



PRINTABLE LESSON

The Selfish Dog

A lesson in the difference between using and guarding



One complete lesson from The Sing Me a Fable Lesson Book

Ages 4 to 8 . Printable . 26 lessons in the full book

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The Selfish Dog

Fable S from Sing Me a Fable — a lesson in the difference between using and guarding

AGE	LENGTH	SUBJECT	GROUP
4–7 (Pre-K to Year 2)	30–40 minutes	PSHE · SEL · Speaking	Whole class, then pairs

“Guarding what you'll never use means everybody has to lose.”

Learning objective

Children can tell the difference between keeping something they are using and guarding something they are not, and understand that only the second one is selfishness.

You will need

The fable, read aloud A cushion or a chair A box of crayons A snack or a cup Poster S to colour

Everything on that list is already in the room. Nothing needs buying.

Before the story

4 minutes

Sit on one chair with a spare chair beside you, and put your hand flat on the empty seat.

Ask: “Is this chair mine?” Let them answer. Then: “I’m not sitting on it. Am I still allowed to keep everybody off it?”

Take two or three answers and move on without settling it. The whole lesson is that question.

Read the fable

5 minutes

Read fable S aloud. Rusty cannot eat hay. He has no use for it at all. Let that land on its own — don’t point it out.

If a child says “but he doesn’t even want it!” during the reading, they have found the whole moral by themselves. Say so.

Talk about it

10 minutes

1. What does Rusty actually get out of lying in the hay? Name something real.
2. The cow leaves hungry and Rusty is still hungry. Who won?
3. Rusty is guarding hay he cannot eat. Is there anything you have kept that you weren’t really using?

Question 3 is a confession and children will hesitate. Answer it yourself first, honestly and about something small, and the room will follow.

Main activity: Using it, or just holding it?

12 minutes

The point is that **the right answer is not always “share”**. Children are told to share constantly and have learned to say it without thinking. This activity breaks that habit.

1. Put three things where everyone can see: a cushion, a box of crayons, a cup.
2. Read out a situation from the sheet on the back. For each, the class answers one question only: **is he actually using it?**
3. If yes, the answer is **KEEP** — and that is correct, not selfish.
4. If no, the answer is **SHARE**.
5. Two of the situations on that sheet are KEEP. Do not warn them.

Ask, at the end: “Was anybody surprised that sometimes the right answer was to keep it?”

Plenary

4 minutes

“What is the question you can ask yourself, before you say no to somebody?”

You want them to arrive at some version of am I actually using this? Write whatever wording they land on somewhere they will see it again.



Play it together

Put the game on the board. At every choice, stop, let the class vote, then press the card they chose.



Scan to play

OPEN IT

singmeafable.com/arcade/the-selfish-dog

UNLOCK WORDS

WAITING FOR

CHOICES

6, about 2 minutes of play

Level 1 · The Barn Manger



The Hay Burrito

A Wrap yourself in all the hay so nobody can touch it!

B Push a golden bundle down for the Ox! ✓



The Sweater Unravel

A Drag the blanket over and snuggle up together! ✓

B I need all the blankets to make myself a nice ball-yarn sweater!

Level 2 · The Meadow Pasture



Lemons Make Me Faint

A Stuff every lemon into your mouth at once!

B Toss a juicy yellow lemon to the Cow! ✓



The Snapping Umbrella

A Scoot over and make room under the umbrella! ✓

B Can't you see this umbrella fits only me?



The last level, and what to ask

The tick marks the choice that earns the stars. Keep this page to yourself while the class votes.

Level 3 · The Winter Consequence



The Selfish Barricade — or not!

A Nail the door shut and stack a huge boulder against it!

B Open the doors wide and invite them in! ✓



The Stale Sneeze

A Dive face-first into the dusty old hay to prove a point!

B Leave the old hay, say sorry, and join the table! ✓

Ask at every choice

Before pressing: “Which card would you press, and why?”

After it plays out: “What changed because of that choice? What would the other card have done?”

How it joins the lesson

The main activity, **Using it, or just holding it?**, takes the same lesson off the screen and into the room. Play the game first, so the class has already watched both kinds of choice play out before they make one themselves.

Every choice plays out and nothing is timed, so a wrong vote is something to talk about, not a failure. Stars at the end of each level show how many right choices the class made.



Is he actually using it?

Six situations. Two of them are KEEP, and that is the point.

READ THIS OUT	ANSWER	WHY
Rusty is lying in the hay. The cow is hungry. Rusty does not eat hay.	SHARE	He gets nothing from it. Nobody wins.
Rusty is halfway through his supper. The cow asks for his bowl.	KEEP	He is using it. Saying no here is fine.
Rusty is sitting in the only patch of shade. It is big enough for two.	SHARE	He loses nothing by moving over.
Rusty found a small cool spot and is lying in it. There is room for one.	KEEP	He is using it, and it will not stretch.
Rusty has the barn to himself on a cold night. The sheep are outside.	SHARE	The barn does not get smaller.
Rusty is guarding a pile of apples. Rusty does not like apples.	SHARE	Guarding what you will never use.

Three running questions

These three keep the idea alive all week without another lesson.

- **Am I using it?**
- **Does it get smaller if I share it?**
- **Who is better off if I say no?**

The middle one is the useful one. Shade, a barn and a turn on a swing do not get smaller. A biscuit does. Children can sort almost anything with that question.

Watch for this

Some children answer SHARE to all six, quickly and confidently. That is not kindness — it is the answer they have learned gets approval. Stop on the two KEEP rows and ask them to explain; usually they had not considered the question at all.

A child who can say “no, because I’m using it” without guilt is further on than one who shares everything automatically.

Adapting for your class

Age 4 · Pre-K. Use the chair alone. Sit on it, then stand beside it with your hand on it, and ask both times whether someone else may sit. Two situations, not six. Stop there.

Ages 5–7 · K to Year 2. Run it as written. Expect the automatic SHARE answers on the first two rows and slow down when you reach the supper bowl.

Ages 7–8 · Year 3. Add the harder version: things that do not get smaller when shared — a song, a joke, knowing how to do something. Ask whether it is possible to be selfish with those, and what that looks like.

Mixed ages: let an older child read the situations and an younger one hold up the answer. Reading them aloud slowly is what makes the trap rows land.

What children take away

- **Selfishness is not refusing.** It is guarding something you get nothing from — which is why Rusty is the example, not a child who won't share lunch.
- **Sharing is not always the answer.** Two of the six are KEEP. Knowing where the line sits beats always saying yes.
- **Nobody wins.** Rusty ends up as hungry as the cow. The flaw costs the one doing it too.

If you have more time

- **Colour the poster.** Ask what Rusty is guarding in the picture, and whether he wants it.
- **Sing it.** The fable's song with on-screen words runs about 90 seconds.
- **Play it.** The browser game lets the child choose, twice a level, whether the dog guards what he does not need or shares it, and each choice plays out.