

MODULE 6

◆◆◆ HOUSING ◆◆◆

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TEACHER NOTES

Some of the topics addressed in this module will be of interest to tenants only (e.g., landlord-tenant responsibilities), some topics will interest homeowners only (e.g., building permits, contractors, and property taxes), and other topics will be of interest to both homeowners and tenants (e.g., utilities). Before beginning the module, survey the number of renters vs. homeowners in your class so that you can select topics and experiential activities that are of interest to your class.

To introduce the concept of utilities, shut off the classroom lights. Ask students what they would do if there were a sudden power outage. Continue by asking students what utilities are and what kinds of utility service they have. Explain that the module will cover important information on utilities.

COMPETENCIES FOR MODULE 6

Students will learn to:

1. Identify the rights and responsibilities of landlords and tenants.
2. Contact their landlords or property associations regarding housing problems.
3. Report a problem with utility service or billing.
4. Obtain information about utility payment plans.
5. Locate resources for building permits or property tax questions.
6. Check a contractor's or solicitor's references or report a complaint against them.

THE VOCABULARY ACTIVITIES AND THE READING PASSAGE

The Reading Passage contains a large number of vocabulary words that may be unfamiliar to students. To facilitate the teaching of this module, Vocabulary Activities 1-A and 1-B correspond to the first part of the Reading Passage only (through "Utilities"), while Vocabulary Activities 2-A and 2-B correspond to the rest of the Reading Passage ("Property Taxes" through the end). You may choose to teach the Reading Passage in two parts, at two different class meetings, depending on the level of your class.

EXPANSION IDEAS

Fair Housing Act and Housing Discrimination

Students may have experienced discrimination in the area of housing and this issue might be productively explored in the classroom. You may want to research the Fair Housing Act to see what is legal and illegal in your area. It is also important to find out what recourse people have in cases of discrimination. See "Resources" for more information.

Community Newspapers

If the level of the class and student interest warrant it, you may want to include more classroom instruction on ads for 1) apartments and other housing and 2) contractors. Present and practice vocabulary used in want ads (e.g., number of bedrooms, utilities included, security deposit, etc.) and role-play apartment hunting scenarios. Have students research ads for contractors and tradesmen to see how they advertise and solicit business.

TEACHER NOTES *continued*Credit History and Home Ownership

Since students may be affected by their credit history as they apply for apartments or mortgages, you may want to address the topic of credit (i.e., why it's advisable and how to establish credit as well as how to obtain a copy of one's credit report). If possible, obtain a copy of an actual credit report (remove the name and other personal information). If students are interested in learning about purchasing a home or applying for a mortgage, the Fannie Mae Foundation offers a wealth of free information in several languages (see Resources), including booklets about credit, home buying, and mortgages. Local mortgage lenders and real estate agencies may be sources of additional information.

Word Forms

A usage focus that you may want to highlight in the context of this module is vocabulary development with verb, noun, and adjective forms of words. Here are some examples:

1. He pays the **rent** every month. (*noun*)
2. They **rent** an apartment on Center Street. (*verb*)

1. He **repairs** the roof when it leaks. (*verb*)
2. The **repairs** take a lot of time. (*noun*)

1. Lightning can **damage** property. (*verb*)
2. There was a lot of **damage** to the tree. (*noun*)

1. His **building** is on the corner. (*noun*)
2. He's **building** an addition to his house. (*verb*)
3. He needs a **building** permit for his driveway. (*adjective*)

1. The landlord repaired the **leaks** in the roof. (*noun*)
2. The roof **leaks** when it rains. (*verb*)
3. The man fixed the **leaking** roof. (*adjective*)

POSSIBLE AUTHENTIC MATERIALS

- A monthly rental agreement form (lease)
- Brochures from the Office of the Illinois Attorney General regarding landlord and tenant rights
- Guides to local property maintenance codes
- Utility company bills and brochures for payment options

TEACHER NOTES continued**RESOURCES***Print Materials

Consumer Rights for Immigrants, Deanne Loonin and Chi Chi Wu (2002). The National Consumer Law Center, Inc. (2002). Boston, MA (617) 523-8089. A handbook for advocates including information on the most critical consumer issues faced by low-income immigrants.

Web Sites

ABTolls' Reading Your Phone Bill

www.abelltolls.com/information/readingbills.html

A non-profit phone rate watchdog web site providing information on reading the charges on phone bills and finding the best rates.

Angie's List

www.angieslist.com

Consumer-driven organization providing customer reviews on local service companies in 15 major U.S. cities. Covers 250 categories such as roofing, plumbing, and landscaping. Fee for membership.

Better Business Bureau

www.bbb.org

Articles, free publications, and information on how to file a complaint against a business as well as consumer information on purchasing and maintaining a home.

Citizens Utility Board

www.citizensutilityboard.org

Non-profit Illinois state consumer advocate organization providing up-to-date news on utility issues and helpful tips to consumers.

Exelon (parent company of ComEd and PECO)

www.ceco.com/

Illinois electric companies' web site providing information on gas rates, reading gas bills, bill payment options, and a payment assistance program.

Fannie Mae Foundation

www.fanniemaefoundation.org

Information and free publications on credit, mortgages, and home buying; many materials are available in other languages and in easy-to-read English.

Federal Trade Commission Consumer Information

www.ftc.gov/bcp/menu-credit.htm

Information and brochures (some in Spanish) on topics such as credit, loans, home equity loans, and mortgage discrimination.

TEACHER NOTES continued

Helping People Help Themselves

www.ahandup.com

A program helping low-income customers pay off delinquent utility bills through volunteer work or education. Web site includes names of participating utility companies and social service agencies.

Metropolitan St. Louis Equal Housing Opportunity Council

stlouis.missouri.org/501c/ehoc/law.html

Information about the Fair Housing Act.

Nicor Gas

www.nicorinc.com

Information on gas rates, reading gas bills, bill payment options, and the budget payment plan to spread costs over a whole year.

Office of the Illinois Attorney General Consumer Protection Information

www.ag.state.il.us/consumer/consume.htm

Consumer information on credit, home equity, household moves, and landlord/tenant rights and laws.

U.S. Postal Service

www.usps.com

Information on certified mail, other mail tracking services, and online change of address form.

Video

Crossroads Café (1996). Unit 11, “No Vacancy” (tenant rights/discrimination) and Unit 23, “The Gift” (taxes). Videos and tape scripts available from Intelecom, (800) 576-2988, www.intelecom.org. Textbooks are available from Heinle & Heinle, www.heinle.com. Videos may be used independently of textbooks.

* This list of resources is also located at www.thecenterweb.org (click on “The Adult Learning Resource Center”) where it is updated annually.

