



**CASE STUDY HANDOUT**

# BEESWEET LEMONADE

## Background

Mikaila Ulmer started her lemonade business, BeeSweet Lemonade (now known as Me & the Bees Lemonade), when she was just **four years old**. Inspired by her great-grandmother's flaxseed lemonade recipe, Mikaila decided to add honey to the mix after learning about the importance of bees and the threats they face. What started as a simple idea for a lemonade stand quickly grew into a mission-driven business that combined her love for lemonade with her passion for helping bees.

By the time she was nine years old, Mikaila's lemonade had become a hit at local events and fairs. Her commitment to saving bees captured the attention of her community and beyond. Mikaila's lemonade was being sold in local stores in Austin, Texas, and she was personally involved in every aspect of the business—from production to delivery. **Her mother would drive her to stores, and Mikaila would carry the lemonade and deliver invoices herself.** They produced the lemonade in a commercial kitchen just five minutes away from their home, making it a true family endeavor.



## The SharkTank Opportunity

Mikaila's passion and drive eventually attracted the attention of the African-American Chamber of Commerce in Austin, who informed her parents that "Shark Tank" was holding auditions. Knowing how impactful an investment could be for BeeSweet Lemonade, Mikaila decided to take the leap and audition for the show. She wanted to share her product and mission with the world and gain the mentorship needed to take her business to the next level.

In 2015, nine-year-old Mikaila was preparing to pitch her business on "Shark Tank." She knew this was a huge opportunity that could help her expand her reach, but she also understood that the sharks would ask tough questions. She spent weeks practicing her pitch, refining her message, and thinking through every aspect of her business—from its core mission to its potential for profitability. Mikaila needed to find the right balance in her pitch to show that BeeSweet Lemonade was not only a profitable venture but also one that could make a positive impact on the environment.

## The Actual Pitch

### **Mikaila entered the Shark Tank with confidence. She introduced herself and her business:**

*"Hello sharks, my name is Mikaila Ulmer, and I'm the owner of BeeSweet Lemonade. Today, I'm here to ask for \$60,000 for 10% equity in my company. The story of Me & the Bees started in 2004 when I was four and a half years old. My parents wanted to teach me a little bit about finances. They said either I could do some more chores around the house to earn extra allowance, or I could save up money by earning it somehow else. I thought I already had enough chores to do, so I wanted to find a different way to earn money."*

### **She explained how she got the idea for her lemonade business:**

*"Around that time, I learned that there were business fairs for kids in Austin, where I could sell a product for a day without needing a permit. I got a cookbook from my great granny Helen from the 1940s with her favorite flaxseed lemonade recipe, and I also got stung by two bees in one week, which was incredibly painful. My parents encouraged me to do research on the bees, and I ended up learning that they are incredibly important pollinators and that they are dying at an alarming rate. So, I decided I wanted my stand to help save the bees, and I ended up coming up with honey-sweetened flaxseed lemonade. I could also donate a portion of the proceeds to organizations helping save the bees."*

### **Before appearing on Shark Tank, BeeSweet Lemonade was still a local Austin brand. Mikaila shared:**

*"We were producing it in a commercial kitchen, and we had four flavors. We were delivering it ourselves, and I would walk into local businesses with the lemonade and invoices. But we were quickly outgrowing where the product was being sold, and we needed mentorship to take the company to the next level."*

### **She concluded her pitch with enthusiasm:**

*"Sharks, which one of you will be sweet and join my team to help me build my American dream?"*

## Your Task

**You're going to put yourself in her shoes and try to answer the following questions posed by the sharks**

- **How do you plan to scale production to meet growing demand?**
- **What are your current sales, and what is your projected growth?**
- **How do you balance running a business with school and other activities?**
- **What makes your product unique?**
- **What's your profit margin, and how will you improve it?**
- **What challenges have you faced in production and distribution?**

### **Remember**

Mikaila was nervous but determined. She had practiced her pitch countless times, but she was still thinking about how she would answer the questions the sharks might throw her way. How could she communicate her passion for bees while convincing the sharks that BeeSweet Lemonade had the potential to grow nationally?

She also had to think about how to justify her request for \$60,000 for 10% equity in her company. She wanted the sharks to see her business as more than just a lemonade stand but as a product that could truly make a difference.

**Go to the website [meandthebees.com](http://meandthebees.com) to learn more**



# Teacher Guide (Do Not Give Students)

## Setting Up The Class



**55 Minutes**

**OBJECTIVE**

- Help students put themselves in Mikaila's shoes and prepare for a high-stakes pitch.
- Encourage students to think critically about how to present a mission-driven business to investors.
- Develop strategies for anticipating challenging questions and formulating persuasive answers.

**FACILITATING THE DEBATE**

**Step 1: Introduction 10 MINS**

Introduce the case study by sharing Mikaila's story, emphasizing her passion for bees, her great-grandmother's recipe, and how BeeSweet Lemonade grew from a simple idea into a locally distributed product.

Explain that the class will be taking on the role of helping Mikaila prepare for her Shark Tank pitch.

