

Elijah McCoy

Critical Thinking & Discussion Questions

Have you ever purchased something of low quality that seemed like a bargain, but it turned out to be a waste of money? What was it? Would it have made more sense to buy a better quality item, if it would have performed better or lasted longer?

One method of clothes shopping involves considering the “cost per wearing.” Let’s say you spend \$200 on a suit or dress that you only wear once, on a special occasion, and then it sits in the back of your closet and you outgrow it. What was the cost per wearing? On the other hand, you might spend \$200 on a winter coat that you wear every day for the entire winter (90 days) for 3 consecutive winters. What is the cost per wearing for that item?

This means that items that you wear all the time may turn out to be a better value than an inexpensive item that you almost never wear.

In different consumer fields, there is often one product that people regard as the “best” or the “real thing.” In fact, Coca-Cola has long advertised itself as being “the real thing.™”

The brand of tissue called “Kleenex” is so well-known that the word “Kleenex” has come to mean “tissue,” as in: ***give me a Kleenex!***

What other types of products have a central brand name that stands out above the others?

Sneakers _____

Jeans _____

Computer _____

Cellphone _____

Car _____

Batteries _____

Cereal _____

Can you think of any other examples?

What is the benefit of gaining a reputation for being of high quality? Can people gain this reputation, as well as products?

In many areas of life, it only takes a little bit extra to stand out and become the best in the field. This can be true of school, and also in the workforce. Do you think it's worth giving a little bit extra to be considered the best in a particular field? What are the benefits of doing so?

In what areas do you already excel? Can you think of ways to give a little bit extra in this area so that you stand out as the best?

Have you ever thought of a new product idea, or a way to improve an existing product?

Capitalism has been described as people being paid to help other people solve their problems. What sorts of problems do people have today that you could help solve? What problems do you have that you would pay another person (or purchase a product from them) to help you with?

Here are some examples of modern problems:

- Worry
- Health issues
- Time management
- Forgetfulness
- Eating healthy
- Environmental issues

Kids deal with problems like:

- Keeping up with homework
- Taking care of pets
- Getting parents/adults to listen to them
- Making friends
- Making money

What solutions have been tried for these problems? Which ones still need a better solution? As you go through your life, look for moments when other people are struggling with something, and ask yourself what kinds of solutions might be possible. Can you think of a solution now? Could you learn more to be able to come up with a good solution?

Have you ever watched the TV show “Shark Tank”? Which inventions have you seen? Did you see any ideas that struck you as bad or unrealistic? Do you remember any good invention ideas?

What type of person comes up with new ideas and inventions?

Here is a list of Bob Woodson’s 10 Principles:

Competence

Integrity

Transparency

Resilience

Witness

Innovation

Inspiration

Agency

Access

Grace

Which do you think Elijah McCoy most embodied in his life?