PICTURES FOR VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

homeowner



tenant

landlord

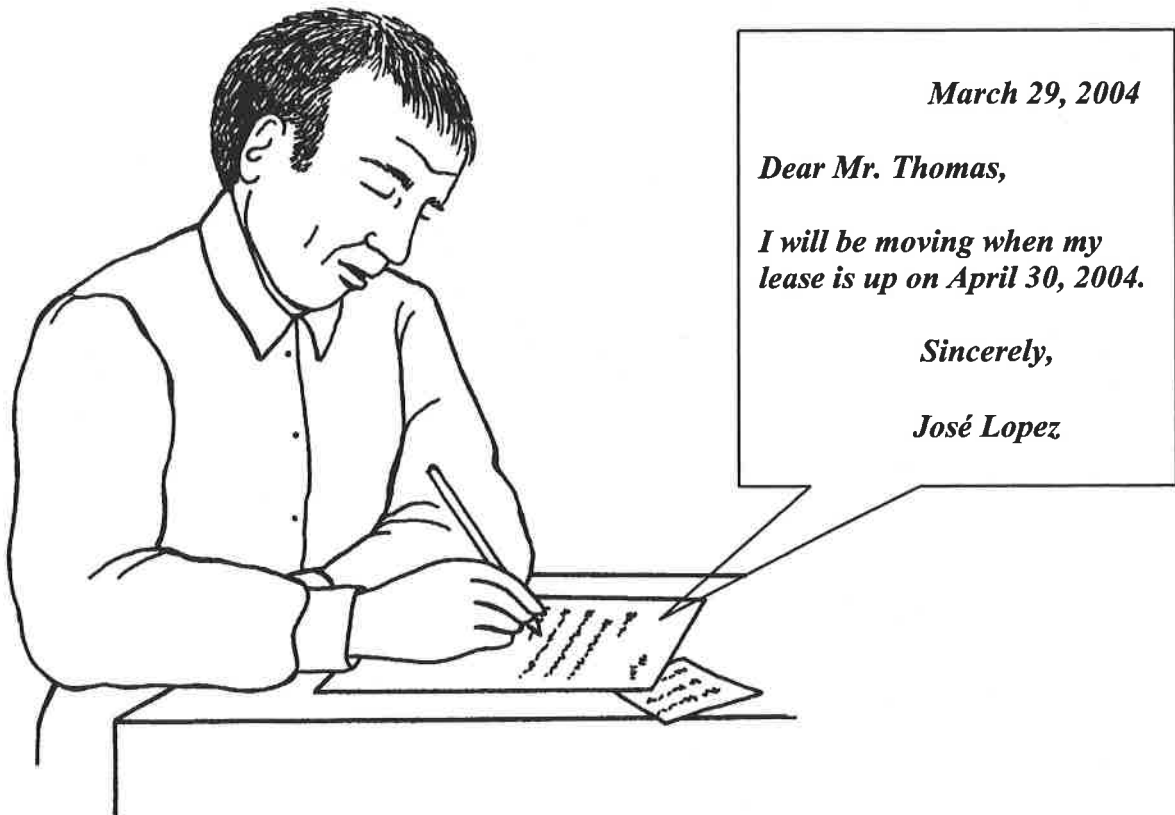


PICTURES FOR VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT continued

lease

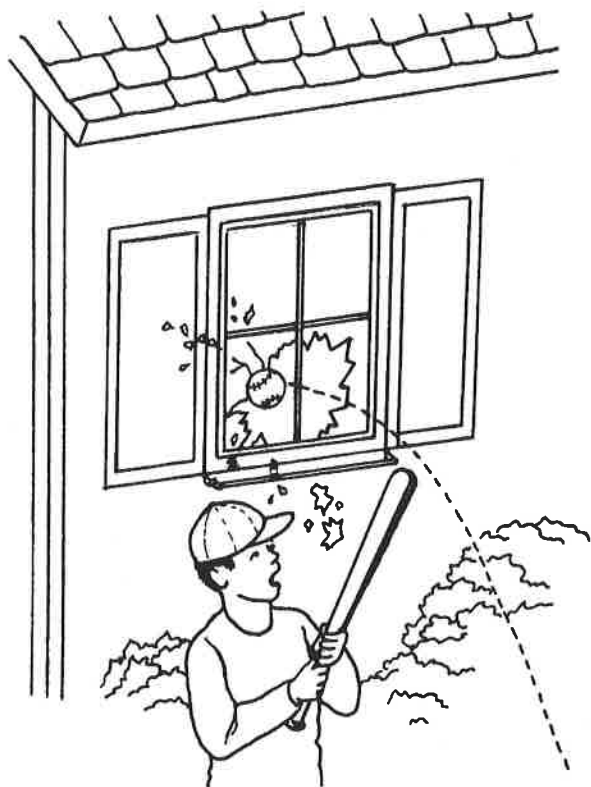
APARTMENT LEASE	
Thomas Property Management 89 First Street Harris, IL 56570 (555) 356-9076	
This Lease Agreement (this "Lease") is dated <u>April 25, 2003</u> , by and between Thomas Property Management ("Landlord") and <u>Jóse Perez</u> ("Tenant"). The parties agree as follows:	
TERM: The lease term will begin on May 1, 2003 and will terminate on April 30, 2004.	
PAYMENTS: Tenant shall pay to landlord lease payments of \$750.00 payable in advance on the first day of each month...	
PETS: Pets shall not be allowed without...	
<hr/>	
LANDLORD: <u>Samuel Thomas</u> Thomas Property Management	<u>April 25, 2003</u> Date
TENANT: <u>Jóse Perez</u>	<u>April 25, 2003</u> Date

written notice



PICTURES FOR VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT continued

damage



repair

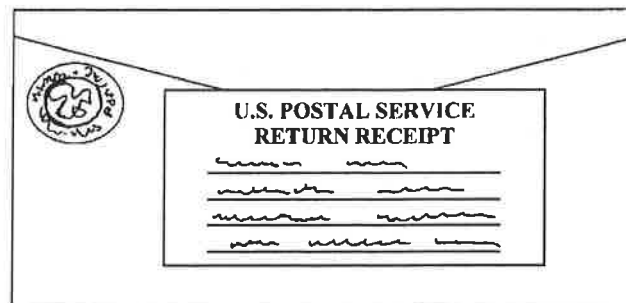
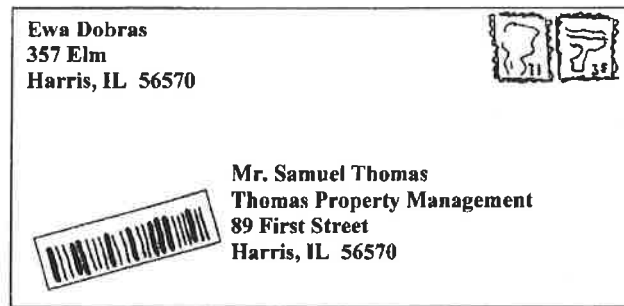


