

## Grade 7 - Narrative

### Cars

For years my parents had talked about buying a new car. When our minivan and I both got to be fourteen years old and the van was spending a day or two of each month at Ed's Auto Repairs, they decided it was finally time to replace it. On a Saturday morning, the whole family visited Larry's New and Used Motors.

"Gee," my mother said, peering at the price sticker on the side of a large, shiny, new sedan in the showroom, "maybe we ought to hang onto the old minivan for a couple more years until we can afford those leather seats and that fancy stereo system."

"Hmmm . . . I think we'll have to find a way to afford those kinds of features," my father said, lifting up my sister, Abby, so she could look inside. "It's hard to find a new car without them these days."

Car shopping seemed to put my parents in a good mood. My mother turned and smiled at me, "Well Jeffrey, we might want to hang onto the minivan for a few more years anyway, as an extra car, so you can drive it."

"Anne, he can apply for a learner's permit ten months from now," my dad said.

"What?" I said. This was news to me.

"You're entitled to apply for a Learner's Permit as early as sixty days before your fifteenth birthday," he repeated.

"If we let you," my mother added. "Better keep those grades up, Jeff."

"Whatever your mom says, of course!" joked my father.

That sounded so weird and wonderful to me: a Learner's Permit to *drive*. *Me*.

"Can I have a balloon?" asked Abby.

"Hey folks, my name is Larry. May I help you this morning?" The salesman, who I guessed was also the owner, untied a balloon for Abby as he spoke.

"What do you say?" asked my mother.

"Thank you!" said Abby.

"We'd like to test-drive a Desert Minivan GT," my father said.

“Did you want an automatic or a manual gear shift?”

“Oh, automatic,” my mother said. “I think that will be easier for Jeffrey to learn.”

The salesman seemed to notice me for the first time. “And when do you get your license, young man?”

“I’m only fourteen.”

“Time passes!” Larry said.

“Yes, we’re buying a car we plan to keep ten years, so Jeffrey will be driving it, too,” my mom said.

“You’ll have him doing grocery shopping, taking his sister to soccer practice, and stopping at the gas station to fill the tank. Teenagers who drive are very helpful!” Larry said. Then he winked at me and added, “Or they can be if they choose to.”

“Oh, we’ve got ourselves a keeper,” said my mother, looking at me affectionately. As I said, my parents were in a good mood that day.

Larry invited us outside to a parking lot full of new and used cars. The five of us climbed into a new tan-colored minivan. My mother took the driver’s seat. Larry spoke as she drove, “The Desert Minivan GT has safety features you’ll like for a teenager: driver air bags, neck-protection headrests, and our unique speedometer warning system that alerts you when you’ve exceeded the speed limit.”

Forget those practical safety features and annoying errands, I thought. I imagined myself at the steering wheel of a real hot car, driving to school, driving to the lake or to the mall to hang out, driving this girl I liked to the movies.

“Mom, do we really have to buy another minivan?” I asked as I looked at a sporty-looking bright blue convertible.

My mother sighed and was no doubt getting ready to give me a lecture when Larry answered for her. “Son, that car is a rocket. Someday you might be ready for a vehicle like that one, and I’ll be happy to sell it to you. For now, trust your parents’ judgment, become a good driver, and come see me again in about ten years.”