

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – Alexander Who Used to Be Rich Last Sunday

1. What is opportunity cost? **Opportunity Cost:** what you give up when you decide to do or buy something
2. Ask students to share stories from their own lives in which they gave up something to get something else, or to save for something else that they want more. Have them identify their opportunity costs. Ask students why they think it is hard to save money. Encourage students to share ideas about how to save money. Jot their ideas on chart paper.
3. Show students the cover of *Alexander, Who Used to Be Rich Last Sunday*. Read the title and author's name aloud. Tell students that this is a story about a little boy named Alexander who receives \$1.00 from his grandparents. Instead of saving his money for something he really wants, he ends up spending it on silly things. Explain that Alexander is the youngest of three, and unlike his older brothers, he doesn't understand about saving his money. Ask students if they have younger siblings like Alexander. Or, were they like Alexander when they were younger.
4. I wonder how Alexander felt about his use of money? I wonder what he will do the next time he gets money? Has anything like this ever happened to you?
5. What were some ways that Alexander handled his money?
6. What things or circumstances caused the character to part with his money?
7. What would you have done with the money?

- Based on Alexander's behavior throughout the story, why do you think his brothers have more money than him at the beginning of the story? (*Alexander is not good at saving money.*)
- Why do you think Alexander has a more difficult time saving money than his brothers? (*He's younger and doesn't know better yet.*)
- What does Alexander's father tell him he should do with his dollar? (*save it for college*) What does Anthony tell him to do with it? (*buy a new face*) What does Nicky tell him to do? (*bury it in a garden and grow a dollar tree*) What does his mother suggest? (*save it to buy a walkie-talkie*). Whose ideas are serious? (*mother's and father's*)
- Does Alexander follow any of the advice he's received? (*no*) How does he spend his money instead?
- What does Alexander give up, or what are his opportunity costs, for spending his money on all the silly things? (*walkie talkie, college tuition*)
- What are some of the ways Alexander tries to earn back his lost money? (*selling his chewed gum, renting toys, trying to make a tooth fall out, looking for loose change, returning bottles*)
- What are some other, more successful ways Alexander could earn money? (*doing chores, having a bake sale or lemonade stand*)
- If you could give Alexander advice, what would you tell him? (*answer will vary, but should be something about saving some of the money he received*)

Activities

Math: In a similar vein to "Who has the most Expensive Name?" is *The \$1.00 Word Riddle Book* by Marilyn Burns (Cuisenaire Co. of America, ISBN 0-941355-02-0) which gives riddles that have answers that equal \$1.00 using the A = 1¢, B = 2¢, C = 3¢,... Z = 26¢ pattern.

Another fun math strategy is math bingo. Each student has a bingo card with familiar math terms in each square (for example, double, triple, word story, fact family, data, etc.). The teacher has an envelope from which she draws a card. On this card is a description of one of the familiar math words. As she reads it the students must decide which word it is describing and cover it with a chip. The rest of the rules are just like Bingo. The students get so excited and when someone wins they all check the answers. This is a really neat way to help students remember math vocabulary.

Do the Math

Students solve the real-life math problems that appear throughout the book. Provide students with play money. Then, re-read the story to them, or have them read the story on their own. Using the play money, have students solve the following problems:

- How much money does Anthony start out with? (\$3.38) How much money does Nicholas start out with? (\$2.38) How much money does Alexander start out with? (\$0)
- How much does Alexander have after his grandparent's give him a dollar? (\$1.00)
- How much does each piece of gum cost? (\$0.05)
- How much does Alexander have after he buys the gum? (\$0.85); after he loses a bet to his mother? (\$0.70); after he rents Eddie's snake? (\$0.58); after his father fines him for saying naughty words (\$0.48); after flushing pennies down the toilet and dropping a nickel through a crack? (\$0.40); after paying for Anthony's chocolate bar? (\$0.29); after pennies disappear in Nick's trick (\$0.25); after paying his father for kicking his brother? (\$0.20); after buying things at a garage sale (\$0.00).

Set Up Shop

Students set up a shop and role play the parts of customer and shopkeeper, making economic decisions along the way. Have them draw pictures or use manipulatives for the items they are selling in the store. Allow them to determine prices and tag each item. Then give all students the opportunity to be a customer and the shopkeeper. Provide customers with a limited amount of play money to spend in the store. They will need to budget their money so that they can afford all they need to buy. Using play money too, the shopkeepers sharpen their math skills as they make change for the customers.