must depend on one another. Challenge the students to think of specialists. (*Accept all appropriate answers such as: doctor, firefighter, baker, teacher, dentist, nurse, pilot, truck driver, professional football player, artist.*) All these workers do a special job. They do not try to take care of all their wants on their own.
4. Ask why the students laughed when the main character said her dad changed light bulbs. (*They*

*didn't think it was an important job.)*

5. Ask the class if all jobs are important. If they don't feel that they are, share some examples. For instance, sometimes people will say that wouldn't want to do a job because it's not glamorous, it's smelly/dirty, etc. Ask students what would happen if someone did NOT do those jobs—we would all suffer.
6. Introduce the concept of interdependence: This occurs when people and nations depend on one another to provide each other's wants. Greater specialization leads to greater interdependence. Because a baker spends his time baking cakes, breads and muffins all day, he doesn't devote time to make his own clothes, grow his own vegetables, service his car, etc. He "depends" on other specialists to assist. Other specialists also depend on the baker for the same reason.
7. Have students form a circle. Give each student a specialist card to wear. Start with the baker. Hand him the ball of string. Ask the baker to share with the others in the circle what he specializes in doing. Then have him toss the ball while keeping the end of the string to someone in the circle he depends on. (NOTE: Make sure the student holds one part of the string before tossing.)
8. Repeat the process until all in the circle have had an opportunity to share how they are specialists and who they depend on. You will have a web of interdependence when you are finished, which provides a wonderful visual for students to see interdependence.

## Closure

As students are holding the web of interdependence, ask them the following questions:

- Each worker, human resource, in the web is considered a specialist. What does that mean? (*A specialist is a worker who produces a narrower range of goods and services than they consume.*)
- Today we learned about an interdependence web. What does the term interdependence mean? (*We depend on others to satisfy our desire for goods and services. For example: A baker spends his/her day producing breads, pies, cakes, and muffins. A baker consumes much more than that daily such as gasoline for his/her car, food, clothing, entertainment, etc.*)
- Are all jobs important? (*Allow students an opportunity to express their thoughts.*)
- [Ask the garbage collector to drop his/her string.] What would happen if the garbage collectors in the city went on strike? (*Garbage would build up, and there would be limited ways to dispose of trash.*) [Repeat with different workers. A nice visual becomes apparent as students see a weakened web.]

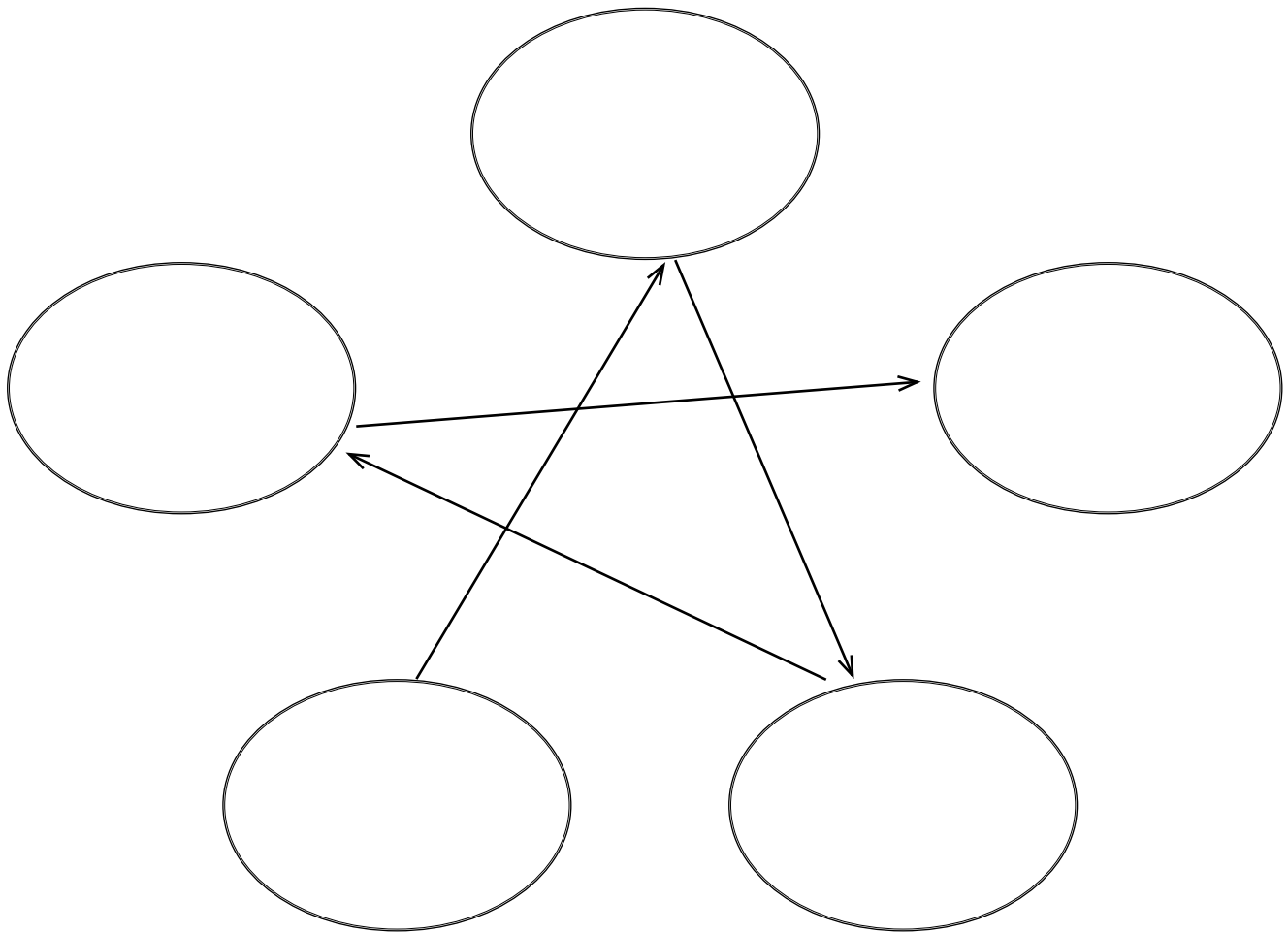
## Assessment

Distribute an Assessment sheet to each student. Answers will vary. Students should state that human resources are specialists when they specialize in the production of a certain good or service that satisfy consumers' wants. Students should include in the explanation of interdependence the idea that specialists depend on others in the web to satisfy their wants for goods and services they do not directly produce.

