

A Reading Guide for Parents

THOSE SHOES

by Maribeth Boelts

 Ages: 5+



Sometimes the best fit isn't the one you buy—it's the one you give.

RADIX

Story Snapshot



Real-Life Tip

This book opens the door for big conversations—about wants versus needs, peer pressure, and how money choices reflect our values. It also reminds kids that self-worth isn't measured by what you wear, but by what you give.



Jeremy wants the cool new shoes everyone at school is wearing, but his grandma says they can only afford what he needs—winter boots. After his old shoes fall apart, he's given a temporary pair that others tease him about. When he finds the trendy shoes at a thrift store—even though they're too small—he buys them with his own money. But after limping around for days, he notices a friend with worn-out shoes and quietly gives them away. It stings at first, but when his friend smiles and thanks him, and Jeremy changes into his warm new boots, he realizes what he really needs.

Conversation Starters

Before Reading:

- Have you ever wanted something just because other kids had it?
- What's the difference between something you want and something you need?

While Reading:

- Why do you think Jeremy wanted those shoes so badly?
- What did you think when he bought them, even though they were too small?

After Reading:

- Why do you think Jeremy gave the shoes to Antonio?
- Have you ever given something that was hard to give?
- What made Jeremy feel proud in the end?
- What's more important: fitting in or feeling good about yourself?
- What are some 'needs' you have? What are some 'wants'?
- What would you have done if you were Jeremy?



Key Themes



Needs vs. Wants

Jeremy learns that while new boots are what he needs, trendy shoes are what he wants. The story clearly shows how hard—but necessary—it is to make smart choices when money is limited.



Fitting In vs. Feeling Good

Even though Jeremy wants to fit in, the too-small shoes cause him pain—both physical and emotional. This theme explores how looking cool isn't always worth it if it costs your comfort or confidence.



The Power of Generosity

Giving the shoes to Antonio is difficult, but Jeremy does it anyway. It teaches that generosity sometimes comes with a sacrifice—but the emotional reward can be greater than keeping something for yourself.



Family Values & Love

Jeremy's grandma can't give him everything he wants, but she makes sure he has what he needs—and teaches him to prioritize wisely. Her quiet strength models financial wisdom and emotional care.

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Talk about it with your kids

- Why is it hard to say no to something you really want?
- How can we decide what's worth spending money on?
- How does it feel to have something everyone else wants?
- What makes a gift more meaningful—cost or care?
- Why do people sometimes feel embarrassed about money?
- How can you tell when someone is being kind without showing off?



Activities to try at home

- **Wants vs. Needs Sort:** Grab magazines or make drawings and sort pictures into two piles: things you need vs. things you want.
- **Generosity Box:** Create a donation box together. Talk about why giving away gently used things can help someone else feel happy.
- **Budget for Shoes Game:** Give your child a pretend budget and a list of shoes with different styles and prices. Have them pick one pair that fits the budget and their needs.
- **“Gift It Forward” Jar:** Add coins when someone in the family is generous or helpful. When full, decide together how to use the money to help someone else.

Family Money Moments

Mini Challenge: The “Needs First” Shopping Game

Ask your child to notice someone in their class or community who might need something (shoes, snacks, school supplies). Work together to come up with a quiet way to help.

This builds empathy and agency—teaching kids that money choices aren’t just personal, they can be powerful.

Daily Practice Tip:

At bedtime, ask: “What was one thing you wanted today? And one thing you needed?” Talk about the difference—and what it feels like to get each one.

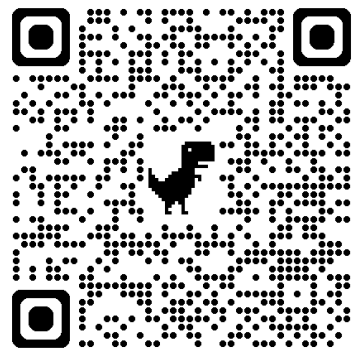


Want more money moments?



See the full book list

We've curated a full list of age-appropriate, story-driven books to help kids build a strong foundation in financial confidence.



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