

From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler

by Bill Peet

Lesson plan by E. L. Konigsburg

Source: www.moneymanagement.org

Printed from

www.choicebank.com

Financial Literacy Library

Description:

In this lesson based on *From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*, students use the experiences of Claudia and Jamie to learn about income, expenses, and the budget process. The book follows the adventures of two runaway children hiding out in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. Students complete an activity emphasizing the need for income and the importance of planning and budgets. Students also have an opportunity to update some of the 1967 prices used in the book. The assessment activity has students sort through expenses and income sources to construct their own weekly budget.

Personal Finance Concepts:

Wants, income expense/spending, budget, opportunity cost

Related Subject Areas:

Language arts (reading), social studies

Instructional Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Distinguish between income and expenses.
- Define a budget as a plan for how to use income.
- Appreciate how the use of a budget can help people make careful spending decisions.

Time Required:

Ten to fifteen class periods

Materials Required:

- Copy of *From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* for each student
- Copy of Activities 1 - 3 for each student
- Reference materials for current price information (newspapers, menus, Internet)

Procedure:

1. Introduce *From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* by reading the back of the book (paperback version) aloud to the class. Remind students that the book is fiction and that running away is not the way to deal with problems or find adventure. Explain that leaving home alone is very dangerous for children, but the

adventure makes a good story.

2. Write "want" on the board. Define **want** as a desire that can be satisfied by consuming a good or service. For example, if you are thirsty, you may "want" to drink a cold soda. You can satisfy this want if you have soda in the refrigerator or if you have 50¢ for the soda machine. Discuss the following.
 - a. If you were "hiding out" in a museum with a sibling, what wants would you have? (*food and drink, clean clothes, a place to sleep, candy, entertainment and games, a place to wash and go to the bathroom*) Encourage discussion because students may forget about basics.
 - b. Will you pay for the goods and services to satisfy your wants? (*Some will be provided at "no cost" because of the museum hide out, such as a dry place to sleep, restrooms, and a drinking fountain. To satisfy other wants, they must use money to buy the goods or services.*) Where will they get the money?
3. Assign the first two chapters of the book. Allow 7-10 days, or read the assignment together as a class.
4. Give a copy of Activity 1 to each student. Use the activity's introduction to discuss the following.
 - a. What is income? (**Income** is money received for work.)
 - b. What do you do to earn income? (*Answers will vary; some will report receiving money for good grades!*)
 - c. Why was Claudia so concerned with income as she planned the escape? (*She wanted to be comfortable. She knew from her life in the suburbs that everything cost money, so she did not want to leave home without it.*)
 - d. What is a **budget**? (*a plan for how to use your money*)
 - e. Does Claudia have a budget? (Yes, she does not use this term, but she has a good idea of her sources of income and how much things cost.) Tell students that they must create an official budget for the Kincaid kids.
 - f. Besides income, what else do you list and keep track of with a budget? (*expenses*)
 - g. What is an **expense**? (*money paid for a good or service*) Remind students that Claudia and Jamie have "wants" while they are living in the museum. The only way to satisfy a want is to consume a good or service. Because museum life will not provide all goods and services that Claudia and Jamie want at "no cost", they will have expenses.