## Extension

Organize a career day at school. Invite specialists into the classroom. Also, allow students to dress up as a specialist they are interested in learning more about. Have them explain the good or service they provide to the community and how they depend on others in the community.

# Interdependence Web



Fill each circle with a human resource in your city.

Why are these human resources considered specialists? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Select 2 specialists in the web. Use these 2 specialists to explain the concept of interdependence.

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

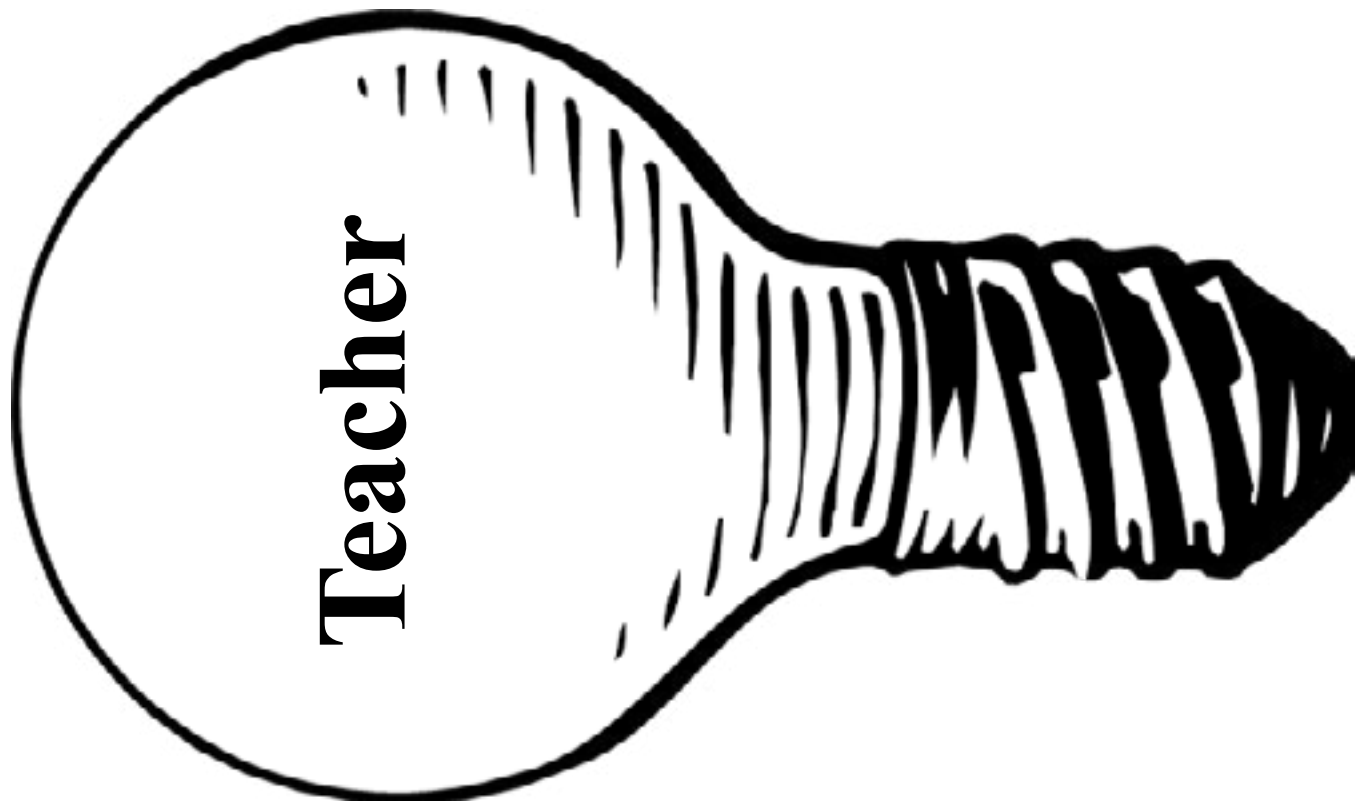
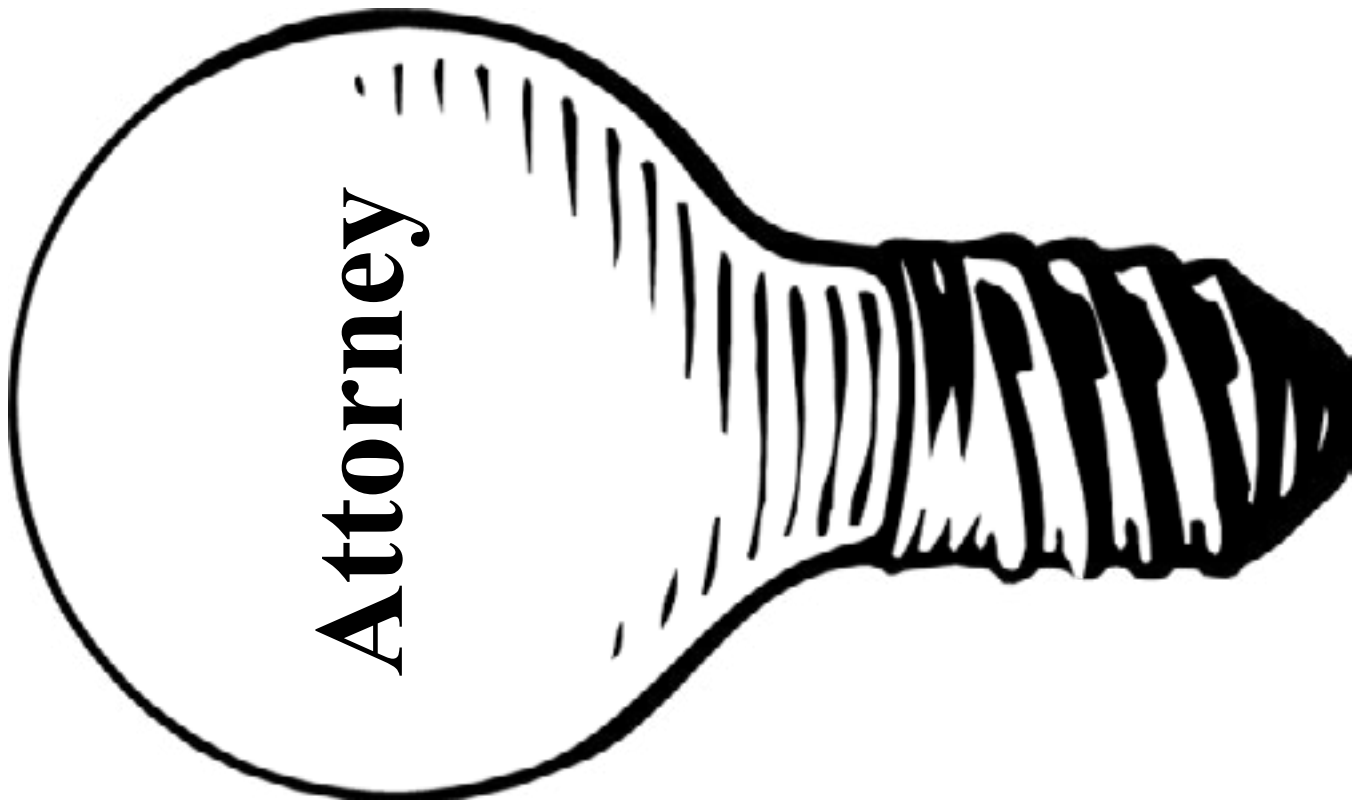
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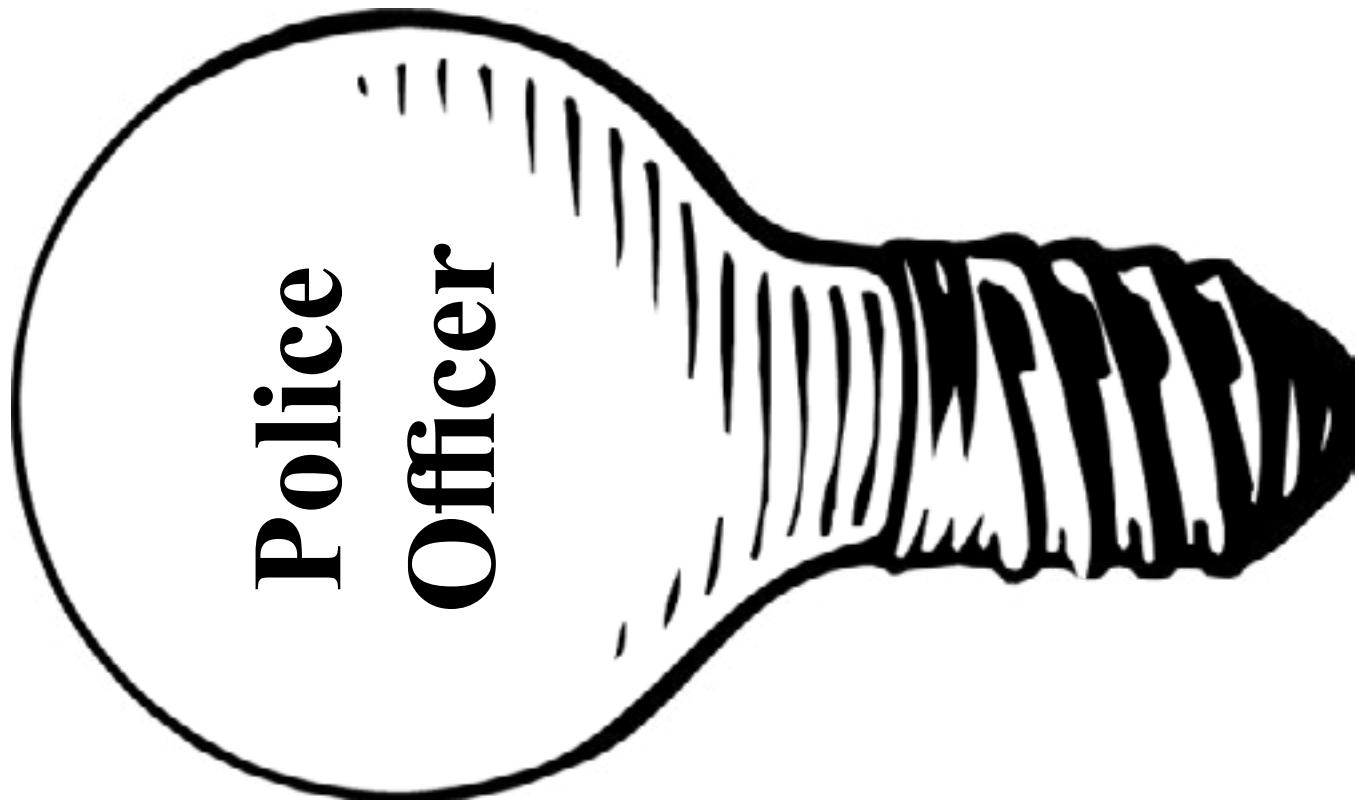
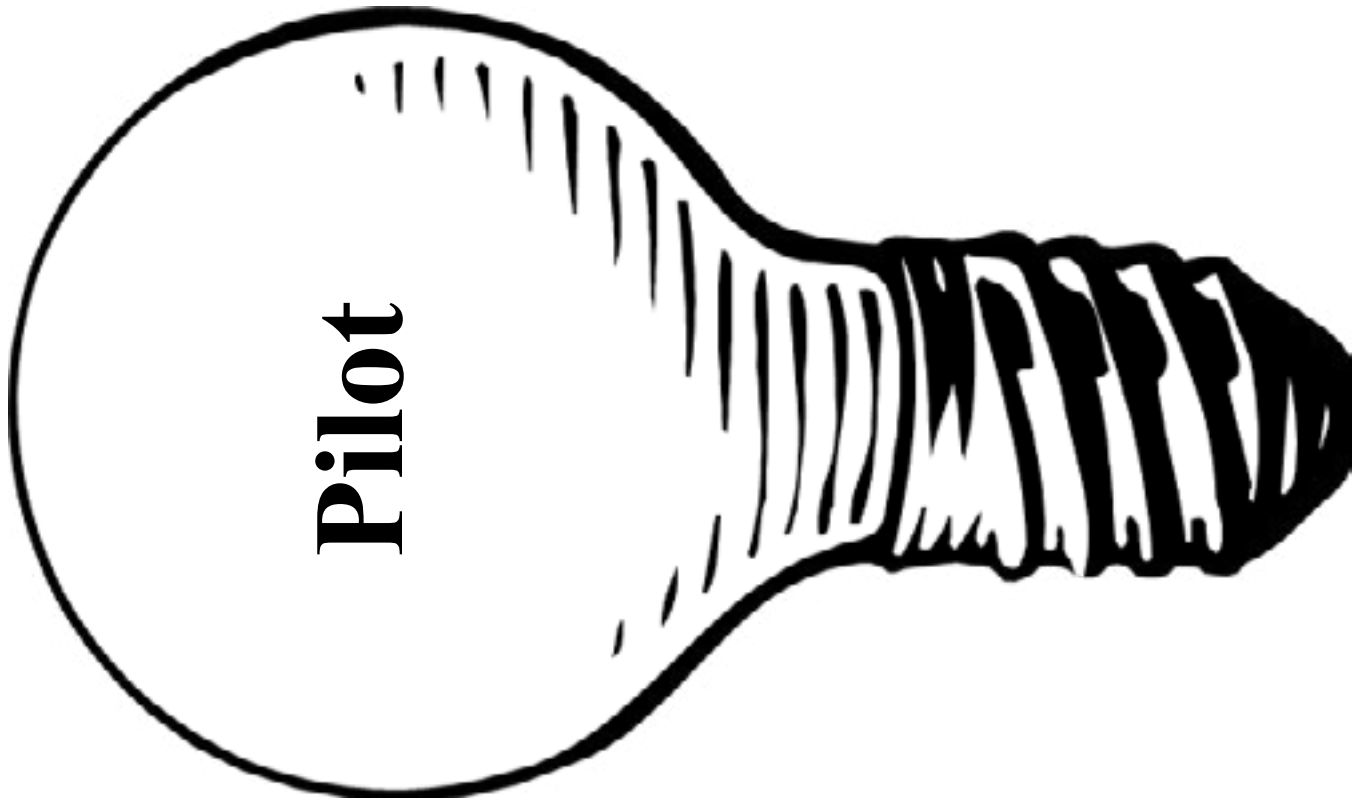


