

Growing Minds in Language Arts #3

Lessons for Stimulating Thinking

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ELE90/106304

ISBN: 978-0-7877-2059-9

Release Date 2015

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Dayton, OH 45401-0802
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The pages in this packet were originally published in
Growing Minds, (ELE90/1063).

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Lorenz Educational Press
Milliken Publishing Company
Teaching and Learning Company
Show What You Know® Publishing
LEP interactive

Teacher's Guide For "The Compulsive Buyer"

ABOUT THE ACTIVITY

"The Compulsive Buyer," like many of the activities in this book, is better suited to some students than others. One of the desired outcomes of each of the activities is to have your students engage in some form of critical or creative thinking. If your group is not the kind that enjoys trying to think of uses for discarded objects, you might hold it for an opportune occasion. You will be the best judge of when to introduce the activity.

Level 1: Considering how to deal with a wide variety of inherited items

The warm-up activity of "The Compulsive Buyer" involves the student in a situation that has confounded many people. If you have ever been bequeathed an old and nearly worthless piano or a box of rusty fishing gear, you know how difficult a position such as the one posed in this activity can be. Accordingly, it requires the student to do some practical thinking about how he or she might benefit from this peculiar inheritance. The student will have many factors to take into consideration as he or she thinks about what use can be made of these new possessions. Can she or he use them? If so, how much will it cost to repair the objects or to make them complete? Will the student want to try to sell some of the items? Will she or he have to get rid of some of them? If so, will he or she have to pay to have them hauled away?

While this activity is not meant to be a lesson in economics or in junk dealing, practical problems of the sort sketched in "The Compulsive Buyer" are likely to release the imaginations of many students.

Level 2: Considering the value of garage/yard sales

After trying to figure out what to do with the various items, your students are asked to think about garage/yard sales. They are now seen as ways to keep our landfills from overflowing. You might mention that "What is one man's junk is another man's treasure."

Level 3: Writing a character sketch about a colorful person

If your students are enthusiastic about the idea of writing about a colorful person they have known, it could well be that some very interesting sketches will result. Those character sketches which have special merit might be accepted for publication in the school newspaper or magazine. Others can be read aloud or displayed on the bulletin board. You will have a chance to point out the elements (phrasing, diction, organization, et al.) which contribute to the success of a short piece of this kind when you discuss the sketches with the class and with individual students. If you have a class discussion about the sketches, ask your students to talk about what makes a personality interesting. Much of what your students offer should be of genuine benefit to them in subsequent writing assignments.

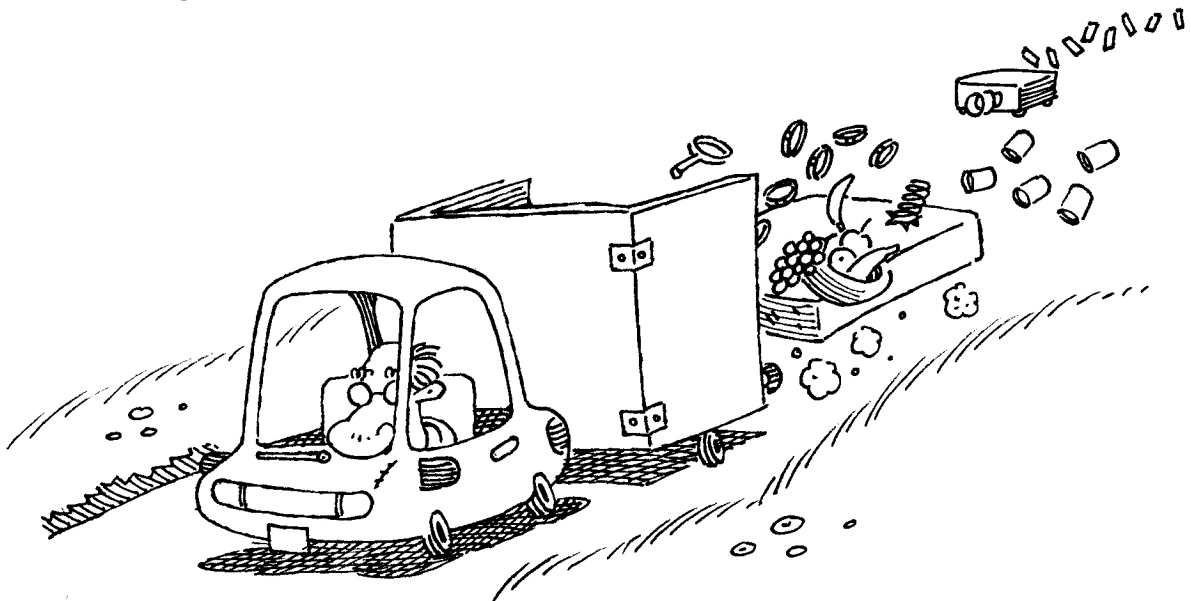
Targeted Learner Outcomes: The student will:

- consider how to deal with a wide assortment of inherited items
- give an opinion on garage/yard sales
- write a character sketch

The Compulsive Buyer

A. Suppose your aunt died a few months ago. When her will was read, you were informed that she had left everything to you. In this case, everything does not mean money. It means 14 cats and a houseful of assorted objects. She had always rented her house (including its furnishings and appliances), and so you are required to go over and remove your new belongings. You know that your aunt was a compulsive buyer and that she continually bought things she didn't need, and so you are both curious and apprehensive about what you will find. When you get to the house, this is what you find:

- 1 spray gun (without paint)
- 1 small kiln for making pottery
- 32 pounds of pottery clay
- 8 cat collars
- 19 cases of cat food
- 1 mechanical horse
- 1 set of cassettes for learning to speak Arabic
- 1 pearl-handled magnifying glass
- 6 bowls of artificial fruit
- 1 slide projector (with 73 pictures)
- 1 guitar bought at a clearance sale at a music store
- 27 player piano rolls (but no player piano)
- 5 pewter candelabras
- 1 loom (with a broken shuttle)
- 6 brass candle snuffers
- 1 innerspring mattress
- 1 18" marble bust of Chester A. Arthur
- 1 broken beach umbrella
- 1 pair of water wings



What can you do with all of these objects that are now your possessions? Will you be able to use all of them? Will you have to throw any away? Outline your plans in the space below.

B. Many people are enthusiastic buyers of other people's castoffs. Because our landfills are overflowing, there is a belief now that garage/yard sales are good things. Instead of unwanted items being discarded in a landfill, they can be used and appreciated by people who have a need for the items or who collect them. What is your opinion of garage or yard sales?

C. Do you know any unusual people? When all is said and done, although they may frustrate or bewilder us, these people add a great deal of color and excitement to our lives. Of all the people you have known, who is your favorite? Write a description of this person in the space below, pointing out why he or she is unusual and/or lovable?