5. Have students work in small groups to construct a budget for museum life and to complete the questions in the activity. Allow them to use their books for reference.
6. Have each group report one source of income or one expense item at a time until all budget items have been reported. Construct the budget on the board or on a transparency. (*Income entries: \$4.18 from Claudia's allowance and \$24.43 from Jamie's allowance and gambling winnings*)
7. Have them report on expense entries (*Expense entries: \$3.20 for round-trip train fare from Greenwich to New York, daily food and drink expenses*) Have students speculate on dollar amounts for food and drink and other expenses that may not be specified in the book such as bus and cab fares, laundry, and other miscellaneous expenses. Discuss the answers to the activity questions.
 - a. *\$28.61 was the total income Claudia and Jamie brought with them*
 - b. *Claudia receives 50¢, and Jamie receives 25¢ per week.*
 - c. *Jamie cheated at daily card games of "War" that he played with Bruce. He won 2¢ for every card and 5¢ for every ace. Claudia did not know this, so she thought that his only source of income was his 25¢ weekly allowance.*
 - d. *Claudia found a one-way adult train fare in the wastebasket. Because Claudia was trying to save enough for train fare and a few expenses, the "free" ticket helped her achieve her goal. The money she saved by not purchasing train fare could be used for other expenses.*
 - e. *Claudia lost 5¢ of her allowance every time she broke one of the household rules.*
 - f. *Jamie used money received from his birthday and Christmas to buy the transistor radio.*
 - g. *As treasurer, Jamie would hold all money, keep track of it, and pass judgment on all expenditures.*
8. Write "saving" on the board or on a transparency. Define **saving** as not spending income. Explain that when people want to buy something that costs more than their current income, they must save. Emphasize that the decision to save all or a portion of income can be shown on a budget by listing the item "saving" and the amount to be put away.
9. Read aloud the paragraph found early in chapter 1 that begins "Claudia also decided that she must get accustomed to giving up things." Discuss the following questions.

- a. How did Claudia have the \$4.18 that she brought on the trip? (*She saved her 40¢ to 50¢ weekly allowance.*)
 - b. How did Claudia usually use her allowance? (*She would spend 40¢ on a hot fudge sundae and 10¢ on something else, if she had a full 50¢ allowance that week.*) Point out that once Claudia began planning and saving to run away, she gave up the opportunity to buy weekly hot fudge sundaes.
10. Write "opportunity cost" on the board. Explain that when a choice is made, something else is given up. The most important thing that you give up when making a decision is called your **opportunity cost**. Claudia chose to save her allowance, the most important item she gave up each week was a hot fudge sundae. It was her opportunity cost. Point out that the paragraph read aloud began with "Claudia also decided that she must get accustomed to giving up things." Stress that **every time** Jamie and Claudia make a decision about how to use their limited income, they will incur an opportunity cost (give up something). Tell them to be on guard for examples of opportunity cost.
11. Assign chapters 3 and 4. After students have read the chapter, discuss the following questions.
- a. What was Jamie's first decision as treasurer? (*whether to walk the forty blocks from Grand Central train station to the museum*)
 - b. What did Claudia want to do instead of walking? (*Her first choice was to take a taxi.*)
 - c. Why didn't Jamie think it was a good idea to take a taxi? (*Because the "price," the money they would pay for the taxi ride, was too high. Jamie knew that they would not have an allowance while they were hiding out. He wanted to choose an option with a lower price - zero price, that is, to save more of their limited income.*)
 - d. After Jamie vetoed the taxi ride, how did Claudia want to get to the museum? (*by bus*)
 - e. What was the price of the bus ride? (*20¢ each, 40¢ total*)
 - f. Did they decide to walk or ride the bus? (*walk*)
 - g. What was the opportunity cost for Claudia of walking to the museum? (*The 20¢ bus ride. It was not the taxi ride because she agreed with Jamie that the taxi ride was too expensive.*)
12. Write "bus ride: 20¢" on the board. Ask students if they think 20¢ is a high or a low price to pay for a bus ride. (*Most will probably think it is low.*)