leak



PICTURES FOR VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT continued

registered mail
certified mail



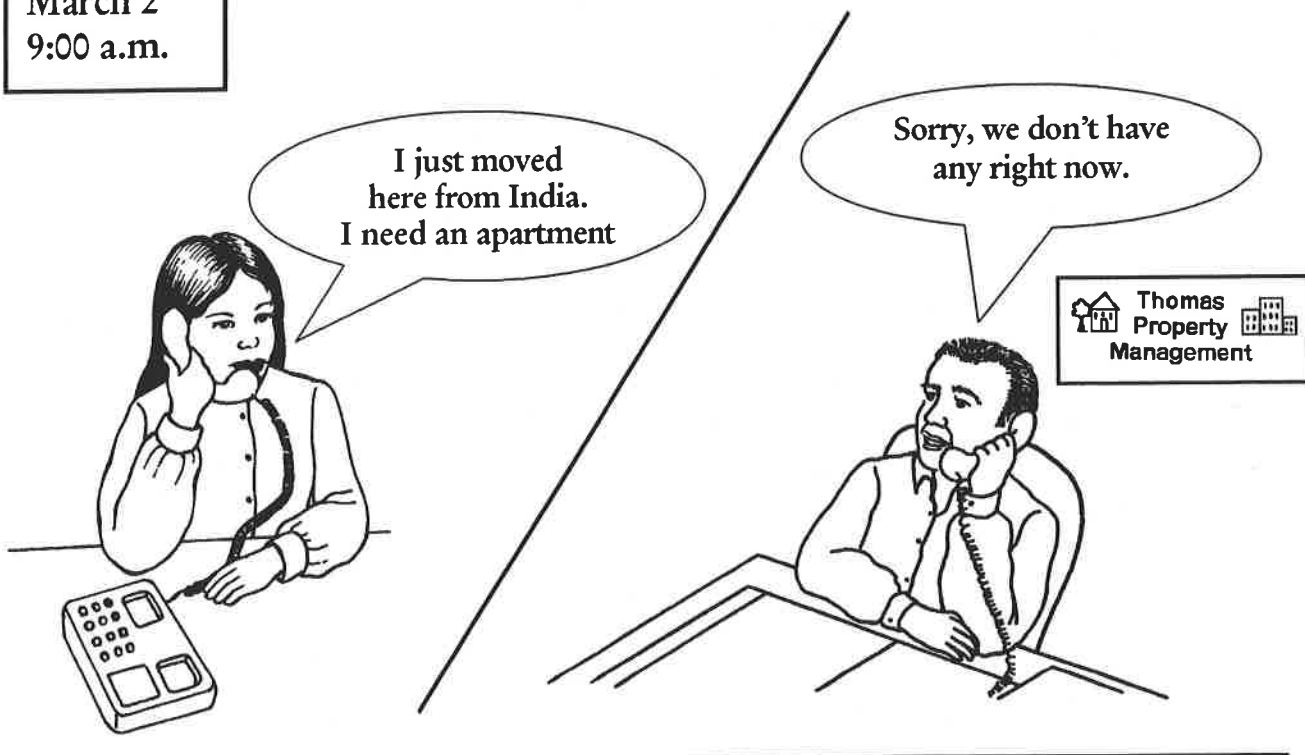
lawyer/attorney



PICTURES FOR VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT continued

discrimination

March 2
9:00 a.m.



March 2
9:30 a.m.



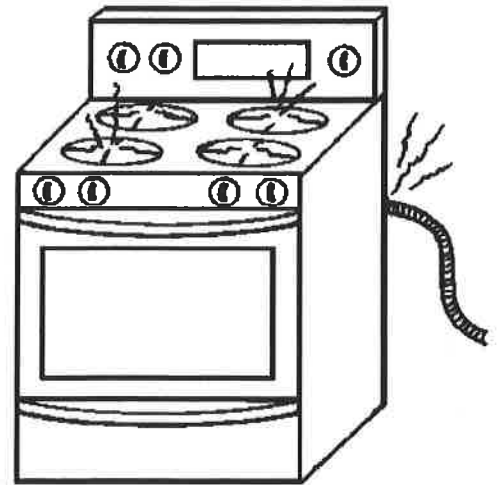
PICTURES FOR VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT continued

UTILITIES

telephone



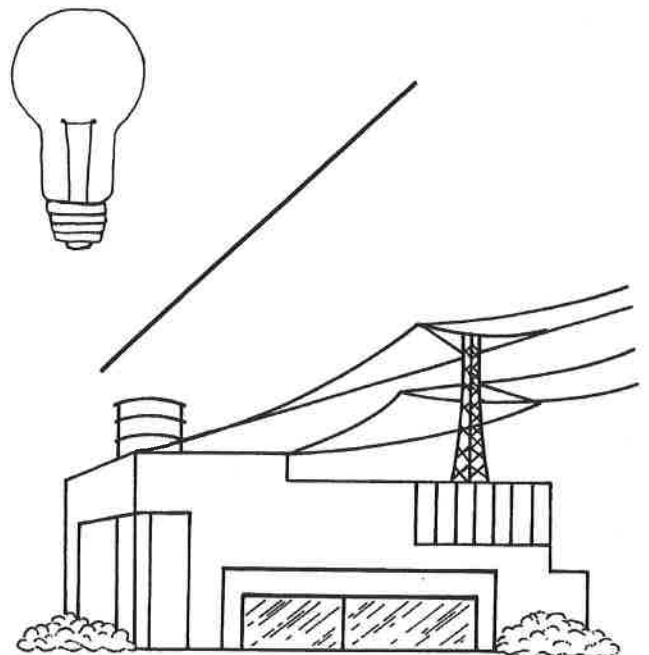
natural gas



water



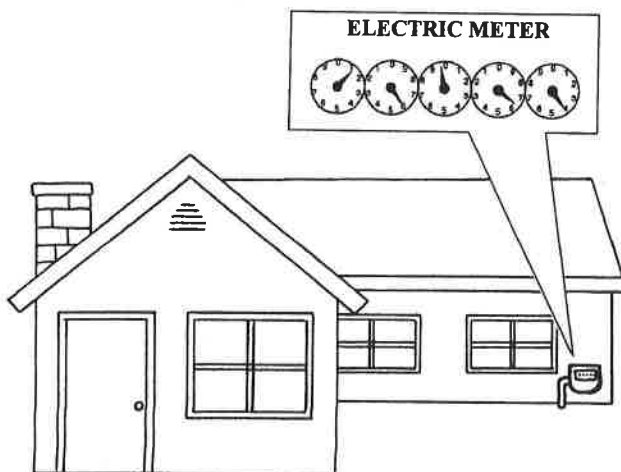
electric



PICTURES FOR VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT continued

UTILITY BILLS

meter



budget plan

GAS BILL: BUDGET PLAN

Month	Bill	Month	Bill
January	\$80.00	July	\$80.00
February	\$80.00	August	\$80.00
March	\$80.00	September	\$80.00
April	\$80.00	October	\$80.00
May	\$80.00	November	\$80.00
June	\$80.00	December	\$80.00

