

Kit Learning Guide

Learn about
the Great Depression,
giving, and resourcefulness
through the stories of Kit,
a girl growing up in 1934.



 American Girl®



Kit

About the Kit Books

Kit Kittredge is a clever, resourceful girl whose family and friends struggle to make ends meet during the Great Depression—the most severe economic crisis in American history. Kit’s stories, which show people facing unemployment and homelessness, are more relevant than ever as our economy shifts and many Americans today experience similar hardships.

Learning what is truly valuable in life is an overarching theme in the Kit series. Times are tough and Kit’s father must close his car dealership. Without a steady income, the Kittredges take in boarders to help pay the bills. At times, Kit feels embarrassed about being poor. But visiting the local soup kitchen, learning from resourceful Aunt Millie, and befriending a young hobo named Will help Kit understand that wealth does not equal worth, and that kindness, generosity, and friendship are what matter most.

The six books of the core series are:

Book 1: *Meet Kit*

Book 2: *Kit Learns a Lesson*

Book 3: *Kit’s Surprise*

Book 4: *Happy Birthday, Kit!*

Book 5: *Kit Saves the Day*

Book 6: *Changes for Kit*

Instructions for Teachers

Assign or read aloud to your students some or all of the books in numerical order. As needed, print copies of each work sheet you would like to use in class. Before assigning the work sheets to your students, consider the talking points and discussion questions for each work sheet provided below. Note: It’s not essential to read all six books in order to complete the work sheets.

Talking Points and Discussion

The Great Depression

During the Depression, many people didn’t have enough food to eat and had to ask strangers for help. *Discussion questions:* How would you feel if you had to ask a stranger for food or money? Why would you feel that way?

Giving

When people think of giving, they often imagine donating money or things, but there are other ways to give. For example, Kit uses her writing skills to raise awareness about homeless children and to lift people’s spirits. *Discussion questions:* What are ways you could give to others without offering money or things?

Resourcefulness

Kit’s family cannot afford to waste anything and so they rarely throw things away. Instead they find clever new uses for old things. For example, Aunt Millie makes a pretty dress for Kit out of empty chicken-feed sacks. *Discussion questions:* What is something you would normally throw away that you could reuse for a different purpose? What’s an interesting way you could reuse that item?



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Answer Key

The Great Depression

1. Answers will vary.
2. Answers will vary.
3. Answers will vary.
4. Answers should convey positive things, such as: Kit met new people when her mother took in boarders; Kit became friends with Stirling and Will; Kit learned the hobo code; Kit learned useful and interesting things from Aunt Millie; Kit started her own newspaper; Kit adopted her dog, Grace; Kit felt proud because she worked to earn money to help pay the electric bill; Kit had a great penny-pincher party; Kit's letter was printed in the newspaper, which helped homeless children get winter coats and shoes.

Giving

1. Answers will vary.
2. Answers will vary.
3. Answers will vary.

Resourcefulness

1.

Purpose	Disposable Item	Reusable Alternative
wiping noses	paper facial tissues	handkerchiefs or rags
holding groceries	paper or plastic bags	boxes or cloth bags
wiping up spills	paper towels	cloth towels or rags
keeping babies dry	disposable diapers	cloth diapers

2. Answers will vary.

Puzzle

1. Symbols will vary.
2. Messages will vary.

Illustrations by Walter Rane and Susan McAliley



Kit

The Great Depression

1. When the family business fails, Kit's family has a hard time paying their bills. At times, Kit feels embarrassed about not having enough money, but Aunt Millie tells her, "There's no shame in being poor." Do you agree with what Aunt Millie says? Why or why not?

What Is a Depression?

An economic depression is a period of time when a large number of people can't get a job. This can happen when many businesses lose customers and sales, and they lay off their workers because they can't afford to keep paying them.

2. During the Depression, it was not unusual for children to work to help support their families. Kit and Stirling helped Kit's family by raising chickens so that they could sell the eggs. What could you do to earn money if your family needed it? How would you feel if you had to work to help support your family?

3. In *Kit Saves the Day*, Kit meets a teenage boy named Will. Will is a *hobo*—a homeless person who travels in search of work. Will tells Kit he left his family because he could fend for himself and didn't want to burden his parents. Do you think Will's decision to leave home was a good one? Why or why not?

4. Although the Depression made life hard, it wasn't all bad. For example, many people felt more connected because they pulled together to help one another. Name one good thing that Kit experiences because of the Depression.



Kit

Giving

1. In *Meet Kit*, Kit is reading *Robin Hood and His Adventures*. Robin Hood steals from the rich to give to the poor. Kit thinks that what Robin Hood does is good. Do you agree with Kit? Why or why not?

Why Giving Feels Good
Scientists have discovered that when you give a gift you truly want to give, your brain rewards you by producing chemicals that make you feel good!

2. In *Changes for Kit*, grumpy Uncle Hendrick tells Kit that turning the old hospital into a shelter for homeless people is a terrible idea. He thinks it will pamper people who choose not to work. Do you agree with Uncle Hendrick? Why or why not?

3. In *Changes for Kit*, Kit writes a letter to the editor of the local newspaper to let people know about homeless children who need coats and shoes for winter. Kit's letter is printed in the paper, and more donations for children are made to the soup kitchen than ever before! Write a letter to your local newspaper about a problem you want people to know about.



Kit

Resourcefulness

1. During the Depression, people didn't use as many disposable products as we do today. Instead, people reused things, which was less wasteful and saved them money. Fill in the rest of the chart by naming a reusable alternative to the disposable item for each purpose.

Purpose	Disposable Item	Reusable Alternative
wiping noses	paper facial tissues	
holding groceries	paper or plastic bags	
wiping up spills	paper towels	
keeping babies dry	disposable diapers	

2. Kit's family does many different things to make ends meet. On the line below each activity, tell whether you would enjoy doing it or not, and why.

Kit's family rents rooms in the house to boarders.

Kit helps tend a garden to grow food for her family.

Aunt Millie buys discounted foods, such as day-old bread, wilted produce, and dented cans.

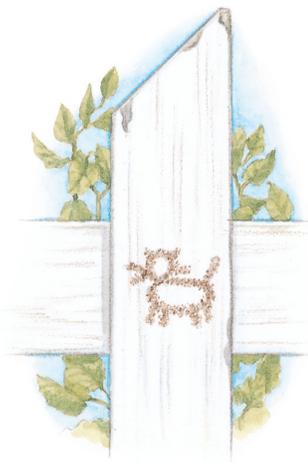
Kit wears hand-me-down clothes instead of new ones.

Kit and Stirling keep chickens and sell the eggs to raise money for Kit's family.

Kit and Stirling write and illustrate a book filled with Aunt Millie's money-saving ideas.



Kit



Make Your Own Code

In *Kit Saves the Day*, Kit's friend Will teaches her how to read hobo code. Hobos drew signs on fences, buildings, and sidewalks to let each other know what to expect in new places. Make up your own codes to communicate with your friends.

1. Pictures

Create a code of symbols. Try these, and make up more of your own.



yes



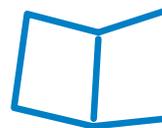
no



call me



sleepover



homework

2. Secret Spacing

Write messages in groups of three letters. Instead of writing,

“Meet me in the tree
house after school.”

you'd write,

“Mee tme in th etree hou
sea fte rsc hoo !.”

3. Now, write a message to a friend in code. Can your friend read the message?