13. Have students think of other items that have a price of 20¢ today. Record ideas on the board. (*There won't be many. Students may list items that are usually sold in packs that have a price greater than 20¢ but individually may not, such as pencils or candy.*)
14. Write "1967" on the board. Tell the class that this is the year the book was published. Have them compute how many years have passed since 1967. Point out that many of their parents may have been children then. Stress that the incomes that people earned from working were also lower in 1967.
15. Distribute a copy of Activity 2 to each student. Read the introduction and work through the examples as a class. (*2031 child bus fare: 80¢*) Have students complete the activity individually, in small groups, or as homework. Tell students they may want to refer to chapters 1 and 2, as well as to 3 and 4, for some of the answers. Students will also require additional resources (menus, newspapers, ads) and/or Internet access to locate current prices. Discuss the activity answers.
 - a. *Bus fare: 20¢ (1967); 50¢ (1999); 80¢ (2031)*
 - b. *Hot fudge sundae: 40¢, 27¢cents on sale (1967); 89¢ (1999 at McDonalds[®]); \$1.38 (2031 at McDonalds[™]) Note: Claudia purchased her sundaes at the drugstore counter. Explain that this was a type of "fast food" of the 50s and 60s before the growth of the fast-food chains.*
 - c. *Weekly allowance: 50¢ (12 year old), 25¢ (9 year old) (1967). For current data, allow students to use their own (or siblings') allowance figures if they receive one. Share the following survey information with the class. The 1997 Nickelodeon/Yankelovich Youth Monitor Survey found that the largest percentage of parents of children of all ages gave no allowance. Of parents who gave an allowance, the largest percent (24%) gave \$5.00 a week to 9-11 year olds, while the largest percent of 12-17 year olds (23%) received from \$6 to \$10 a week. Based on the survey figures, 2031 weekly allowance figures will be \$11.50 for a 12 year old and \$9.75 for a 9 year old. Point out that this allowance amount is what they may be paying to their own children when they are parents!*
 - d. *1st class postage stamp: 5¢ (1967); 33¢ (1999); 59¢ (2031). Remind students that Claudia mailed two letters on the way to the train station. One letter was not home, and the other had two boxtops from cornflakes that she was sending in to get a 25¢ rebate. Point out that it would not be worthwhile today to use a 33¢ stamp to send for a 25¢ rebate. How much would they expect for two boxtops today? Accept a variety of responses, but point out that even a 50¢ rebate will require a 33¢ stamp, and thus net only a 17¢ "return."*
 - e. *Lunch for two at the museum snack bar: \$1.50 (75¢ each) (1967). Accept a variety of responses for current lunch prices. Kids meals at fast-food outlets average about \$2.00 to \$2.50 per meal, value meals for bigger appetites will run \$3.00 to \$4.00 per meal (1999); \$3.25 (2031 kids meal)*
 - f. *New York Times newspaper: 10¢ (1967); \$1.00 (1999); \$1.90 (2031)*

16. Assign chapters 5 and 6. After students have read the chapter, discuss the following.

- a. Remind students of the definition of income - money earned for work.
- b. What new source of "income" did Jamie discover in chapter 5? Encourage discussion. Can the \$2.87 in coins that Claudia and Jamie scoop up from the bottom of the fountain really be called income? (*No, they did not work and earn it. They stole it, and the money belonged to the museum.*) Although the money was not rightfully theirs and they did not earn it, it was a source of funds that they could use to buy goods and services.
- c. Have students discuss how they think the presence of a fountain containing coins would affect Jamie and Claudia's spending decisions. Will they spend more freely? Why or why not? Encourage discussion. Remind students that in chapter 6, Jamie allowed them to ride the bus to the Automat instead of walking after Claudia pointed out "all we have to do is take a bath whenever we need money."

17. Assign chapters 7 and 8. After students have read the chapters, discuss the following.

- a. What was the price the post office charged to rent a post office box for three months? (*\$4.50*)
- b. How did Jamie feel when the post office clerk told him the price? (*He "scowled" which is a facial expression indicating that he was not happy or pleased.*)
- c. How did Claudia feel about the price? Did she think it was too much to spend? (*Not really. She "shrugged her shoulders" which is a body movement indicating that she was not concerned with the price.*)
- d. What did Claudia mean when she told Jamie "We'll take a long, long bath tonight?" (*She was trying to tell Jamie that they could scoop up more coins from the fountain bottom for additional funds to cover the price of the box.*)
- e. After reading chapter 7, did you think the Kincaid's spending decisions were being changed by the fountain funds? How would it affect their budget? (*Their budget would be affected in two ways. First, they had an added source of funds that would be listed on the "income" side of the budget, even though the coins were not income because they were stolen. Second, they could have more expenses in their budget.*) Close this discussion by pointing out that they could still keep their budget balanced as long as they had income to cover their expenses.