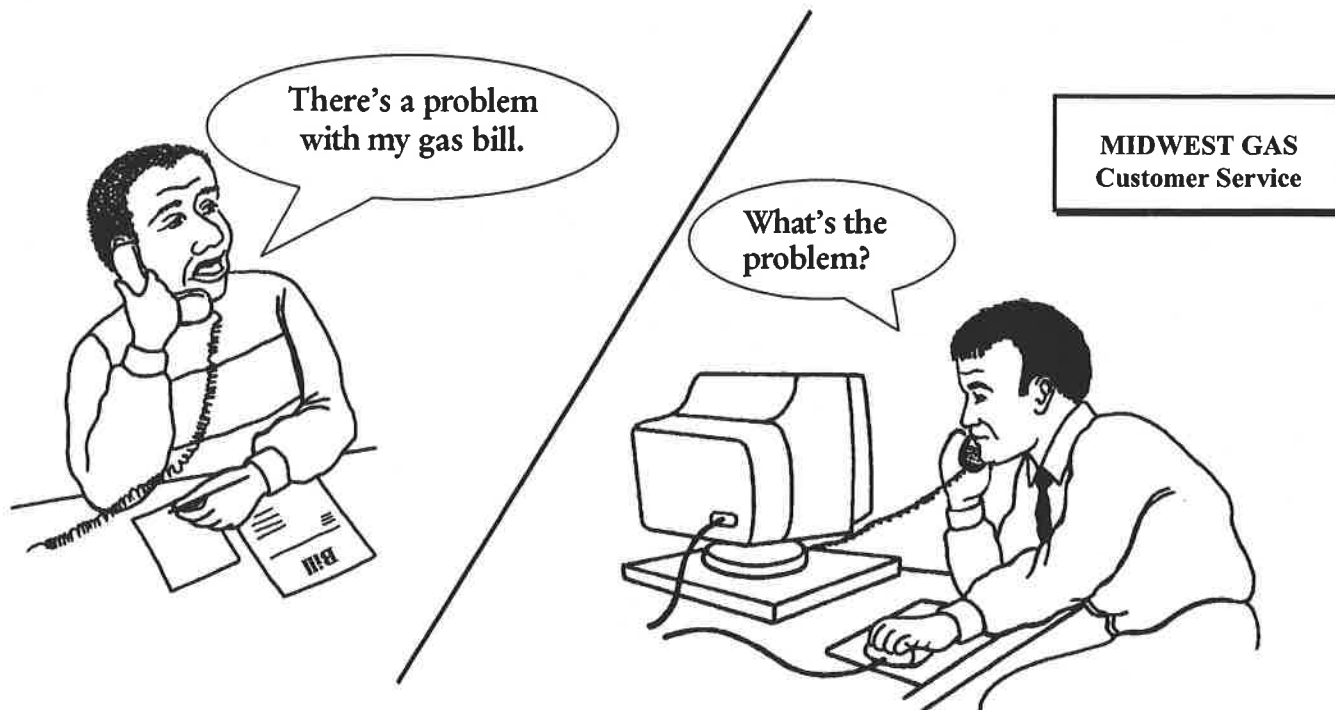
Total: \$960.00

GAS BILL: REGULAR BILLING

Month	Bill	Month	Bill
January	\$135.00	July	\$30.00
February	\$127.00	August	\$33.00
March	\$101.00	September	\$40.00
April	\$75.00	October	\$90.00
May	\$59.00	November	\$110.00
June	\$35.00	December	\$125.00

Total: \$960.00

customer service



PICTURES FOR VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT continued

local telephone service

Chicago
(773) 555-2435



Chicago
(773) 555-5987



long distance telephone service

Chicago
(773) 555-2435

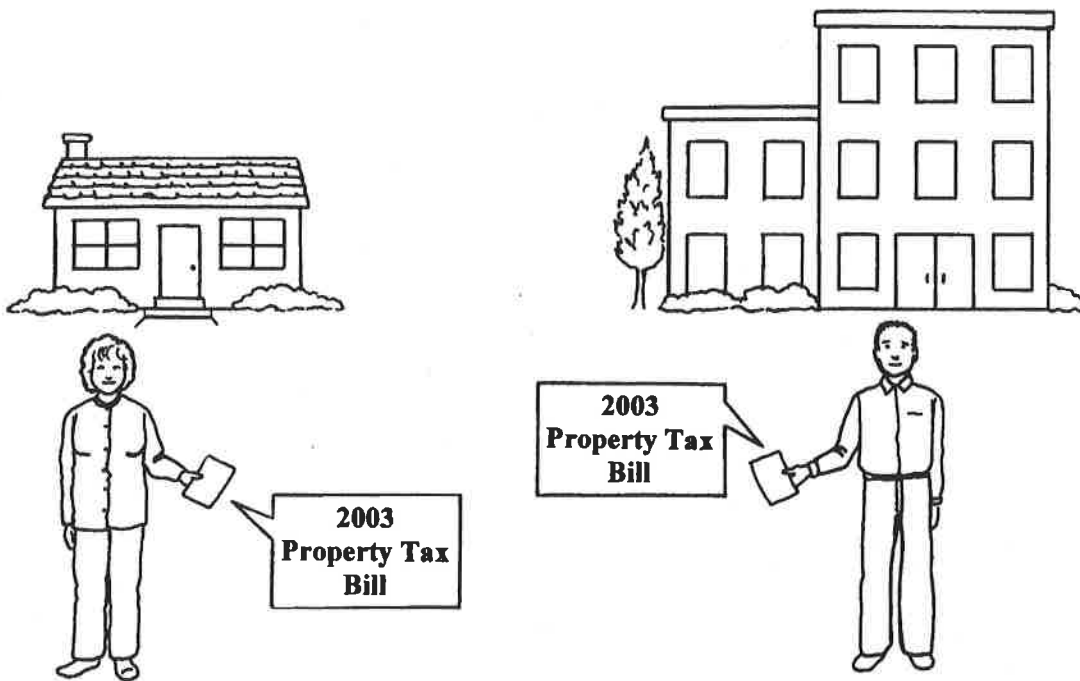


New York
(212) 555-3678



PICTURES FOR VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT continued

property taxes



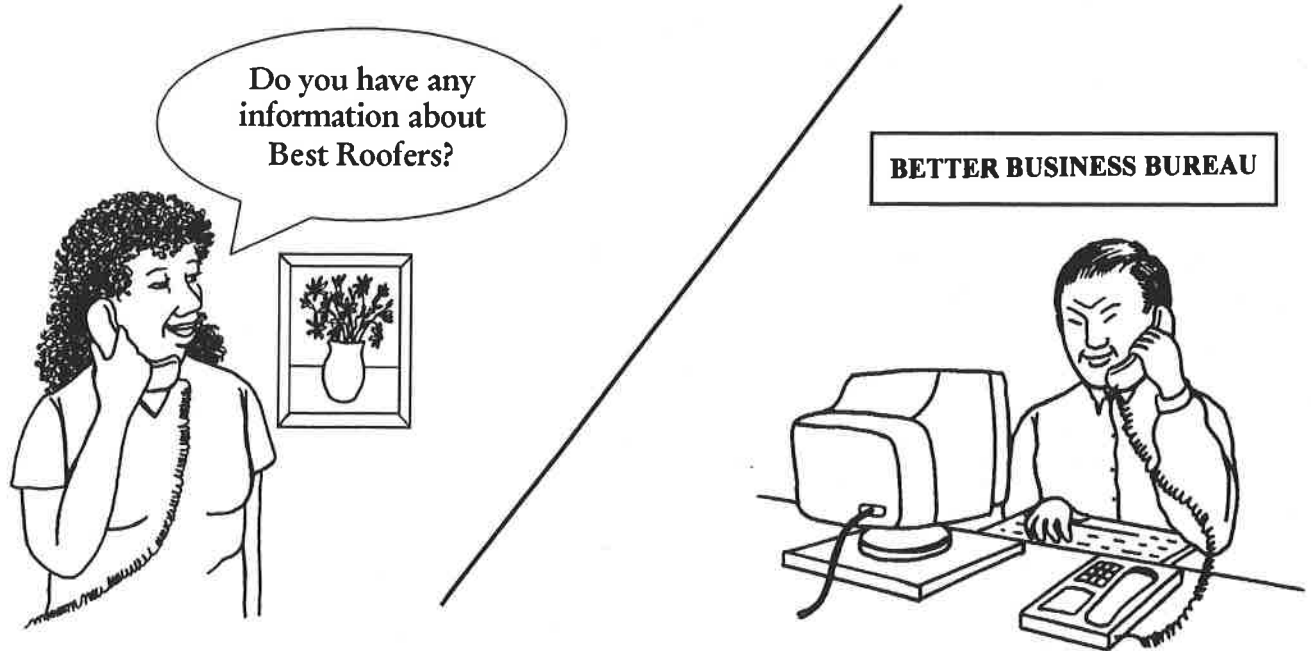
assessor



PICTURES FOR VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT continued

HIRING A CONTRACTOR

calling the Better Business Bureau for information



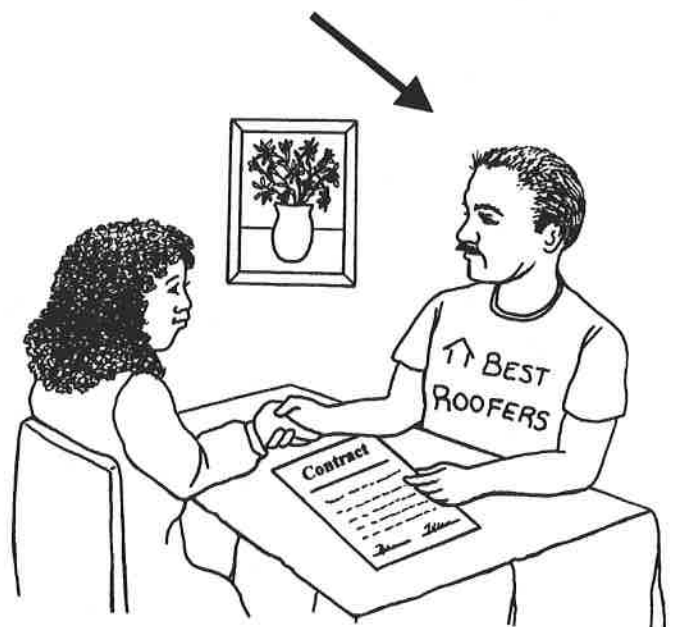
references

BEST ROOFERS
People love our work!

