



Elijah McCoy (“The Real 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?

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 central 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?

They say that it’s better to buy something expensive that lasts than something cheap that breaks.

Do you agree or disagree with this idea?

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 parka that you wear every day for the entire winter (90 days) for 3 consecutive winters. What is the cost per wearing for that item? (about 75 cents per wearing).

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.

Example A: \$100 pair of shoes that you wear every day for a year. Cost per wearing:

Example B: \$100 pair of shoes that you only wear once. Cost per wearing:



Using this method of evaluating value, what is the best value in your closet (the item from which you've gotten the most for the money you paid?) Which item has given the worst value?

Some people have started renting fancy clothes that they know they will only wear one time. What do you think of that idea? What are the pros and cons of renting clothes?

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:

Boredom

Worry

Health issues

Fear of catching an illness

Lack of exercise

Overeating/poor nutrition

Too much time sitting

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?



Sometimes, we see these problems at work. Do you have a job now? Is there anything happening that could be done better or more efficiently? Have you ever suggested an improvement to your boss or supervisor?

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?