**Baker**



**Doctor**





A black and white line drawing of a lightbulb. The bulb is oriented vertically with the base at the top. The base is shaded with horizontal lines. The glass part of the bulb is a large circle containing the word 'Zookeeper' in a bold, serif font, rotated 90 degrees counter-clockwise.

**Zookeeper**

A black and white line drawing of a lightbulb. The bulb is oriented vertically with the base at the top. The base is shaded with horizontal lines. The glass part of the bulb is a large circle containing the word 'Mechanic' in a bold, serif font, rotated 90 degrees counter-clockwise.

**Mechanic**

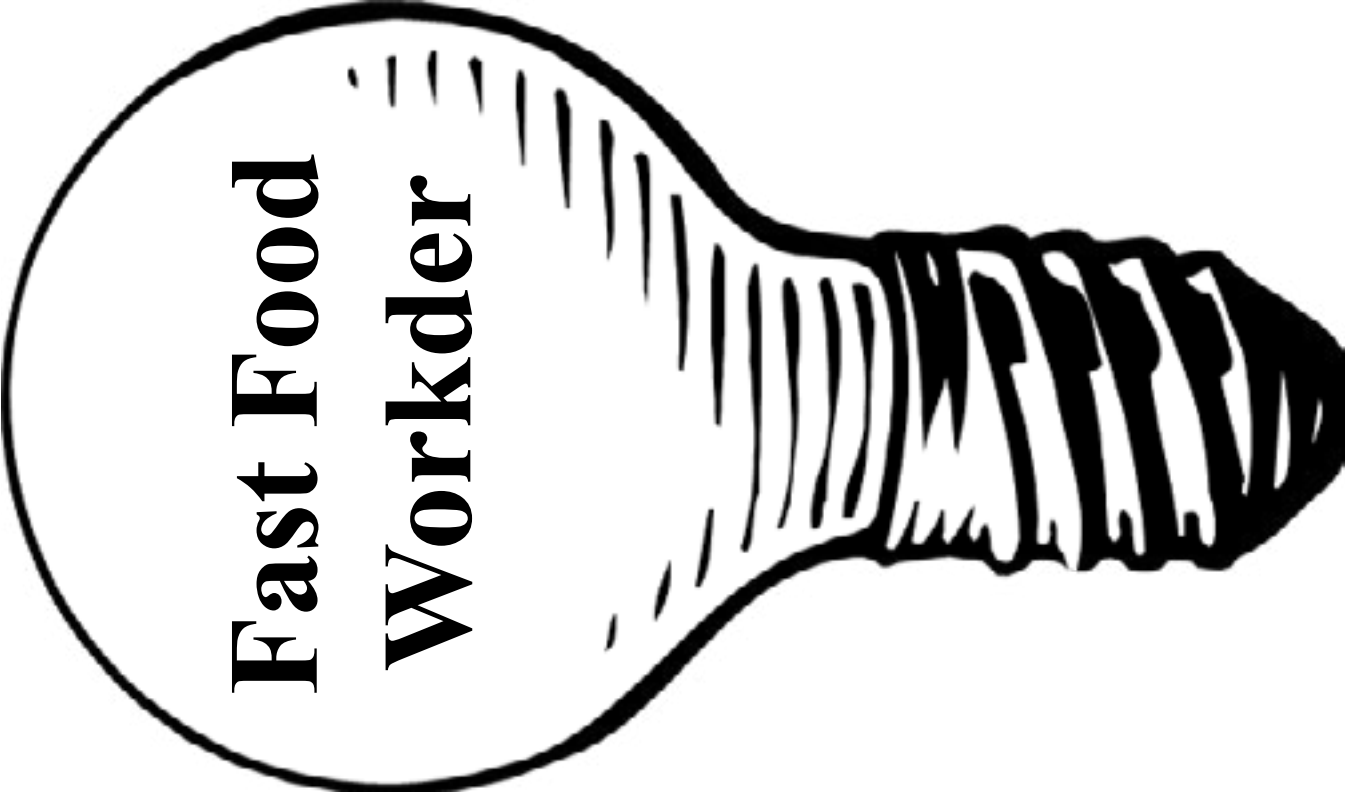




**Garbage  
Collector**



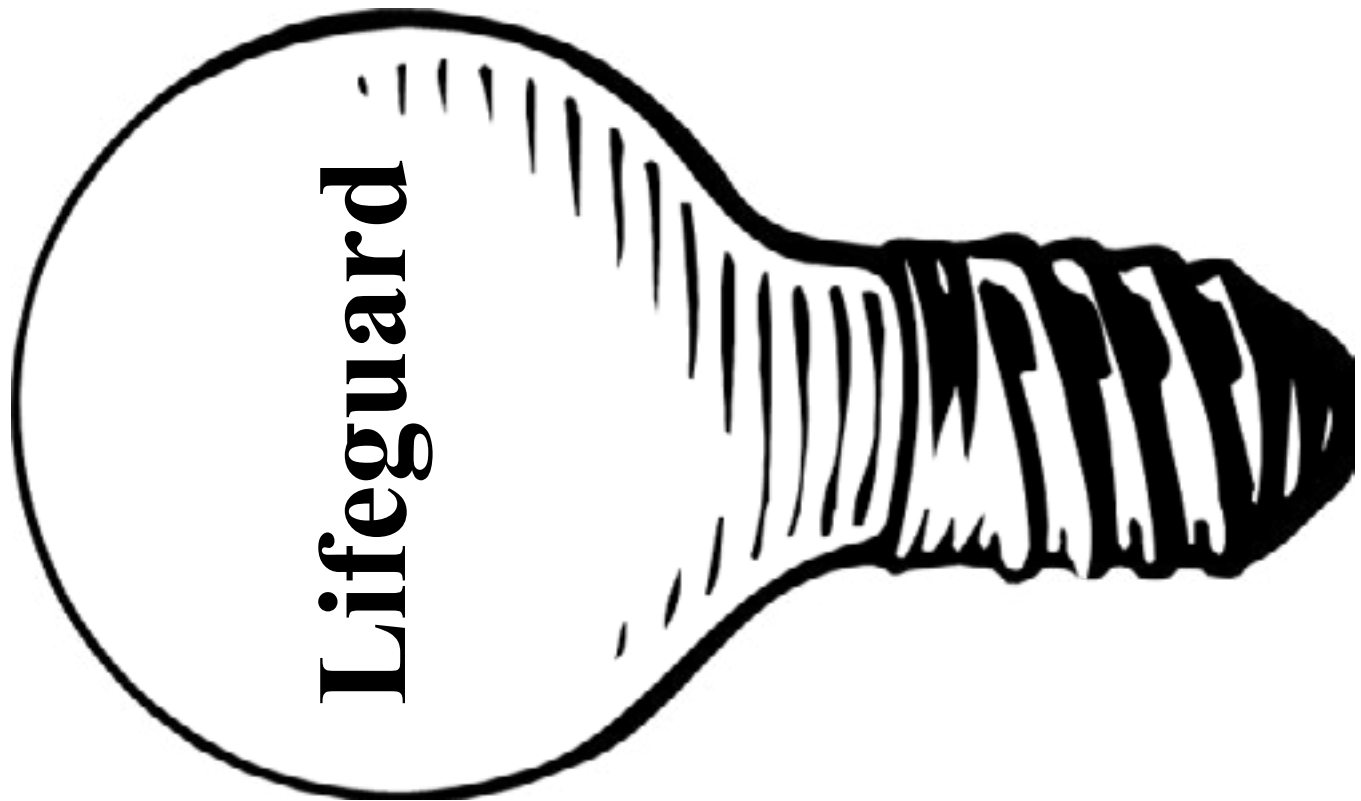
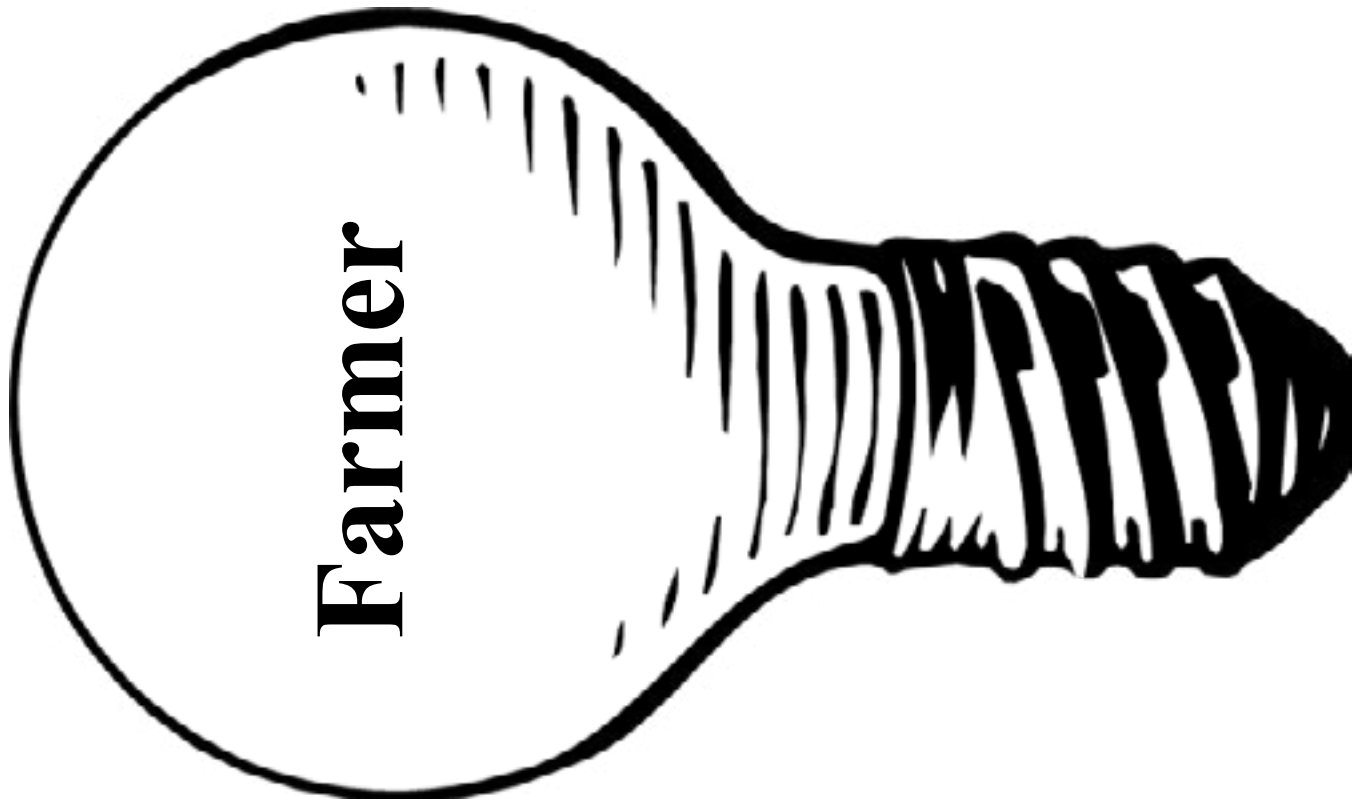
**Plumber**