Tom Smith (354) 555-2976
132 Oak St.
Harris, IL

Julia Kowalska (597) 555-6088
2987 75th St.
Greensburg, IL

contractor



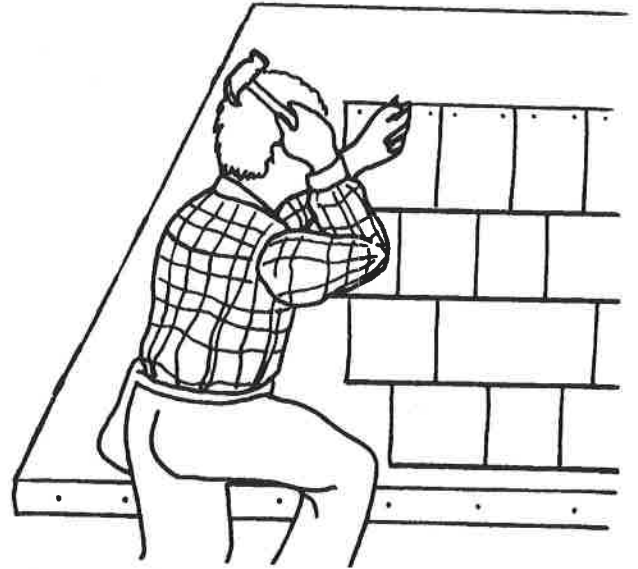
PICTURES FOR VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT continued