18. Assign the final two chapters, 9 and 10. After students are finished reading, discuss the following.

- a. After Jamie paid the taxi driver in front of Mrs. Frankweiler's estate, how much money did the Kincaid kids have left? (*None. They were broke.*)
- b. Did Jamie and Claudia make a wise spending decision when they chose to use all their money to go to Mrs. Frankweiler's? (*Most students will think it was wise. If they had not gone, they may not have uncovered the mystery and would not have stood to inherit the valuable sonnet.*)
- c. Have students predict what they think Claudia and Jamie will do when they inherit the sonnet? Will they give it to the museum? Sell it? Will Jamie take the proceeds of the sale, invest in mutual funds and become a gazillionaire? Will Claudia spend her inheritance on marble bathtubs and hot fudge sundaes?

Closure:

Discuss the following:

1. What is a want? (*a desire that can be satisfied by consuming a good or service*)
2. What is income? (*money received for work*)
3. What are expenses? (*money paid for a good or service*)
4. What is a saving? (*not spending income*)
5. What is income? (*a plan for how to use money*)
6. What is opportunity cost? (*the most important thing given up when a decision is made*)

Assessment:

Distribute a copy of Activity 3 to each student. Go over the directions and make sure that students understand step #7 - the concept of saving. (See Procedure step #8.) Assign the activity for classwork or homework. Have an in-class discussion after students have completed the assignment.

1. How many students had saving?
2. Which income sources did most choose?
3. Did anyone choose to do all jobs for income?
4. What was the maximum total income? (\$17.00)

5. Did anyone list "new basketball shoes" on his or her weekly expenses? Why? *(Even if one does all jobs for income, there is not enough to cover the \$65.00 expense. Do not allow students to put the shoes in the budget with the notion that their parents will pay for them!)*

Emphasize that if students want an expensive item such as shoes, a new coat, or a video game, they must earn more income than they spend each week and save the difference for these big ticket items.

Close the discussion using the activity to check their understanding of opportunity cost. When making their budgets, did they have to choose between going to a movie and playing goofy golf? Remind them that if they chose the movie, the opportunity cost will be goofy golf.

Extension:

1. Have students imagine that they are best friends with either Jamie or Claudia and that they know about their plan to run away. Write a letter to your best friend and try to talk her or him out of running away.
2. Have students conduct a poll in several classes (the more the better) of how many students receive an allowance and how much they receive. (Make sure that students' names are not recorded in the poll - use an anonymous questionnaire. Have students summarize the results of the poll using a bar graph or pie chart.
3. Have student conduct research (encyclopedia, Internet, memories of parents and relatives), and write two paragraphs on "Live in 1967" or "Life in the 60s." Include information on clothes, music, movies, food, cars, famous people.

From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler
Activity 1: Life on the Run: A Budget for Claudia and Jamie.

Before Jamie and Claudia leave home for an adventure "hiding out" in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Claudia plans very carefully. She is very worried about having enough income. **Income** is money people receive for doing work, such as earning a weekly allowance for making beds and emptying the wastebaskets. People also receive money as gifts.

Why was Claudia so concerned with income as she planned the escape? She enjoyed planning, and she enjoyed spending money, especially on hot fudge sundaes. By combining these two activities - planning and spending -you can make a budget for Claudia and Jamie. A **budget** is a plan for how to use income. It shows the income that you will have and the expenses that you think you will have. An **expense** is money paid for a good or service. Claudia had a weekly expense for a hot fudge sundae before leaving home.