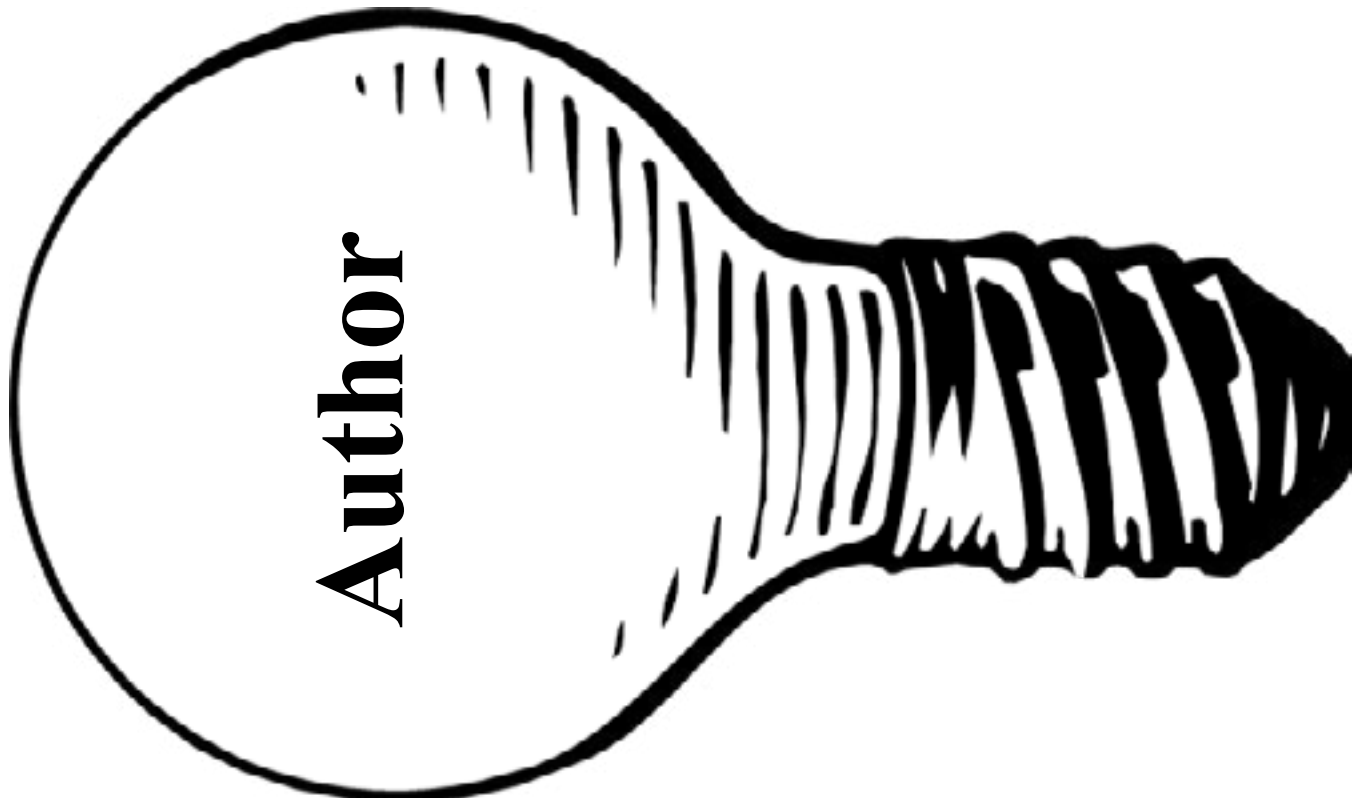
A black and white line drawing of a lightbulb. The bulb is oriented vertically with the base at the top. The base is shaded with horizontal lines. The glass part of the bulb is empty except for the text.

**Fast Food  
Worker**

A black and white line drawing of a lightbulb. The bulb is oriented vertically with the base at the top. The base is shaded with horizontal lines. The glass part of the bulb is empty except for the text.