HIRING A CONTRACTOR

building permit



roofing contractor



calling the Better Business Bureau to make a complaint



PICTURES FOR VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT continued

solicitor

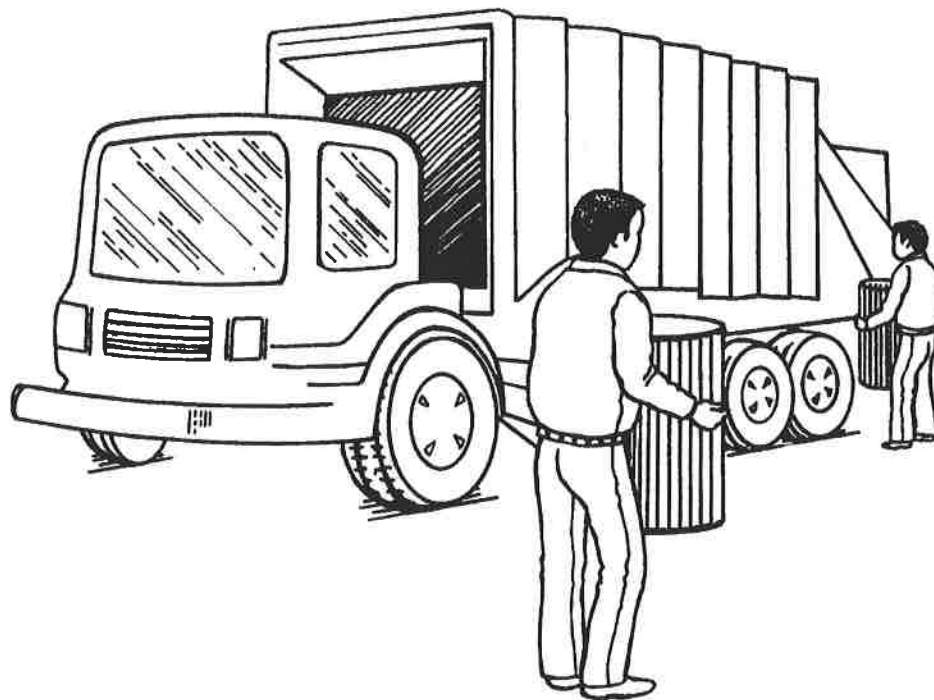


telephone solicitor

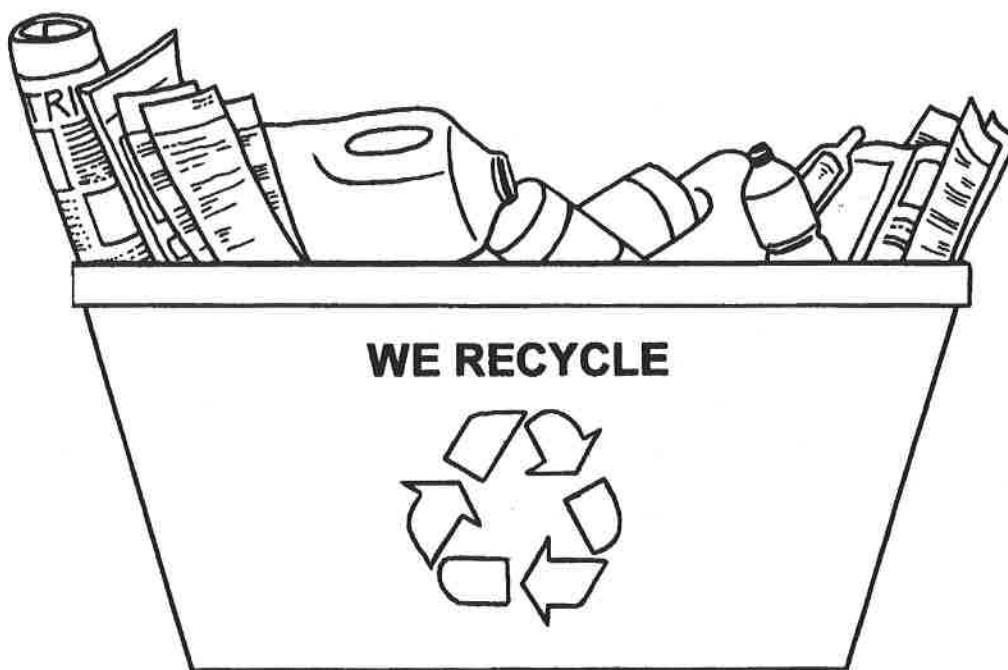


PICTURES FOR VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT continued

garbage collection

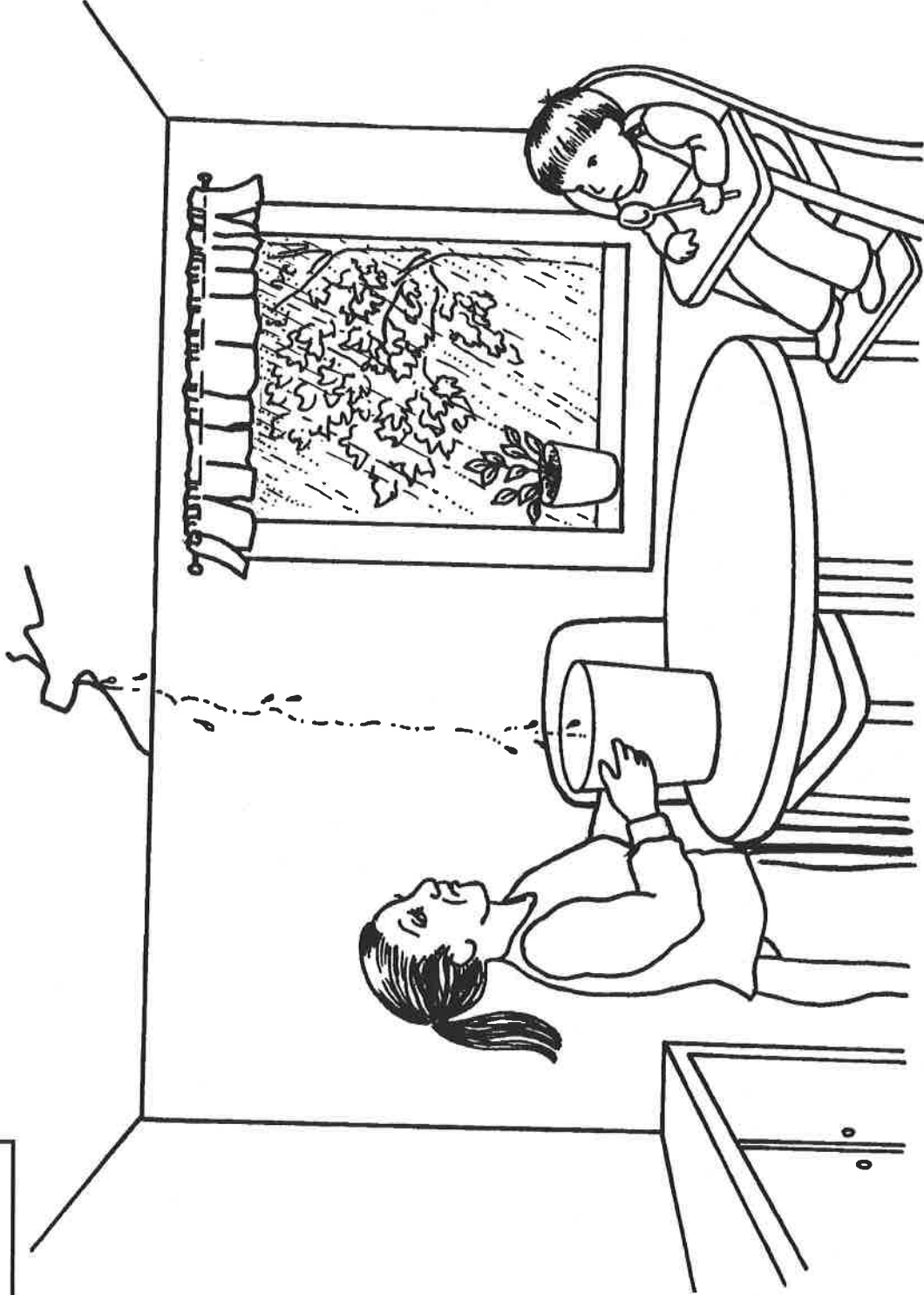


recycling



PICTURES FOR LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE

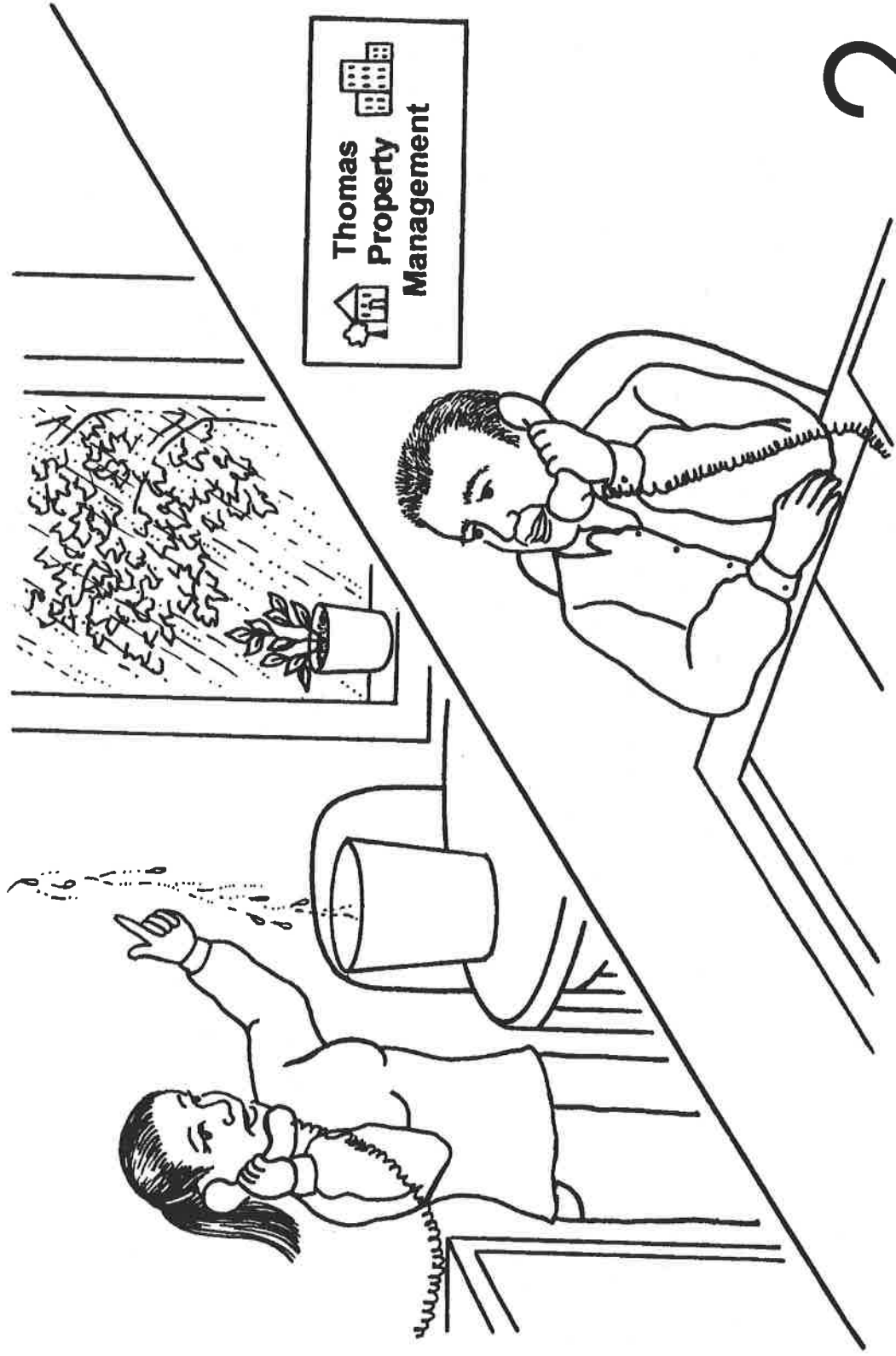
April 3



1

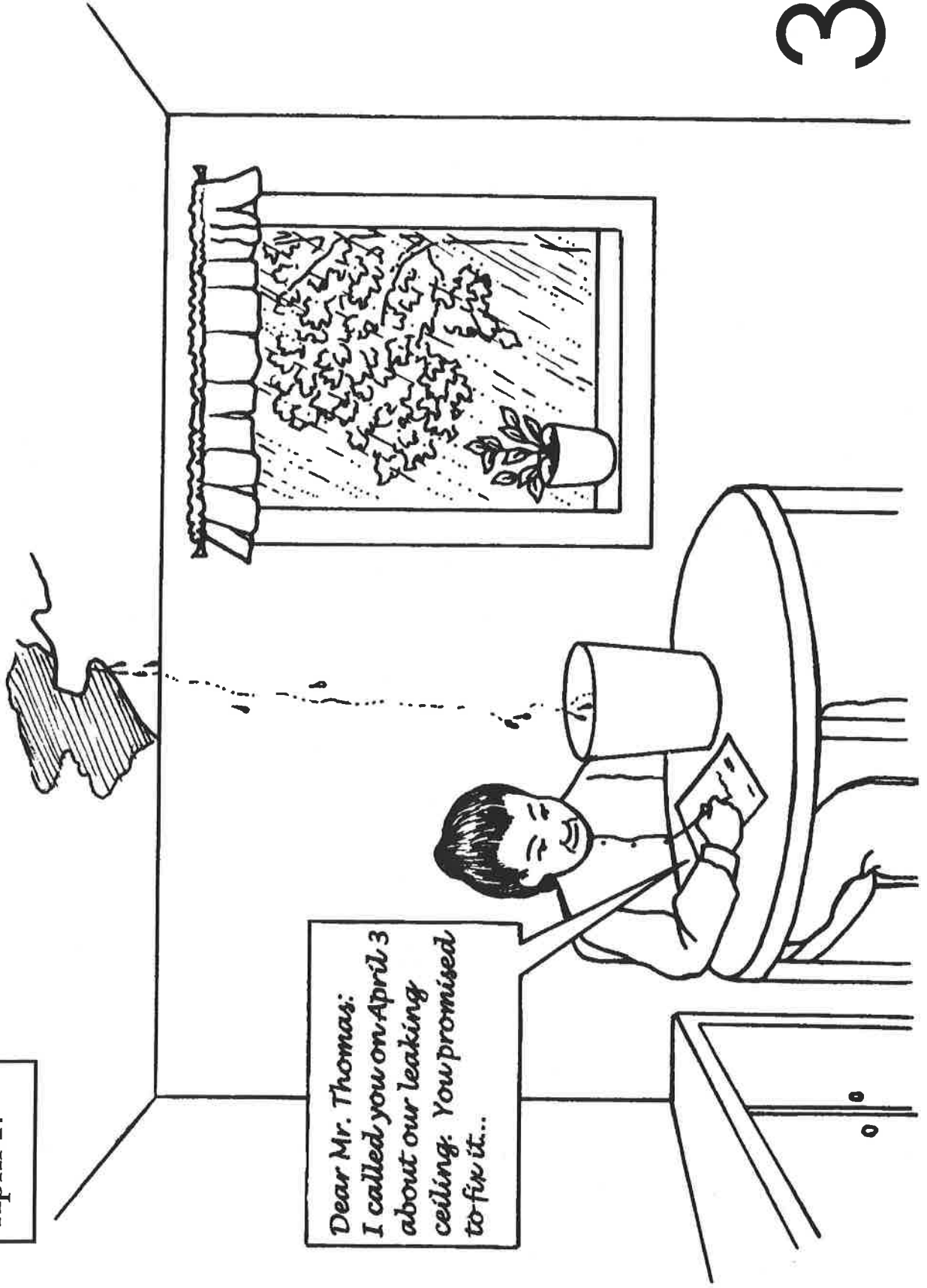
PICTURES FOR LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE continued

April 3



PICTURES FOR LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE continued

April 17



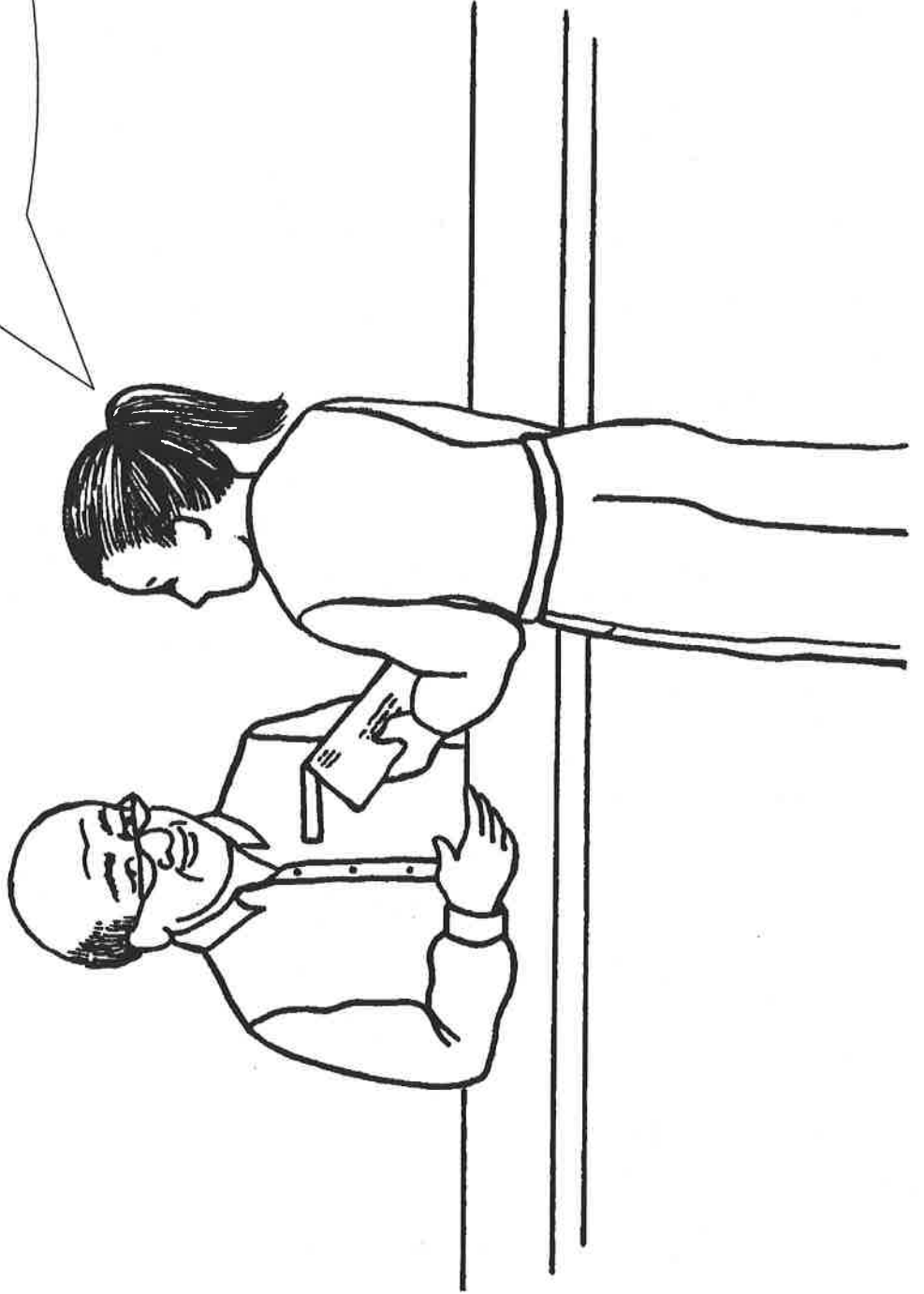
Dear Mr. Thomas:
I called you on April 3
about our leaking
ceiling. You promised
to fix it...

PICTURES FOR LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE continued

April 17

U.S. POST OFFICE

I want to send this
by Certified Mail
with a return receipt.

