



Facilitator note: The skill is the sunk-cost check, not "quitting is brave." Minda's friend runs the identical check and stays, and both answers are honest - keep that visible. The rule is that past investment is spent either way and cannot vote; only future costs and gains count. Do not let students use the check to escape hard things at the first bad week: Minda is three months in, the pattern is steady, she sleeps on the decision, and adults approve the switch. Finishing the still life matters - leaving well is part of the skill. Students are not asked to announce their own quitting decisions in class; Activity 7 uses a made-up case. If a student is wrestling with a real commitment, the next step is a trusted-family conversation, not a worksheet verdict.

Activity 1: The two lists

From the story, reconstruct Minda's two lists - what staying buys, what switching buys. Which item on the staying list is really the past wearing a future costume?

Activity 2: Spent or ahead?

Label S (spent - already paid, cannot come back) or A (ahead - still in the future, can still count).

1. Three months of Tuesday afternoons.
2. The June exhibition.
3. The supplies Mama bought in September.
4. The spring oils unit.
5. The application essay about why art mattered.
6. Two free afternoons a week, January to June.

Which ones were allowed to vote in Minda's decision?





Activity 3: The pang audit

Minda asks the loudest feeling what it is protecting. What is it protecting? Why is the answer real but not a vote? What is the difference between a pang and a verdict, in the story?

Activity 4: Semester arithmetic (all numbers made up for practice)

An elective meets 2 afternoons a week. If 24 weeks remain in the year, how many afternoons is that? If a girl dreads 3 hours of each of those afternoons, how many heavy hours is that? If switching costs 1 hard conversation of 20 minutes, compare the two totals. What does the arithmetic NOT tell her? Show your steps.

Activity 5: Same check, opposite answers

Avital runs the same check and stays. Why is that the tool working rather than failing? What would you guess is different on Avital's lists? What does it mean that the check has no favorite answer?

Activity 6: Draw the exhibition

Draw the June exhibition: the wall of pieces, the printed program, Minda with her notebook, Avital beside her own piece. Only what can be seen - no labels for feelings. Caption with one line from the story.





Activity 7: Nechuma's choir - planning for a fictional case

A teen named Nechuma joined the school choir in September, paid for the robe herself, and by December knows it is not working - but leaving feels like wasting the robe. Write the sunk-cost sentence she needs to hear, one spent item and one ahead item from her case, and what an honest finish-it-well step could look like. One sentence each, with names.

Activity 8: Word grid

Find eight words left to right. Row/column numbering begins at 1.

Q	Z	X	C	O	S	T	B	F	Y
G	G	A	I	N	M	N	O	R	S
T	C	D	E	S	P	E	N	T	J
S	T	A	Y	F	Y	G	H	U	P
L	M	N	O	R	L	E	A	V	E
A	I	L	I	S	T	K	V	W	B
F	Y	G	H	P	A	N	G	N	O
S	I	X	C	D	E	A	I	Q	Z
X	J	K	V	W	B	F	Y	G	H
U	P	L	M	N	O	R	S	T	C

COST, GAIN, SPENT, STAY, LEAVE, LIST, PANG, SIX. Which word names what the three months already are, and which word names what the decision is really about?





Teacher answer key

1. Staying buys: the June exhibition and the printed name; the spring unit - which is oils, "which she has never liked"; six more months of Tuesday heaviness; the chance it clicks (written with a question mark). Switching buys: the newspaper if it has room; two afternoons she likes the sound of; the hard cost of telling Morah Kagan; no exhibition; the "I quit art" story. The past wearing a future costume: much of the staying column - the three months, the supplies, the application essay - dressed up as reasons, when the only true future items are the exhibition and the spring unit.

2. 1 S. 2 A. 3 S. 4 A. 5 S. 6 A. Only the A items were allowed to vote - "Both columns are already paid for. Which column do I want for the next six?"

3. It protects the picture of herself - the art girl since third grade, chosen out of thirty applicants. Real because identity is real and leaving it stings; not a vote because "it is a photograph, and photographs do not change if you stay in the room another six months." A pang is a feeling to name and let pass; a verdict is a decision about what to do. The story's rule: "Missing is a pang, not a verdict."

4. $2 \times 24 = 48$ afternoons. $48 \times 3 = 144$ heavy hours. One conversation = 20 minutes. The arithmetic does not tell her which afternoons she would love, what she would learn, or what matters to her - it only makes the size of the price tags visible. Steps shown.

5. Because the check tests the future, not the courage: Avital "still loves it, even the bad Tuesdays," so her staying column is full of real ahead-items, and staying is her honest answer. If the tool always produced "leave," it would be an escape hatch, not a check. Having no favorite answer is what makes both girls' decisions trustworthy.

6. Open. The drawing should show the wall of pieces, the program, the notebook, Avital beside her work. Strong captions quote "Like a whole year" or "A pang is a photograph, not a verdict." Any honest rendering counts.



7. Sample: Sunk-cost sentence - "The robe money is spent whether Nechuma stays or goes, so it cannot vote." Spent item - the robe and September's Sundays. Ahead item - the spring concert, and the Tuesday rehearsals between now and then. Finish-well step - "She sings through the winter concert she already committed to, tells the choir director to her face, and hands the robe back clean." Any plan that counts only the future and leaves well counts.

8. COST row 1 columns 4-7; GAIN row 2 columns 2-5; SPENT row 3 columns 5-9; STAY row 4 columns 1-4; LEAVE row 5 columns 6-10; LIST row 6 columns 3-6; PANG row 7 columns 5-8; SIX row 8 columns 1-3 The three months are already SPENT; the decision is really about whether to STAY or LEAVE for the next SIX months.