

Name: _____



The Boy in the Red Plaid Coat

1. Describe a time in your life when you were late for an important event. Make sure you describe your circumstances and your feelings at the time.

2. What is meant by a good Samaritan?

3. Have you (or a friend) ever acted as a good Samaritan to someone? Describe what happened.

4. Why is it sometimes surprising to be helped by someone you don't even know?

5. Explain the meaning of the following proverb: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

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"Hurry up, Frank. It's ten to eleven! We're going to be late!"

Frank bounded out the back door to the laneway where his mother was waiting in the family mini-van.

"You know how hard it rained last night," his mother said. "The back lane will be one big mud puddle."

"If I have a good practice this morning, Mom, I should make the football team," he said as they made their way down the laneway to the street.

Frank peered through the windshield at the mud-filled laneway, then glanced at his watch. He could forget about making the team if he was even one minute late. The coach was a real stickler for things like that. Good thing the field was only a few blocks away.

Why do you think the coach was so strict about being late for practice?

His mom leaned over the steering wheel, cautiously edging the van into the sloppy mess.

"Watch the spot this side of the sidewalk," Frank advised as they neared the street. "It looks pretty soupy."

His mother slowed to check traffic. Suddenly they were stopped, the back tires spinning in the mud.

"Back it up. Rock it, Mom."

"It won't move."

A feeling of panic swept over him.

What a time to get stuck. He scrambled out of the van. Thick mud oozed out around the back tires. Picking his way gingerly through the sloppy mess he leaned his shoulder against the middle of the back of the van, avoiding the worst of the spray from the spinning tires.

"Hit it, Mom!"



The tires whirled to life, spewing out a shower of muck, some sticking to his pants and overshoes. Again and again he heaved on the van. Reverse, then forward, then reverse again. So close – if only he had some help. He glanced again at his watch – ten fifty-five – they were going to be late! He looked up to see a small group of people passing on the sidewalk.

“Let’s try it again, Mom.”

The rear wheels spun obediently into action, but it was hopeless. What was even more discouraging was the people passing by didn’t even seem to notice their predicament. A tall, dignified-looking man seemed to be leading the little procession past them. Frank recognized him from seeing his picture in the paper the odd time. He was some big shot down at city hall.

“Excuse me,” Frank said.

The man turned in his direction. Frank pointed to the van beside them. “Would you mind giving us a hand? We’re trying to get to football practice. I think one more person should be enough to get us on our way.”

The smile disappeared from the man’s face.

“I’d like to son, but I’m just not dressed for that sort of thing this morning.” He gave an apologetic shrug, then continued on down the street.



Who do you think might stop to help Frank and his mom? Consider the person’s age, gender, occupation, etc.

Frank felt his face grow hot.

Several more people were approaching from the same direction. A middle-aged man in a long, beige trench coat glanced at Frank and the mired van.

“Excuse me, Sir,” Frank said. “I wonder if you’d be able to give us a hand to push our van out onto the street?”

The man shook his head solemnly. “Sorry, but I’ve got a bad back. No more heavy work for me.”

Frank turned helplessly to his mother. The procession of people had petered out – not that it really mattered. It was too late now, the practice would be underway in just a couple of minutes. His mother looked at him from the driver’s seat. Frank could see the disappointment on her face. She knew how important making the team was to him and how hard he had worked for it. He could just see his brother, Kevin, laughing his head off when he heard what had happened.

Just then he heard footsteps behind him, this time from the opposite direction. The voice startled him.

“It looks like you need a tow truck.”

A boy about his own age in a red, plaid coat stood before him, his hands thrust deeply into the pockets of his baggy pants.



Frank managed a weak grin.

"Doesn't look too bad," the boy said, doing a quick appraisal of the back wheels. "We should be able to get this out of here."

"You may get a little muddy," Frank smiled in spite of himself.

The boy in the red plaid coat grinned. "That's okay. I'm not exactly wearing my Sunday best."

Frank followed him to the back of the van and together they leaned their shoulders into it. Again the engine roared to life, tires spun, muscles strained, until finally the vehicle heaved itself free.

Frank and the other boy followed the van out onto the street and for a moment leaned, puffing against the back of the van.

His mother rolled down the window. "Thank you for your help."

The boy nodded politely.

"We'd better get going, Frank," she said. "We're late already."

"Thanks very much," Frank said, shaking the boy's hand. "Do you live around here? I don't remember seeing you before."

"I just moved in a few blocks from here." He nodded off to their right.

Frank hesitated for a moment by the passenger door. "We live in the big gray house half-way down the street. Why don't you drop by later today?"

The boy shrugged noncommittally. Reluctantly Frank crawled into the seat beside his mother. "Looks like I'm going to be late."

His mother glanced at her watch. "Looks that way. Maybe the coach will give you a break when you explain what happened."

"Maybe," Frank said. He thought again of the boy in the red plaid coat. "Whether I make the team or not, I'd like to get to know that guy who pushed us out of the mud. He seems real nice." Then he laughed. "You know what? I forgot to ask what his name was. Now I really do hope he drops in to see me."



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1. Describe the crisis that Frank encountered in the story.

2. How might Frank have avoided this crisis in the first place?

3. Why do you think Frank was especially disappointed by the first man's refusal to help?

4. How does Frank picture his brother reacting when he finds out about Frank's problem?

5. What does this tell you about Kevin's relationship with Frank?

6. Tell three things about the personality of the boy in the red plaid coat that you learned from this story.