**Landscaper**



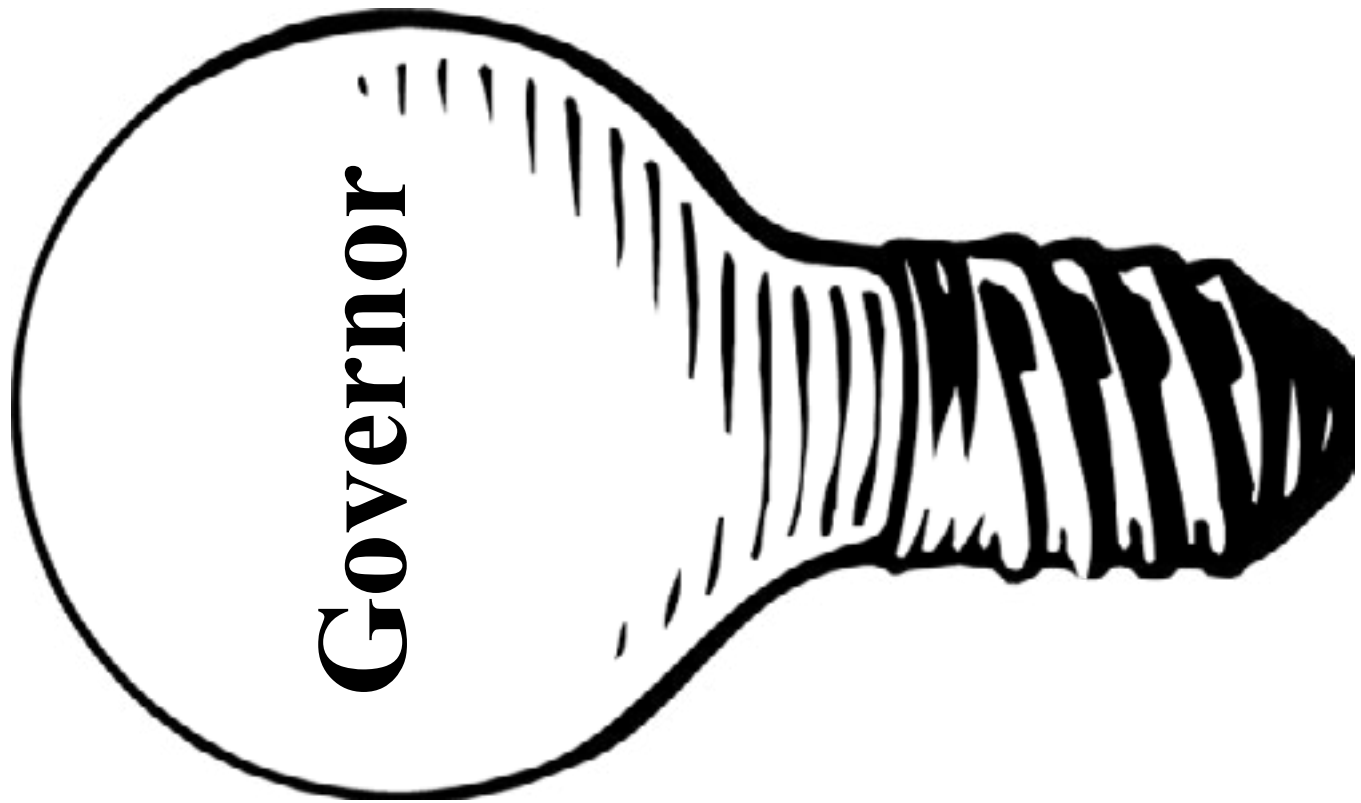
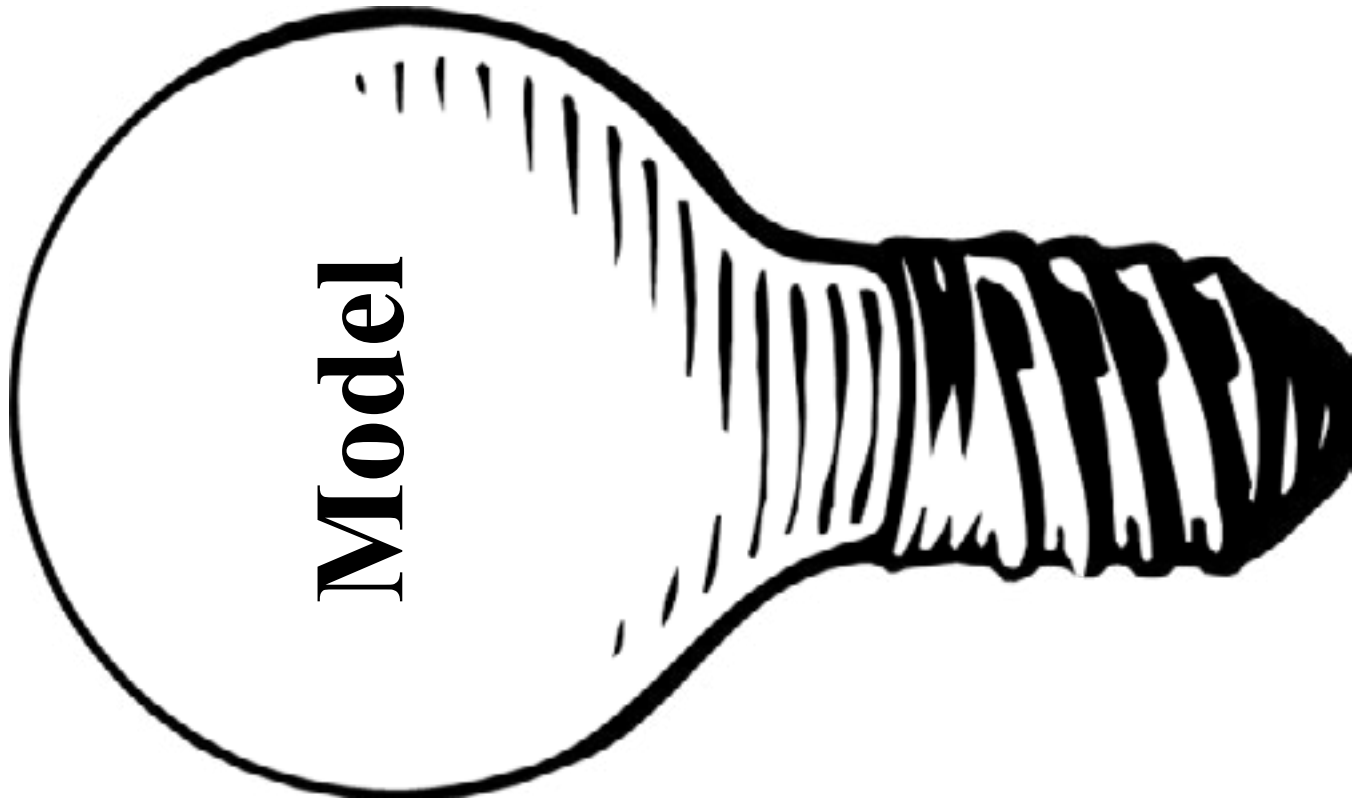


