






Parent reading guide for "The Rag Coat" by Lauren Mills

 Ages 6-9



Welcome

This guide will help you teach your child money management skills while reading “The Rag Coat” by Lauren Mills. It will do this by:

-  Helping you explain the key ideas covered in the book, and then providing you with signs your child understands the key ideas and can use them in daily life.
-  Giving you things to think about before reading the book with your child. These can help you spot key points in the book or spark ideas to discuss later.
-  Helping you prepare for an enjoyable reading time with your child.
-  Providing questions to talk about with your child.
-  Suggesting activities that help your child put ideas and lessons into action.

The story

After Minna's father dies, her neighbors make her a coat so she can go to school in cold weather. Minna chose the scraps of fabric for her coat because of the special stories behind each scrap. She is surprised by the reaction of her new classmates to the coat.



Key ideas

By the time you finish this discussion guide, your child will be able to **point to examples** of these key ideas in the book you read and **discuss real-life examples, too**. Use these definitions to explain the ideas. We've also included ways children can show they are ready to use them in their daily lives.

1. Solving problems

When problems come up, we try to deal with them. Solving problems means finding what works best for us and taking action to make things better.

How kids show it: They can describe problems and come up with a few ideas to make things better.

2. Sharing and borrowing

There are two kinds of sharing: Something shared that does not have to be returned or paid for is a gift. Something borrowed or lent must be returned.

How kids show it: They can explain the difference between lending and giving something away.

3. Staying true to yourself

Sometimes we might feel left out if we don't have what other people have. Knowing what's important to you and not comparing yourself to others can help you feel good about your decisions.

How kids show it: They can name one special thing they like about themselves and one thing that makes each family member special too. (Ages 7+) They can discuss why it's okay that different people use their money for different things.

Something to think about

First, read the book yourself and think about these ideas:

- Papa dies from a coal mine illness, and many neighbors visit the family with food. These friends give help and support during the story.
- The family did not own very much. Papa reminded Minna, his daughter, “People only need people, and nothing else.”
- Minna thought it was more important for her to stay at home and help her mother than to go to school. Papa told her that she needed to learn things from books at school that she could not learn at home.
- Minna didn’t want to start school because she wouldn’t be able to go when it got cold, so Mama and neighbor women made a patchwork coat for her. Minna chose fabric scraps with good stories and her coat was lined with her father’s coat.
- Minna’s parents helped her to think about what was most important to her and the family, which was for her to attend school and to value people over things.

Before you read

Read the book first yourself. Knowing the story will help you know what comes next. It is important to ask your child questions about the story as you read. Ask what might happen next in the story.

- Choose a quiet time for stories and make it part of your daily routine.
- Find a cozy, quiet place to read.
- Make sure your child can see the pictures.
- Talk about the pictures and characters in the book.
- Read with expression in your voice. Give each character in the story his or her own voice.
- Keep the story time short enough to leave them wanting more.
- Look for ways during the day to bring up the messages in the story.
- Continue to read aloud together even if your child can read alone.



Something to talk about

Before you begin to read the story with your child, look at the cover of the book together. Ask what the story might be about.

As you read the story with your child, talk about these ideas:

- In this story, friends and neighbors work together to help each other. How did they help Minna's family after her father died? Is there a time when someone helped you? What things have you done to help a friend or family member?
- The women know how to sew and they make quilts to earn money for their needs. They also share their fabric and like to work together. What skills do you have?
- This story is set in the past. How did Minna get to school? What do you notice about her school and classroom?
- Children at school have a sharing time. What kinds of things did the other kids bring to school? What would you bring to school for sharing time?
- Minna finally gets her winter coat and wears it to school. What do her classmates think about her coat? How does Minna feel at first?
- Minna's father tells her, "All people need is each other." How did that help Minna when she wore her coat at school?

- Minna tells her classmates about her coat and the stories their mothers shared about each scrap of fabric. Do you have a special story behind something you have?
- At the end of the story, Minna tells her friends, “Friends share.” What’s something that you have shared with your friends?
- Talk about the needs and the wants in this story. After looking at the pictures and hearing the story, what needs were the same back then as now? What needs are different now? What do you need to go to school?



Something to do

Planning ahead

Ages 6+

In this story, Minna couldn't afford a new coat. She and her mother planned ahead to make a winter coat before it got cold. For this activity, think about an event that will be coming up soon for your child or your family. It could be starting school in fall, a family vacation in summer, or planning for a holiday your family celebrates. First, make a list with your child of what is needed for this event, such as clothes or supplies or gifts. When you have a list, think about all the different ways you could get what you need or want for this event - new, used, handmade, or borrowed.

If you need some new clothes, for example, compare the cost of new name brand clothing, new clothing at a discount store, and used clothing. What are the differences? You might also be able to sell your old clothes or toys at a rummage sale or thrift store, and use the money for newer clothes. Talk about how you can save money and reuse or recycle items you don't use anymore.

Sharing with others

Ages 5+

Like Minna's family, there may be families in your school or neighborhood who have a need. Talk to your child about what needs families might have and how you might be able to help them.

What does your family love to do that could help someone else? Maybe your family likes to garden, make a meal, babysit, shovel snow, or collect cans. Make a list of your talents as a family and plan to share your skills with others.

As a family, talk about how it felt to share with others. What did you learn about yourself and other people? Would you like to do this or something different to share in the future?

About this guide

The Money as You Grow Book Club is a research-based program designed to help parents, caregivers, and others teach children ages 4 through 10 money skills through reading, activities, and play.

The Money as You Grow Book Club is an updated version of the University of Nevada Extension's Money on the Bookshelf program. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), The University of Wisconsin-Madison Center for Financial Security, and the University of Wisconsin-Extension Family Living Programs have worked together to expand the program and make it available to libraries, educators, and parents nationally.

The CFPB is an independent federal agency. We write and enforce rules that keep banks and other financial companies operating fairly. We also help educate and empower consumers. For more about tools and resources for parents, visit consumerfinance.gov/MoneyAsYouGrow.

The Center for Financial Security is a research center that seeks to help the public build financial knowledge and skills, increase access to financial services and increase the financial security of families. The University of Wisconsin-Extension is part of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture's (NIFA) Cooperative Extension System, which brings vital, practical information to agricultural producers, small business owners, consumers, families, and young people.

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