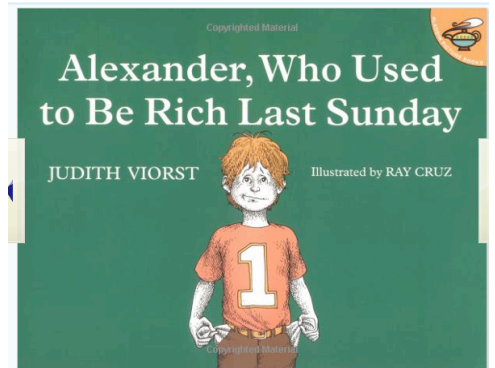


Alexander, Who Used to Be Rich Last Sunday

By Judith Viorst Illustrated by Ray Cruz



Where does money go? Last Sunday, Alexander's Grandma Betty and Grandpa Louie gave him a dollar. And he was rich. There were so many things he could do with all of that money. Like buy as much gum as he wanted, or even buy a walkie-talkie, if he kept saving. But he was rich last Sunday. Well, let's see, there was bubble gum, and then bets with Anthony and Nicholas (that Alexander lost). Now Alexander plunges his hands in his pockets and finds only . . . bus tokens. It's not fair. His brother, Anthony, has two dollars, three quarters, one dime, seven nickels and eighteen pennies. His other brother, Nicholas, seems to have even more. Alexander even tries to make some money back.

Children love the persistent but mistake-prone Alexander who wants so badly to be rich, VERY rich. Enjoy the detailed descriptions of how Alexander spends his money and attempts to make more money. He just can't get it right, but his choices are sure to make you smile. Look for familiar situations to discuss in this story of emotional ups and downs. Most importantly, children recognize the power to make good or bad choices with money. This is a perfect opportunity to introduce the concepts of spending, saving, and donating.

This book has been described as a "tongue-in-cheek introduction to money and finance."

Before Reading:

- ASK: How much money would you need to feel rich? Do you like to feel rich? If so, why?
- SHOW: Look through the book at the pictures of Alexander. Pay attention to his face and the range of feelings he goes through. Look at the cover and talk about what kind of face he is making and what words might go along with that face.
- CONNECT: It may be fun to try to recreate some of those facial expressions. (Can you make your own face look that way?)

During Reading:

- ASK: Why does the boys' mom say it isn't nice to say "we like money."
- SHOW: Look carefully at the details in the pictures as you read. Talk about what is happening in the background.
- CONNECT: Name some purchases you have made that seem kind of silly now.

After Reading:

- ASK: For what toy does Alexander really want to save his money (a walkie-talkie)? Why can't he save it if it is important to him?

- **SHOW:** Look at the pictures of Alexander after he spends money. Is he pleased with the ways he spends his money?
- **CONNECT:** How difficult is it for you to save money? Talk about your savings plan. How much do you have and for what are you saving? Is it difficult to save money? Why or why not?

Activities:

- Define budget. Discuss the importance of having a plan in order to make sure you have the money you need for fun purchases, bills, saving for big purchases, and donating.
- Making choices and living with your choices is an important lesson related to money. Play a game that uses the language of making choices. Play this game with students. Start a sentence with "Would you rather . . ." The rule is that the child has to choose one of the options with the understanding that he or she can't have both or neither, and then ask why he or she made that choice. For example, would you rather have a lion or a bear for a pet? Would you rather play a board game or an outdoor game? Make up silly choices and realistic ones.
- Talk about the meaning of the words spend, save, and donate. Make sure your students understand that these are the choices for how to use money. Many children set aside half of their allowance for savings in the bank. This money can be saved for larger purchases later. Some people set aside a small part of their allowance for donating. They choose a way to help others or the environment. Talk about the children's allowance or other sources of money (such as birthday gifts). Help your students make a plan for how to split allowance into the three categories. (For example, I'll put 50% in savings at the bank, 10% in a donation jar, and 40% in my piggy bank or wallet for spending as I choose.)
- Fold a large piece of paper into three parts. Unfold the paper and label the sections with the following headers: Spend, Save, and Donate. Ask your students to make a plan for how to use his or her money in these categories. He or she may draw pictures and/or write the things he or she would like to buy. For example, in the spend section, he or she may draw pencils, a stuffed animal, or playing cards. In the save section, he or she may draw a walkie-talkie or a special doll. In the donate section, she or he may draw a whale or a family eating at a soup kitchen.
- Reread the parts of the story where Alexander spends (or loses) money and make a list of where the money went. Use real money (dimes, nickels and pennies) to count out his losses from one dollar to nothing.
- Use real money to figure out how much money Alexander's brothers have at the beginning of the story. Can you figure out how much of their money came from Alexander?