

Morty and the Monster Truck Madness

A Reading A-Z Level R Leveled Book
Word Count: 1,103

Connections

Writing

Have you ever had to earn back someone's trust? Write about how you felt when you broke their trust and how you gained it back.

Math

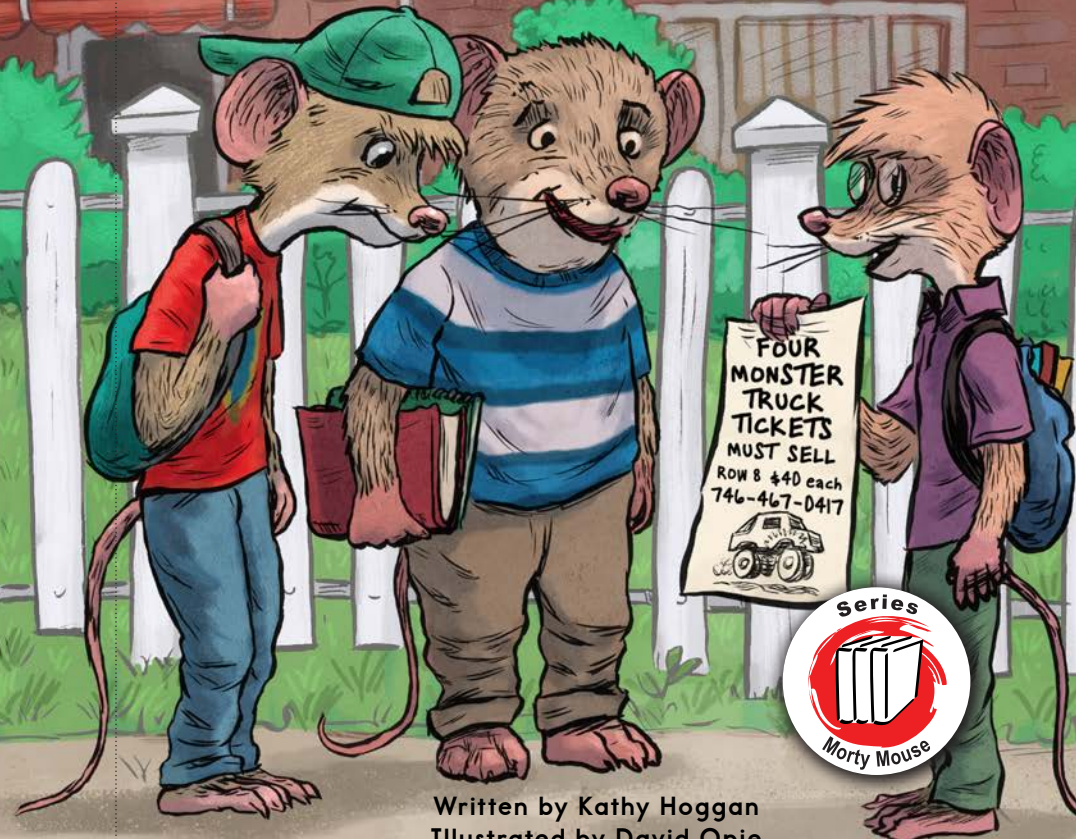
Most loans have an extra charge called *interest*. If Morty's dad charged him an extra 25 cents each day for a \$20.00 loan, how much would Morty owe at the end of one week?

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Written by Kathy Hoggan
Illustrated by David Opie

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Focus Question

What lesson does Morty learn?

Words to Know

bailing	permission
consequences	rally
determination	reputation
frantic	valuable
loan	

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Correlation

LEVEL R

Fountas & Pinnell	N
Reading Recovery	30
DRA	30



Morty, Ben, and Fred enjoyed an after-school snack at Morty's house. "Check it out!" Fred exclaimed mid-bite. He stopped munching his cheesy chip cookie and looked closer.