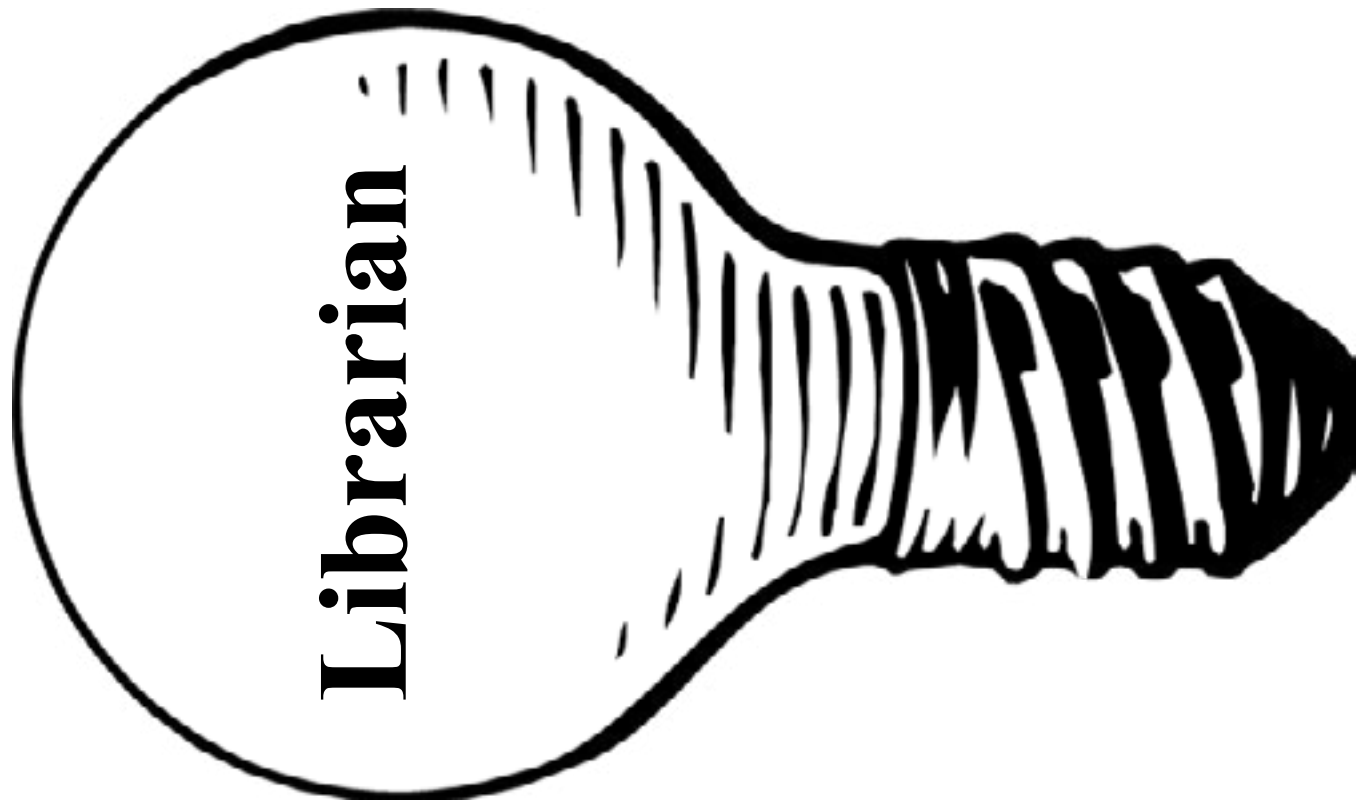
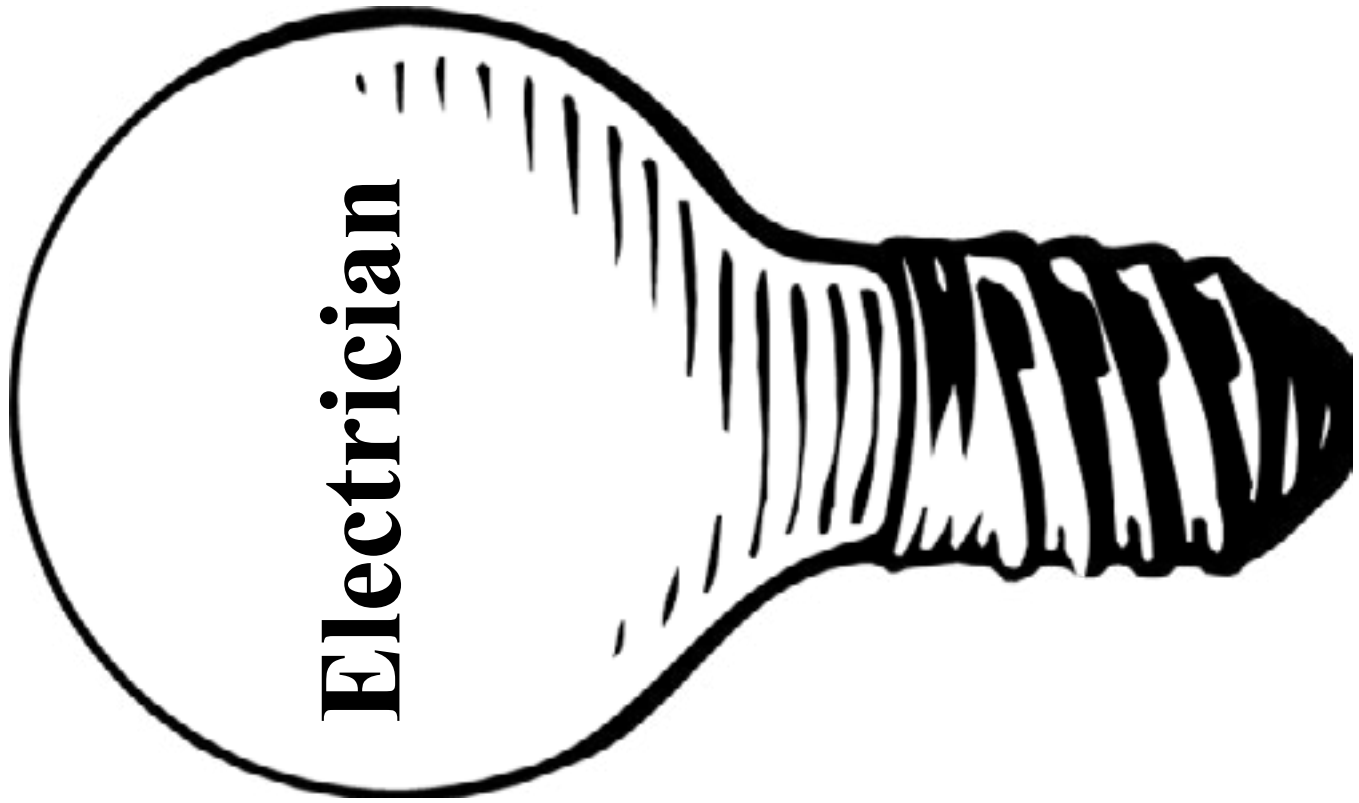
A black and white line drawing of a lightbulb. The bulb is oriented vertically with the base at the top. The base is shaded with horizontal lines. The glass part of the bulb is a large circle containing the word "Firefighter" in a bold, serif font, rotated 90 degrees counter-clockwise.

**Firefighter**

A black and white line drawing of a lightbulb, identical to the one above. It is oriented vertically with the base at the top. The base is shaded with horizontal lines. The glass part of the bulb is a large circle containing the word "Banker" in a bold, serif font, rotated 90 degrees counter-clockwise.

**Banker**







**Photographer**



**Principal**



A black and white line drawing of a lightbulb. The bulb is oriented vertically with the base at the top. The base is shaded with horizontal lines. The bulb itself is a simple circle with a few short lines inside to suggest light or reflection.

**Truck-  
driver**

A black and white line drawing of a lightbulb, identical to the one above. It is oriented vertically with the base at the top. The base is shaded with horizontal lines. The bulb itself is a simple circle with a few short lines inside to suggest light or reflection.

**Veterinarian**

Additional specialist cards intentionally left blank to suit teacher's purposes.

