Steve Swayngim

A Cat, a Parrot, and a Bag of Seed:

A man finds himself on a riverbank with a cat, a parrot and a bag of seed. He needs to transport all three to the other side of the river in his boat. However, the boat has room for only the man himself and one other item (either the cat, parrot or seed). In his absence, the cat could eat the parrot, and the parrot would eat the bag of seed. Show how he can get all the passengers to the other side, without leaving the wrong ones alone together.

**Define the problem. What is the goal? Any insight that isn’t immediately apparent.**

The goal is for the man to transport all of the items across the river. The problem is that the boat is not big enough to transport all of the items at the same time.

**What are the constraints? Sub-problems?**

A constraint is the size of the boat, which only allows the man to transport one item at a time. Another constraint is that the man is alone. There are two sub problems that are the cat will eat the parrot if left unattended, and the parrot will eat the seeds if left unattended.

**What are potential solutions?**

Potential solutions are to get a bigger boat, to find additional help, or to keep the cat separate from the parrot and the parrot separate from the seeds.

**Evaluate each solution?**

While getting a bigger boat or finding help are the easy answers, nothing in the story makes it seem that they are available options. The remaining option relies only on what the man has available and seems possible.

**Explain the solution in detail.**

The solution would keep the parrot and cat separate and also keep the seeds and parrot separate. The first move would be for the man to transport the parrot across the river. This satisfies both requirements. The man would travel back alone and pick up either the cat or the seeds. He would then transport the item across and pick up the parrot because the parrot cannot be left alone on either bank. He travels across the river with the parrot to drop it off and pick up the item left on the bank. He travels back across and drops off the item. He then travels back alone to pick up the parrot and finally transport it across the river.

Socks in the Dark:

There are 20 socks in a drawer: 5 pairs of black socks, 3 pairs of brown and 2 pairs of white. You select the socks in the dark and can check them only after a selection has been made. What is the smallest number of socks you need to select to guarantee getting the following:

a) At least one matching pair.

b) At least on matching pair of each color.