The *Mousetown Gazette* lay on the table in front of them, and a monster truck **rally** advertisement nearly jumped off the page. The dramatic bold print read: *Monster Truck Madness: Coming to Mousetown in Two Weeks!*

"We have to go!" Morty cried out in excitement. Another line of text caught his eye: *Tickets only \$50.*

Morty's excitement quickly dissolved when he remembered he had a mere eighteen dollars saved. He groaned in disappointment, knowing he'd never be able to earn the money in time.

The next day at school, Fred chattered nonstop about the rally. "We've got to get tickets soon," he reminded them every hour.

"I'm in!" Ben said.

"I'm short thirty-two dollars," Morty admitted, "and my mom nearly swallowed her tail when I asked for the money."

"You've got to find a way to come!" Ben exclaimed.

What could be worse than missing a monster truck rally? Morty wondered dejectedly.





The next morning on the way to school, Fred presented a flyer with a proud flourish. The sheet read:

*FOUR MONSTER TRUCK TICKETS
Must sell. Row 8. \$40 each. 746-467-0417*

"They're ten dollars cheaper than the original price!" Ben squealed.

"My dad said he can take us to get them after school," Fred announced.

Ben smiled from ear to ear, but Morty's mood was gloomy.



"Morty, there has to be some way to get the cash," Fred said. He withdrew his lunch money from his pocket and handed it to Morty. "Share your lunch with me?" he suggested.

Morty quickly did the math: He had eighteen dollars, and Fred's two dollars made twenty total. He still needed another twenty to see the trucks perform near-impossible feats.

"Mom refused to give me the ticket money, but I could ask her for a **loan**," Morty contemplated. "I'll bring you the money after school," he said with **determination**.

Morty raced home after school and found his mom making a list at the table. He had been planning exactly what he'd say about the loan. "Mother?" he started. "You know how you said the truck rally was expensive and that you couldn't give me the money for a ticket?"

"Uh-huh," she replied without glancing up.

"Fred found tickets for only forty dollars," Morty said nervously. "Would you consider loaning me twenty dollars and letting me pay you back?"

"I could, but I need that cash to buy groceries," Mother responded. "Maybe you can ask your father when he gets home."



Morty's whiskers drooped with disappointment. Dad never got home from work before 6:00 p.m., and Fred needed the money by 4:00 p.m. Morty shuffled to his room, downcast. When he passed his parents' bedroom, he noticed his mother's wallet on the dresser with a few bills sticking out.





He flipped through the cash, **frantic**, and counted four five-dollar bills—just what he needed. Morty figured she wouldn't miss the money for a few hours. When Dad got home and granted him the loan, he'd put that money in Mother's wallet. *It's my only chance to see the rally*, Morty thought. With that, he plucked the money from her wallet and pocketed it. He asked Mother if he could hang out at Fred's before dinner and scampered off to pay for his ticket.

"Broccoli cheese surprise is my favorite!" Morty said as he sat down to dinner that evening.

"Honey, is there any more of this?" Dad asked as he scooped out the last of the broccoli. Only a spoonful was left.

"Sorry, that's it," she replied. "When I got to the checkout at the store, I was twenty dollars short, so I had to put most of the groceries back," she added, shaking her head. "I don't know where that money went."

Morty set down his fork. He wasn't hungry anymore.





The next morning, Morty's chest ached. His plan to quickly return Mother's money hadn't worked—his dad had agreed to the loan but needed to go to the bank to get cash. Morty slurped down his Cheesy O's, trying to determine the best way to confess to Mother, but he knew he'd be in hot water once she found out he had stolen from her. Before he could figure it out, she mentioned the dreaded loan.



"Did your father allow you to take out a loan?" she asked. Morty looked at his toes. "Morty, I don't think you'd do this," she continued, "but did you take twenty dollars from my wallet?"

Morty hung his head in shame. "Yes," he muttered. "Dad wasn't going to be home in time for me to get the ticket. I was going to put the money back in your wallet as soon as he loaned it to me."

Mother looked Morty sternly in the eyes. "Stealing is a crime, Morty," she said firmly. "Your honest **reputation** is worth more than all the money there is."

