Just like evaluating functions from tables, evaluating functions from graphs is something we do regularly. We don’t think of it as an algebra skill.

The graph below shows the stock price for Kellanova, formerly Kellogg’s. The horizontal axis shows the dates. The vertical axis shows the stock price. To find a stock price on a given date, find that date on the horizontal axis and look at the graph above that point. Look to the vertical axis to find the stock price.

Graphs are helpful for seeing an overall trend in the function values. The downside is that it is hard to find exact function values from a graph. Graphs are very useful when combined with tables or formulas.

Going back to the Kellanova stock, we can tell the story of the price without knowing specific values. The stock price was slightly decreasing between the beginning of June until the end of July. Between the end of July and the middle of August, the stock price increased quickly. After the middle of August, the stock price stayed consistent.

For another example, let’s look at a function more typical of an algebra class. The green graph defines a function f of x. Let’s evaluate f of 3 and f of 6. For f of 3, look on the horizontal axis to find 3. Then, identify the point on the graph with x-coordinate of 3. The y-coordinate can be read off the vertical axis. We can say that f of three is about 1.2. For f of 6, repeat the process. The value of f of 6 is about 3.8.