

# Case Study: The Chilean Miners and Collective Interest in Teams

**SUBMITTED BY:** WGYP Summer Instructor

**SUBJECT(S):** Communication, Management

**GRADE LEVEL(S):** 9, 10, 11, 12

## ≡ OVERVIEW:

This lesson on communication and teamwork introduces students to the 33 Chilean miners who were trapped in an underground shelter for weeks. They will read about how they survived and what strategies they used to work as a team to survive in these hazardous conditions. It is a powerful case study with long-term lessons.

## ≡ NBEA STANDARD(S):

- Communication, III. Workplace Communication

## ≡ RELATED ARTICLES:

- [“Thinking Like an Innovator: The Power of Experimentation”](#)
- [“Teamwork with a Marshmallow on Top”](#)
- [“Mountain Guides Teach Us About Leadership”](#)
- [“A Teen Entrepreneur Ventures into Cyclist Safety and Product Sales”](#)

## Common Core Standard(s):

Reading Informational Text–RI.9-10.1.; RI.9-10.2.

## Speaking and Listening–SL.9-10.1.

### **Purpose:**

- After this lesson, students will understand the importance of developing collective interest in teams.

**Knowledge@Wharton Article:** [“Lessons on Leadership and Teamwork — from 700 Meters Below the Earth’s Surface”](#)

**Other Resources/Materials:** [CNN Special Report on Chilean Miners](#)

### **Activity:**

#### *Introduction (5 min)*

Ask students how many of them heard about the Chilean miners. Explain the details of the event:

- About a dozen or so of the 33 miners were trapped 2,300 feet below the earth in a Chilean mine.
- After more than two months, all 33 miners survived the ordeal.

Ask students to imagine it happening to them: how would they react to the situation?

Tell the students that the survival story has impressed many people, and endures as a relevant case study about teamwork and survival. How did 33 men come up with a strategy to survive and take care of each other while trapped in a mineshaft for 69 days?

#### *Group Reading (10 min)*

As a group, read the Knowledge@Wharton article together, having different students read paragraphs out loud in turns.

#### *Group Discussion (10 min)*

In groups, ask students to answer the following questions on butcher paper:

- What does “collective interest” mean?

- What are the three concepts that can be applied to the business world? (background and expertise of the team; having a good leader; creating a system that works for the task)
- Was there just one leader in the group or several?
- Why is integrity in decision-making important?

*Application of Material (10 min)* Ask students to brainstorm situations in their experiences of working in teams where they came across obstacles. Ask them to identify three specific examples. Once they do, as a group work through these examples to come up with solutions based on the reading. For example, if they were trying to plan a school dance, but no one replied to emails on time to set up a meeting or people fell through on their responsibilities, how can they avoid such a situation in the future by applying the concepts learned here? This is a great lesson plan to conduct with competitors in the WGYP Investment Competition half-way through the competition journey. They are working in teams; how can they apply what they learn from the Chilean miners to their experiences?

### **Tying It All Together:**

In this lesson, students learn about the amazing survival strategies adopted by the Chilean miners during their 69-day ordeal. The strategies were entirely dependent on working as a team.

5