



Tía Isa Wants a Car by Meg Medina

This book tells the story of a young person and her aunt (Tía Isa), as Tía Isa works through the process of saving money to purchase a car. This exercise will provide the opportunity to:

1. Weigh options when evaluating a want or need;
2. Define the terms of opportunity cost and benefit; and
3. Practice evaluating the cost and benefits of decisions.

Time Limit: 40 minutes

Supplies Needed:

- *Tía Isa Wants a Car* by Meg Medina
- Crayons or colored pencils
- Worksheet copies for all students



Saving for Wants and Needs

(1) (5 minutes) In order to buy something that you want, you have to save money to afford it. If you were to save to buy one item that you really, really want, what would it be? **Ask students to describe their “want.” Use the example of a video game.** Do you need a video game? **No.** If you were saving for a video game and you suddenly had a need that required you to spend your savings differently, what would you do? **Take brief responses.**

(2) (10 minutes) Today I’m going to read you a story about a girl and her aunt, Tía Isa. Tía is spanish for “aunt.” In the book, Tía Isa has to balance her wants with family needs as she works to save money for her goal to own a car. One of the ways people achieve a financial goal is to rank their priorities. As we read, see if you can pick out how Tía Isa ranked her wants and needs. **Read the story.**

(3) Go to page 2. Why does Tía Isa want to buy a car?

Answer: She wants to have a car to drive to the beach.

(4) Go to page 8. When Tío Andrés learns of Tía Isa’s plan to buy a car, he doesn’t react well. Tío Andrés says that everything the family needs is within walking distance. Would he call the car a want or a need?

Answer: Because the car is for the beach, Tío Andrés would probably think it’s more of a want than a need.

(5) Go to page 9. Tía Isa’s money is split between family savings, otherwise known as “helping money,” and her car fund. Why did Tía Isa decide to devote the majority of her money to her family?

Answer: The “helping money” is shared with family so they can pay for needs. The car is a less important want, so Tía Isa made it less of a financial priority. **Consider having a conversation about whether a car could be a need for one person, but not for another, depending on lifestyle, etc.**



(6) Go to page 13. What does Tía Isa's niece do to help her aunt save for a car?

Answer: She works in a fruit store, feeds cats, and teaches spanish.

(7) Go to page 15. Saving money can take a long time when you have to prioritize your money between wants and needs. The want of the car is second to the needs of family, which make saving take longer than might otherwise be the case. **Consider discussing the role of choice when prioritizing how to spend money on wants and needs.**

(8) Go to page 19 of the book. After Tía Isa's niece reveals her secret money sock savings, do they have enough to afford the car that they first looked at at the car dealership?

Answer: No. They buy a car they can afford. They had to compare the advantages and disadvantages of their purchase and decided that the car was acceptable, even without a radio and air conditioning.

(9) Do you think the fact that Tía Isa had limited financial resources impacted the choices that she made? **Discuss, noting that a person's financial condition could impact how they choose to spend their money.**

(10) Go to page 21 of the book. Why do you think the first thing Tía Isa did after buying the car was to post a photo of her family?

Answer: Tía Isa posts the photo as a reminder of her family's need, which is what she works for once her immediate needs are fulfilled.

For Younger Students ask them to complete the coloring sheet. You can continue the conversation about wants and needs by starting a discussion about items that they want or need. Consider starting with classroom objects and moving to other examples as they develop the concept.

For Older Students consider having a broader discussion about vehicle shopping. You can have students visit an automotive sales website to compare different new or used vehicles, features, and price points. Frame the conversation around wants and needs. When you're done, ask the students to write a short essay about what they learned. There are many easy to use options for comparing automobile prices. One is www.carfax.com.