

The Challenge

4th Grade Fiction

Public Domain Text; Questions by Center for Urban Education

Mrs. Bertram loved her son, but she worried about him. He was always losing things, and he did not take care of his toys or clothes. She wanted him to be more careful. She wanted him to be responsible.

She was reading a book one morning, or at least she was trying to. It was not easy to do so because Robert was in the hall playing with his drum. Suddenly the drumming stopped and Robert rushed into the room crying.

"I broke it! I broke it," he sobbed.

"Your drum?" asked his mother. "How did you do that?"

"I was beating it with the knives and--"

"With the knives!" exclaimed his mother. "Where were your drumsticks?"

"I--I--don't know," sobbed Roger.

"Have you lost them?" said Mrs. Bertram. She needed no words to know the answer. Robert's manner was quite enough. "You know, Robert, what I said would happen the next time you lost anything."

"Yes," said Robert, "You said I must give away all my toys to some little boys who would know how to take care of them."

"Yes," said his mother. "I see you remember. I will send them all to the children's hospital tonight."

"But, mama," said Robert, "if I don't have any toys to take care of, how can I learn to take care of them?"

Mrs. Bertram had to turn away so that Robert would not see her smile. "I will have to think of some other way to teach you to be careful. I will think of something, and I will tell you what to do tonight."

That night, she told him, "I have decided that there is another way you can show how careful you are. I want you to do the laundry every week for two months."

Robert looked astonished. "Boys don't wash clothes," he said.

"Sometimes," said his mother, smilingly. "Now if you do this every day for two months, I will know you have become more responsible. Being careful is part of growing up. It means you are responsible, and it means people can trust you. This is a challenge. It is something to do that is not easy. It will help everyone in the family."

The next week Robert began his work. At first, he disliked it very much. But after a while he changed his mind. He wanted to show his mother he was responsible. He not only washed the clothes, but he also folded them neatly. He kept his toys in a box where he could find them. He was careful with everything.

The day when his two months would be up was Christmas Day. Imagine Roger's delight when he saw he had a new coat, a video game and a new drum and drumsticks. On them was a note: "For Robert, who is very responsible." He felt proud.

Infer and Support the Main Idea – Fiction

Questions developed by Center for Urban Education for use by Chicago Public Schools 2008-2009.

Choose the best answer for each question.

1. What is the main idea of the first paragraph?

- a. Robert's mother loves him.
- b. Robert loses things.
- c. Robert's mother wants him to change.
- d. Robert breaks things.

3. What is the main idea of the passage?

- a. You should be careful with toys.
- b. Children need to help their family.
- c. Robert is careless.
- d. It is important to be responsible.

2. What is the main idea of the last paragraph?

- a. Robert has met the challenge.
- b. Robert needs to change.
- c. Robert has more toys.
- d. Robert has new clothes.

4. What is another good title for the story?

- a. Responsible Robert
- b. Helping My Family
- c. Robert Gets New Toys and Clothes
- d. Robert's Family Needs Him

5. *Write your own answer to this question. Robert learns a lesson in the story. What is the lesson he learns?*

TEACHER NOTES: Develop Students' Skills: Exercise Thinking

These questions have not been validated, so decisions about student's achievement should not be made based on their responses. They are intended to exercise skills. Recommended activities include: students work in pairs to choose the best response; give students the questions without the responses so they generate their own answers; students make up additional questions; students make up questions like these for another passage.

Answers: *You can remove this answer key and then give it to students and ask them to figure out the basis for the correct response.*

Item	1	2	3	4
Answer	c	a	d	a

Question 5 is open-ended. Here is a suggested response.

Answers should include that he learns how important it is to be careful or responsible.