Morty's face flushed red. "I made a lousy choice," he said. "I'm so sorry. I'll get the money from Dad today and pay you back."

"You won't be getting a loan from your father anymore," Mother said. "I'll discuss the **consequences** of your actions with him later. You may not get to see your friends for a while."

Morty felt helpless. Mud and wheelies weren't important anymore—just earning back his mother's trust. He'd sell his ticket to the rally and set things right.



"I've got the tickets!" Fred announced when Morty walked into the classroom. He handed Morty a colorful ticket showing a truck ascending a steep, muddy hill.

Morty's excitement quickly waned. "Is there anyone else who wants to go?" he asked.

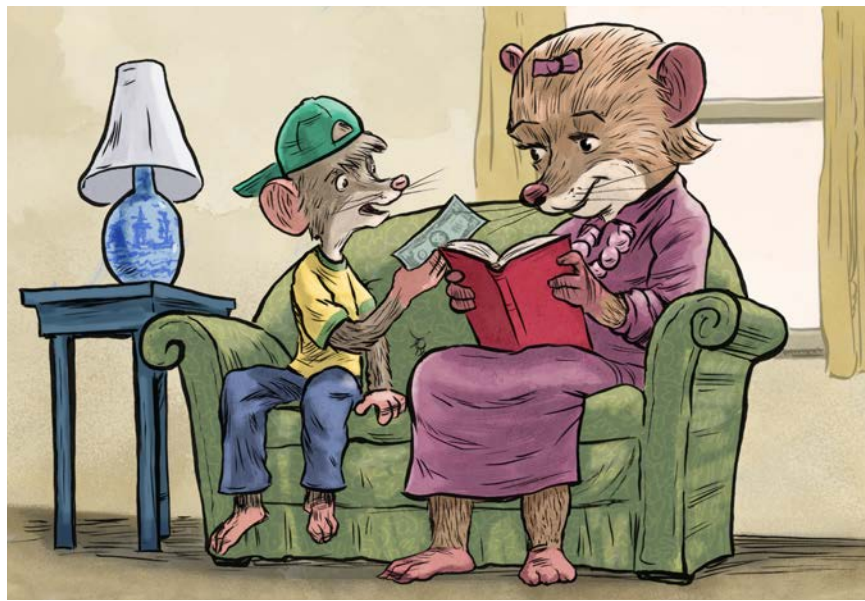
"You're **bailing**?" Fred cried.

"I'd rather pay back the money I took for the ticket," Morty said calmly.

Fred shook his head. "Gus asked me about tickets this morning," he said, "but I think you've lost your head!"

"It's better than losing trust," Morty replied as he scampered off to find Gus, leaving a perplexed Fred behind.





When Morty rushed in the door after school, he immediately found his mother and handed her a twenty-dollar bill. “I want to give you something even more **valuable**, too,” he said.

Mother looked puzzled.

“I’d like to give you my word,” Morty continued. “You can trust me to never take anything from you without your **permission**. I promise.” He wrapped his mother in a hug.

Mother hugged Morty back. “Thank you, Morty,” she said. “I love you, and you’ve already started to earn back my trust.”

Glossary

bailing (<i>v.</i>)	escaping from an unwanted situation or abandoning a responsibility (p. 14)
consequences (<i>n.</i>)	the results of an action; effects (p. 13)
determination (<i>n.</i>)	the commitment or drive to work toward a difficult goal; resolve (p. 6)
frantic (<i>adj.</i>)	wild with anxiety or fear; very rushed or busy (p. 9)
loan (<i>n.</i>)	something that is borrowed for a certain amount of time (p. 6)
permission (<i>n.</i>)	approval by someone in charge (p. 15)
rally (<i>n.</i>)	a race or show where vehicles are driven over roads or rough terrain (p. 3)
reputation (<i>n.</i>)	the general way that a person or thing is thought of by others (p. 12)
valuable (<i>adj.</i>)	having value or worth; very important (p. 15)