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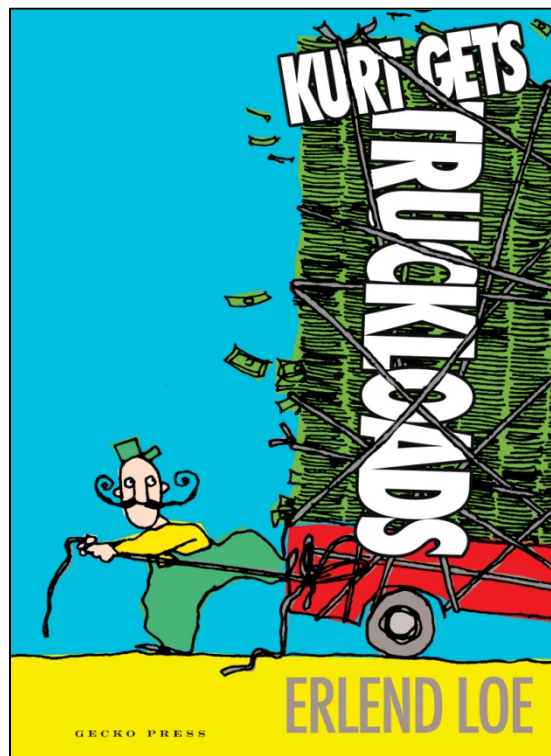
Teaching Notes

Kurt Gets Truckloads

by Erlend Loe

illustrated by Kim Hiorthøy

& translated by Don Bartlett



Synopsis

Kurt is a truck driver. He loves his truck. He loves his wife, too, and their three children. Kurt has always been a very kind man, until one day he saves a man's life and is rewarded with a diamond as big as a football. But what use is a diamond? Kurt sells it and gets fifty million dollars.

Now that he has truckloads of money, it is perhaps not surprising that Kurt turns nasty.



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The Author

Erlend Loe was born in 1969. He is a popular Norwegian novelist and screenwriter whose work has been translated into more than 20 languages. He lives in Oslo, Norway.

The Illustrator

Kim Hiorthøy, born in 1973, is a Norwegian electronic musician, graphic designer, illustrator, filmmaker and writer. He lives in Berlin, Germany.

The Translator

Don Bartlett is best known for his translations of Norwegian crime writer, Jo Nesbø.

Themes

This very funny, illustrated chapter book about how Kurt stops being the nicest man in the world has several themes.

The first theme evident is that of the importance of kindness and altruism. These are the driving forces behind Kurt's heroic deed, as he does not hesitate to save another human being from danger, and this in turn leads to him coming into vast amounts of money.

Another theme explored is the importance of family relationships. Kurt loves his family but after he gets his money his relationship with each family member, as well as their loyalty to him, is sorely tested. While Kurt's wife admits to desiring just a little bit more money for travel, she is happy with what they have and with living within their means. She is rightly concerned that coming into a large amount of money would have a negative effect on the people involved and that it may corrupt them.



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This theme of corruption is thoroughly explored throughout the novel, as once Kurt has huge sums of money he rapidly becomes greedy, power hungry, immoral, and turns from being nice to nasty, just as his wife feared. Kurt's loss of his moral compass and guiding principles, his increasing selfishness, and consequent thoughtless actions, affect not only his family but the whole of the society in which he lives.

The theme of maintaining integrity, and being nice rather than nasty when placed in a position of power, is further illustrated when Kurt and Bud campaign for Kurt to become prime minister with disastrous results.

A final theme seen in the book is that of retribution. The aftermath of Kurt's actions result in justice prevailing. Kurt, full of repentance, must pay for his nasty deeds and eventually returns to the life he had had before he became rich, seemingly having learnt his lesson - that money cannot buy happiness and that with or without money, it is always better to be nice than nasty.

Activities

1. Before reading the book, look at the cover image and title. Discuss what you think this story might be about?
2. The opening section of the book contains illustrated descriptions of Kurt and his 'normal family doing normal, everyday things.' (pp. 5-10). Write an illustrated description about you and your family in a similar style.
3. Kurt asks his wife the question: 'Why is it some people have money and others don't?' (p. 11). As a class, divide into groups to discuss this question. Present your group's conclusions to your class. Does your group agree/disagree or share the same opinion as any of the other groups?
4. Kurt's heroic actions save George's life (pp. 22-25). Research and interview someone who has done something you consider heroic from your family, school, local area or country. Present your findings in the style of a biographical entry in an encyclopaedia.
5. Kurt writes a list of what he would like to buy with his money (p. 51). Imagine you also have fifty million dollars. Write a short story about what you would do and buy with the money.



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6. Once he starts spending the money Kurt's family accuse him of becoming 'nasty', 'mean' and 'rotten'(p. 58). Find three other qualities or emotions that are mentioned in the book. Use these as inspiration for and/or the title of a poem.
7. Kurt decides he wants to be in an influential role such as the Prime Minister, and enlists Bud to be his campaign manager (p. 79). Research the electoral process. Then in groups, choose a classmate to put forward as a candidate for either class president or for prime minister of the country! As campaign managers, design an election campaign to help draw attention to your candidate and the causes that you wish to highlight. The campaign could include elements such as pamphlets, scripts for talks, radio jingles, posters, slogans, etc. Next hold a candidate debate followed by a mock election.
8. After his rampage there is an article about Kurt on the front page of the local newspaper (p. 109). Imagine you are a journalist and write this article. Present it in a newspaper format, including quotes from Kurt's school friends who were interviewed.
9. Imagine you are one of Kurt's family members. Choose an event from the book and write a personal diary entry about it from your point of view. Think about how you would describe the physical scene, any other characters who were involved and your feelings about the incident.
10. Below is a list of sayings taken from the book. Try to find their origins and then draw a cartoon representation of each of them:
 - 'as kind as the day is long' (p. 35)
 - 'a wink of sleep' (p. 60)
 - 'scared out of their wits' (p. 98)
 - 'gone bananas' (p. 101).
11. Find out the definitions and elements of the literary terms 'tragedy' and 'comedy'. As a class, discuss whether you think this book is a tragedy or a comedy. Use examples from the book to support your choice.



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12. Examine the illustrations in the book. What attracts your attention to a particular picture? What kinds of lines and textures are used? Do the pictures mirror the text or go beyond what the story tells you? Which is your favourite illustration and why? Choose a section from the book that doesn't have an accompanying illustration and draw your own.
13. Choose your favourite scene from the book and create your own artistic interpretation of it. Use, for example, a diorama, painting, model, poem, cartoon strip, etc.
14. Which is your favourite chapter in the book? Why? Write a plot summary of it.
15. Without speaking, act out a character doing something from the book. See how quickly the class can guess who you are and what you are doing.
16. Review the book for your favourite magazine or website. What did you like about the book? Why? What did you dislike about the book? Why? Give it a rating, such as stars or a number out of ten.
17. In groups, choose an event from the book. Devise a script, costumes, and scenery. Act it out for your class. If you have access to a video camera, film it.