

# Think About Fran and Sam:

Which one is better at thinking?



By Dr. Linda Elder

There are two kinds of skilled thinkers



Selfish  
Sam



He's good  
at thinking.  
But he's  
not fair  
to others.



Fair  
Minded  
Fran



She's good  
at thinking.  
And she's  
fair to  
others.

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**By Dr. Linda Elder**

Illustrated by Sara Barnett

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## Fairminded Fran



"I think a lot. It helps me to learn. It helps me to figure things out. I want to understand my parents and my playmates. In fact, I even want to understand myself and why I do things. Sometimes I do things that I don't understand. It's not easy trying to understand everyone and everything. Lots of people say one thing and do another. You can't always believe what people say. You can't believe a lot of what you see on TV. People often say things not because they mean them but because they want

things and are trying to please you. I would like to make the world a better place. I want to make it better for everyone, not just for me and my friends. To understand other people you have to look at things as they do. You have to understand their situation and what you would feel like if you were them. You have to put yourself in their shoes. The other night I got mad at my sister because she wanted to watch a TV program that was on at the same time my favorite show was on. I didn't want to let her until I realized that she needed to watch her program to do some homework for school. I knew then that it wouldn't be fair of me to insist on my show, since she did have to do her homework for school. It isn't easy to be fair. It's a lot easier to be selfish and just think about yourself. But if I don't think about others, why should they think about me? I want to be fair to others because I expect everyone to be fair to me."



People liked Fran because she always tried to be fair.

No matter what she was doing, or who she was with, she tried to be fair.

Whenever she was watching TV and others wanted to watch something different, she tried to be fair.



Whenever her teacher asked Fran to help another student learn something in class, Fran tried to be fair.



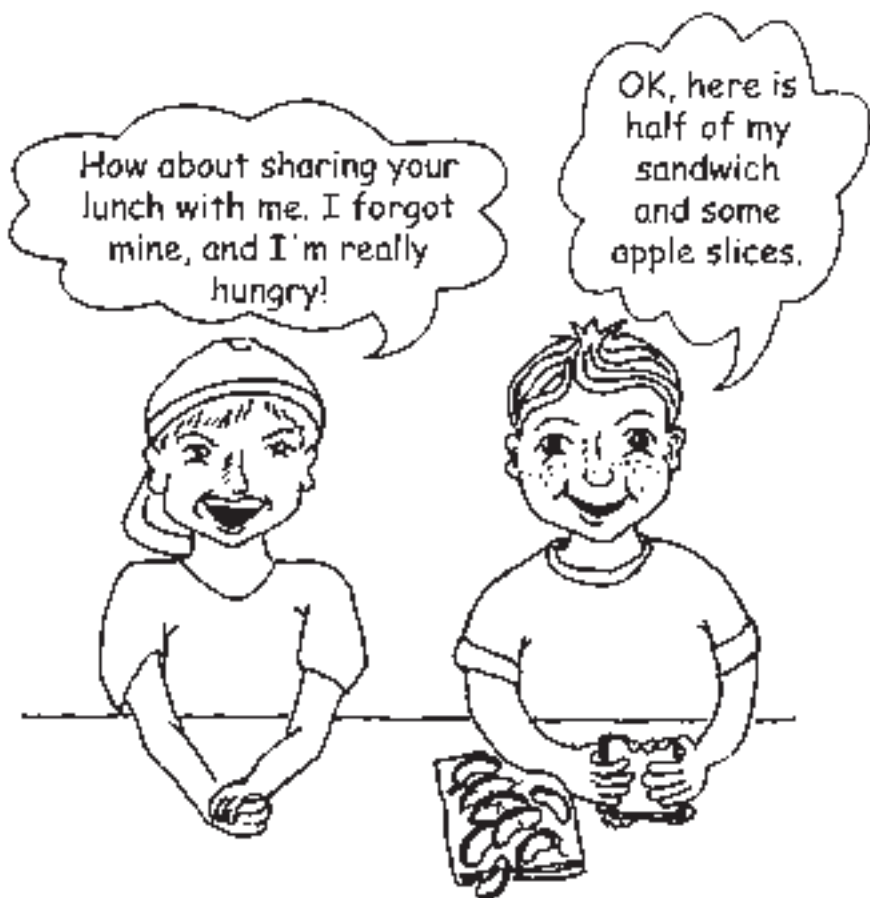


Because she tried to be fair, and she *was* fair most of the time, most people liked Fran. But there was one person who didn't like her. That was Selfish Sam.

Now Selfish Sam was just the opposite of Fairminded Fran. He didn't try to be fair. He thought that he should get whatever he wanted. He was often unfair to others. Sometimes he hurt their feelings because he was selfish.

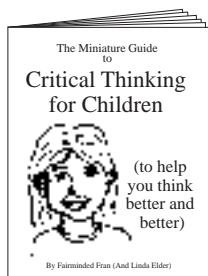


And Selfish Sam would trick people to get what he wanted.



**Note to the Teacher:**

The templates on pages 21–24 may be enlarged and duplicated for classroom use. These pages help children internalize the concepts of fair and unfair thinking. The more students think about these concepts and apply the concepts to situations they face on a daily basis, the more they will develop as fair-minded thinkers.

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The Foundation for Critical Thinking seeks to promote essential change in education and society through the cultivation of fair-minded critical thinking, thinking predisposed toward intellectual empathy, humility, perseverance, integrity, and responsibility. A rich intellectual environment is possible only with critical thinking at the foundation of education. Why? Because only when students learn to think through the content they are learning in a deep and substantive way can they apply what they are learning in their lives. Moreover, in a world of accelerating change, intensifying complexity, and increasing interdependence, critical thinking is now a requirement for economic and social survival. Contact us to learn about our publications, videos, workshops, conferences, and professional development programs.

#### *About the Author:*



**Dr. Linda Elder** is an educational psychologist who has taught both psychology and critical thinking at the college level. She is the President of the Foundation for Critical Thinking and the Executive Director of the Center for Critical Thinking. Dr. Elder has done original research into the relation of thought and emotion, the cognitive and the affective, and has developed an original theory of the stages of critical thinking development. She has authored and co-authored a series of articles on critical thinking including a column on critical thinking for the *Journal of Developmental Education*. She has co-authored a textbook published by Prentice Hall entitled *Critical Thinking: Tools for Taking Charge of Your Learning and Your Life*. She is a dynamic presenter with extensive experience in leading seminars for elementary educators and in designing curriculum materials with teachers.

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