**Ask** students: *"What are the key elements of a successful pitch?"*

**Step 2: Exploration 20 MINS**

Divide the students in groups of 3-4. Have them read the case study. Then **ask** them to brainstorm how Mikaila should present her pitch and prepare answers for questions the sharks might ask. (Listed at the bottom of page 2 of the case study)

**Step 3: SharkTank Simulation 15 MINS**

- Have students role-play as Mikaila and the sharks. One student can present the pitch while others act as the sharks asking the anticipated questions.
- Encourage students to think like investors: What would they need to hear to feel confident in investing in BeeSweet Lemonade?
- Ask students to be constructive but challenging, pushing the presenter to provide thorough and persuasive answers.

**Step 4: Reflection 10 MINS**

After the pitch simulation, ask students to reflect on the following questions:

- *What were the strongest points in Mikaila's pitch?*
- *What were the biggest challenges she faced during the Q&A?*
- *How does being an entrepreneur require balancing passion with practical business needs?*
- *What specific techniques did Mikaila use to make her pitch more compelling, and how do they align with what it means to be an entrepreneur?*

**NOTES**

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## The Actual Outcome – What Happened?!

Mikaila secured an investment of **\$60,000 from Daymond John** in exchange for **25% equity**. This partnership allowed her to grow BeeSweet Lemonade significantly, with her product eventually reaching over **1,500 stores across 40 states**.

Mikaila spent time carefully crafting her responses. For example, she knew that scaling production was going to be a major hurdle, so she had researched potential partnerships with larger commercial kitchens and suppliers who shared her commitment to sustainability. She also prepared to talk about her profit margins and how her product’s uniqueness—honey-sweetened with a focus on saving bees—set her apart from competitors.

When it came to balancing school and running a business, Mikaila had a compelling story. She was able to share her experiences of doing homework in the car while her mother drove her to deliveries, and how she had learned to manage her time effectively. This narrative not only demonstrated her commitment but also highlighted her resilience and ability to overcome challenges.

### Today (The added focus on sustainability)

- From our humble beginnings, we shared our profits with organizations helping to save the bees, and in 2016, we started our very own non-profit foundation
- In 2020, Mikaila wrote a book ***Bee Fearless: Dream Like a Kid*** so she could share our story even further, with the hope of inspiring the next generation of entrepreneurs and changemakers.
- Me & the Bees Lemonade, a small business leader in sustainable beverage production and a steadfast advocate for pollinators, is celebrating its 15th anniversary with a significant packaging upgrade. The company is transitioning from glass bottles to 100% recyclable 12-ounce aluminum sleek cans for its line of all-natural lemonades.



### CONNECTION TO THE MODULE

Mikaila’s story highlights the importance of being able to effectively communicate both the mission and the business potential of an idea. For young entrepreneurs, it is crucial to understand how to present passion and mission as valuable assets while addressing the practical aspects of scaling a business. Like the challenges discussed in the module, Mikaila had to balance her values with the demands of growth and convince others of her vision.

Her journey also underscores the **value of preparation**. Mikaila’s success in securing an investment was not just due to her passion for saving bees—**it was also the result of countless hours spent practicing her pitch, understanding her business inside and out, and anticipating the questions that investors would ask**. This kind of preparation is what makes the difference between a good pitch and a great one.



### PERSONALIZATION OPTION

Ask students to write a 250-word reflection on the following prompt:

**Think about an incident in your life that makes you passionate enough to build a business around it. What would it be? What problem would you be solving?**

### NOTES



### CASE FACT

Me and The Bees has national distribution in all 50 US states.

# Assessment + Rubric

## INSTRUCTIONS

When facilitating this Pixar case study debate, the teacher's role is crucial in guiding students toward a deeper understanding of the concepts involved, ensuring thoughtful participation, and pushing them to critically analyze the decision-making process.

Criteria	Expert	Proficient	Developing
<b>Understanding of Pitch Elements</b>	Demonstrates deep understanding of the trade-offs and consequences.	Shows good understanding, but lacks depth in exploring both sides.	Limited understanding of key pitch elements.
<b>Solution Quality</b>	Actively participates with strong evidence and critical analysis of both films.	Participates with some evidence but lacks depth.	Solutions are basic and lack detailed support.
<b>Reflection Quality</b>	Insightful reflection connecting personal experience with case lessons.	Reflection shows some thought but lacks depth.	Basic reflection without strong connection to the case.

## TIPS ON FACILITATION

- **Prompt with “what if” scenarios:** Ask questions like, “What if Mikaila decided to focus only on maximizing profit? How would that affect her mission?” to encourage critical thinking.
- **Encourage using quantitative data:** Remind students to consider aspects like operational costs, profit margins, and growth projections to support their arguments.
- **Monitor group dynamics:** Ensure quieter students have a chance to contribute and challenge dominant voices to allow for diverse ideas.
- **Emphasize Real-World Application:** Encourage students to think about how the lessons from Mikaila's story apply to their own lives, whether they are considering entrepreneurship or just want to become better at presenting their ideas.