Use the chart below to make a budget for Claudia and Jamie. List income (amount and source) on the left and expenses (things you think they'll buy) on the right. You won't always have dollar amounts, that's okay. You can fill them in later. Be sure to answer the questions below.

A Budget for Museum Life

INCOME		EXPENSES	
SOURCE	AMOUNT	ITEM	AMOUNT

Questions:

1. What is the total amount of income Jamie and Claudia bring with them?
2. What was Claudia's weekly allowance? Jamie's allowance?
3. Why did Jamie have so much more income than Claudia thought he would? Where and how did he get so much?
4. What did Claudia find in the wastebasket that was almost like income?
5. What would happen to Claudia if she broke a household rule?
6. How was Jamie able to afford the transistor radio he brought?
7. What were Jamie's responsibilities as "treasurer?"

From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler
Activity 2: Is the Price Right?

Have you noticed how familiar Jamie and Claudia are with the prices of the goods and services they want? It would have been more difficult for Claudia to plan and budget their income if she didn't know the prices of many of their wants. How familiar are you with the prices of the goods and services you want? Would hiding out in a museum in 1999 or 2000 be more or less expensive than in 1967? Look at the following activity to find out!

Example: Jamie and Claudia walked forty blocks from the train station to the museum to avoid paying 20¢ each for bus fare. How much is the current bus fare for a kid in your home town? In the St. Louis, Missouri area, the fare in 1999 was 50¢. If the 1967 fare in St. Louis was also 20¢ and it is now 50¢, by how much has the fare increased in 32 years? The price has increased by 30¢. If the fare increased by the same amount over the next 32 years, what will the price of a bus ride for a child be in 2031? Look at the first example below and make sure you understand how to determine the figures. Then fill in the missing prices or amounts for the rest of the items listed.

Activities:

ITEM	1967 PRICE	1999 PRICE	2031 PRICE
Bus fare	\$0.20	\$0.50	_____
Weekly allowance (12 years old)	_____	_____	_____
Weekly allowance (9 years old)	_____	_____	_____
1st class postage stamp	_____	_____	_____
Lunch for two at the museum snack bar	_____	_____	_____
New York Times daily newspaper	_____	_____	_____

From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler Activity 3

From the Mixed-up Budget of _____

It's time to see what you learned from Claudia and Jamie's experience. Listed below are some expenses that a typical kid might have during an average week during the school year. Mixed up with the expenses are sources of income for a typical kid.

1. Use the list to make a weekly budget for yourself.
2. Choose at least five expenses.
3. Choose at least three sources of income.
4. Write the expenses and income amounts in the correct columns.
5. Add all expenses, then add all income.
6. Make sure that you have enough income to pay for all expenses. If you don't, you must spend less or add some more income.
7. If you have more income than expenses, label the difference "saving" and list it under your expense column.

New basketball shoes: \$65.00	Walk neighbor's dog, earn \$2.00
Weekly allowance: \$5.00	Hot fudge sundae: \$1.99
Wash the car, earn \$3.00	Bubble bath: \$4.00
Movie (Sat. afternoon): \$3.00	Library fine: \$0.20
Movie (Sat. night): \$5.00	English notebook: \$0.75
Popcorn & soda at movie: \$6.50	Water plants and earn \$0.50
Clean litter box, earn \$1.00	Clean the toilets, earn \$1.50
Babysit 2 hours, earn \$4.00	Play Goofy Golf: \$3.00
Soda after volleyball: \$0.50	Baseball cards: \$1.50
Donation for poor: \$0.65	Play video game: \$0.75

**From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler
Activity 3, Pg. 2**



From the Mixed-up Budget of _____

INCOME		EXPENSES	
SOURCE	AMOUNT	ITEM	AMOUNT
TOTAL INCOME		TOTAL EXPENSES	