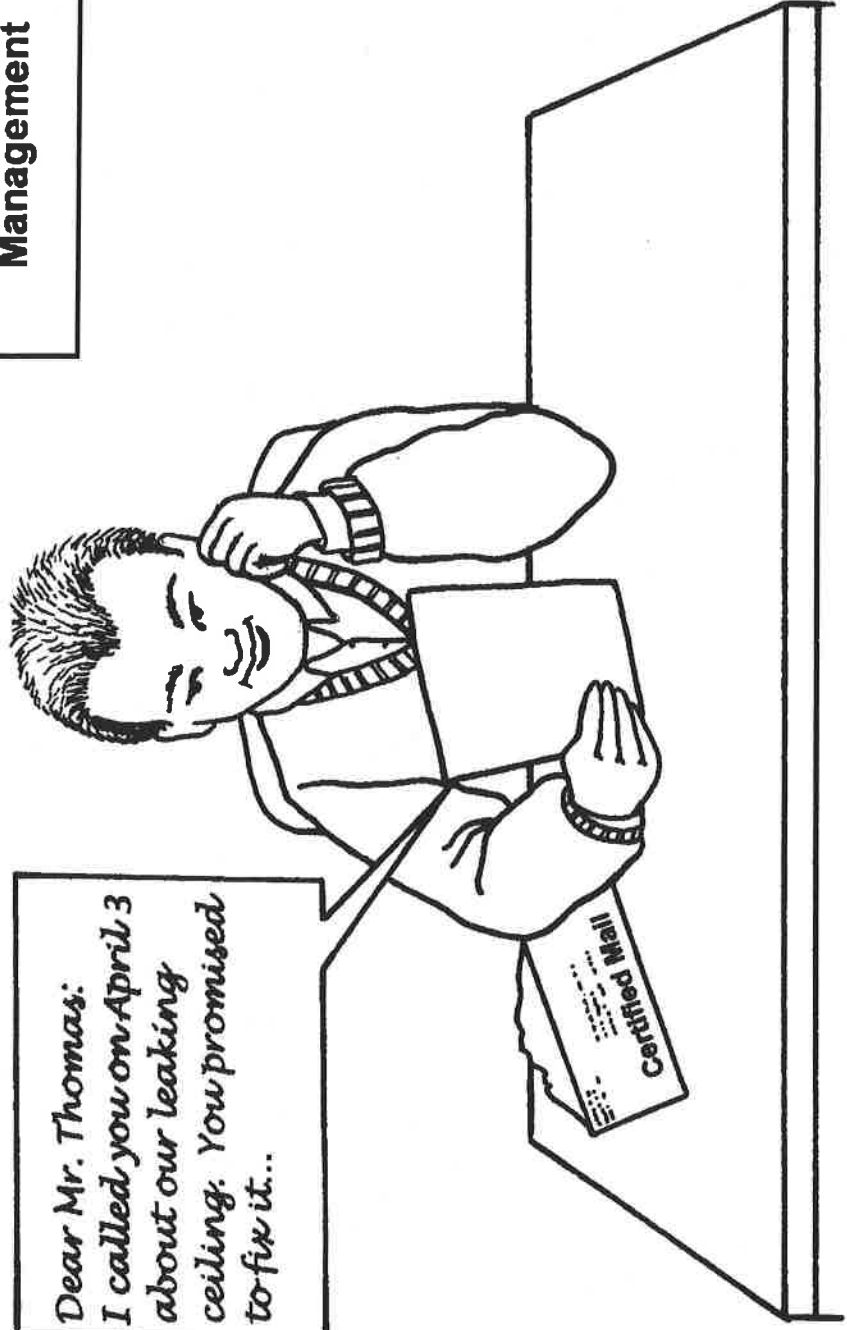


PICTURES FOR LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE continued

April 18

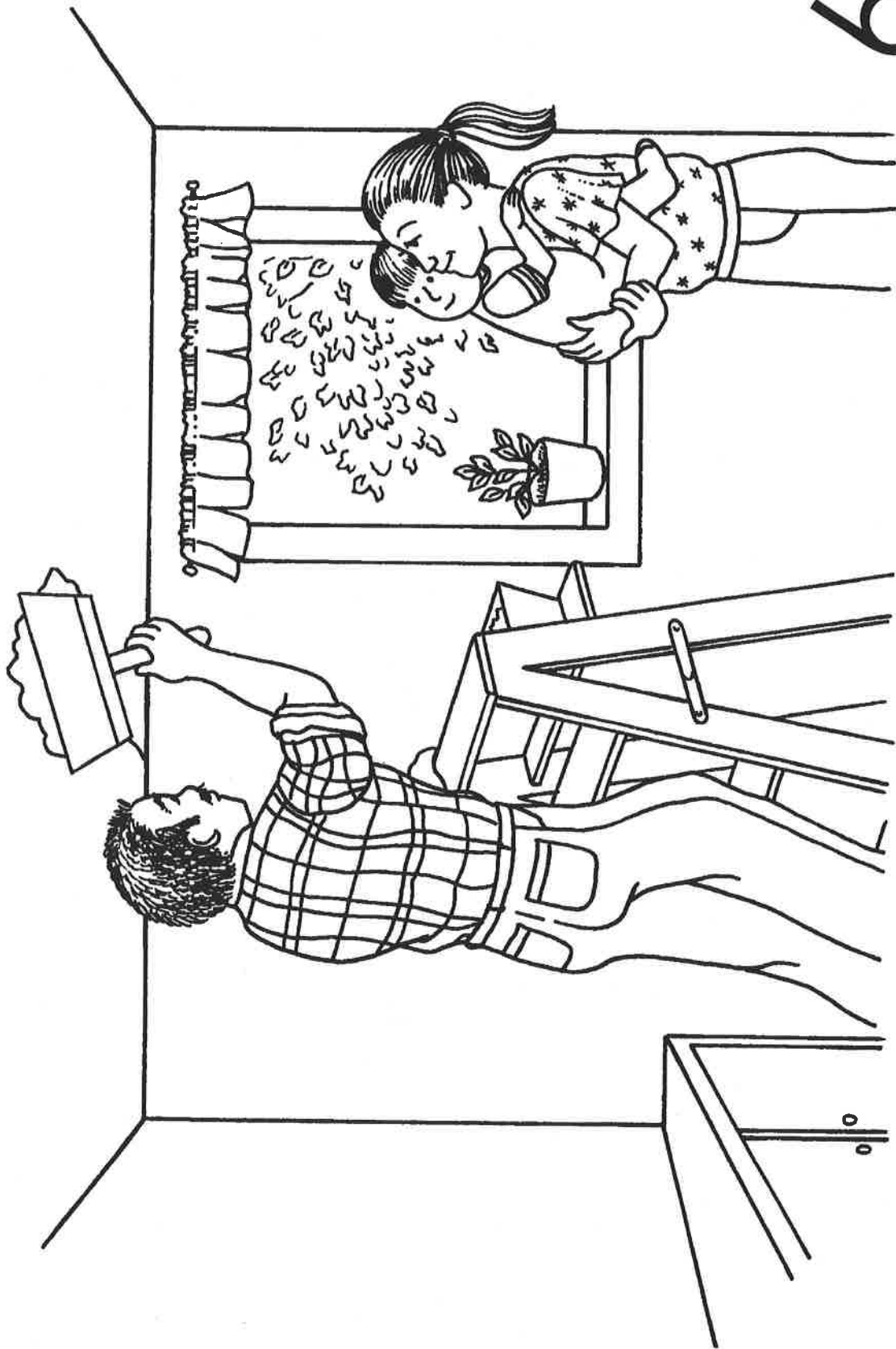


Dear Mr. Thomas:
I called you on April 3
about our leaking
ceiling. You promised
to fix it...



PICTURES FOR LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE continued

April 20



6

PICTURES FOR GROUP STORY WRITING

Directions: Work in groups of three or four. Write a story about the pictures below and on the next page. Write one or more sentences for each picture. Then share your story with the class.

April 3



1

April 3



2

PICTURES FOR GROUP STORY WRITING continued

April 17



3

April 17

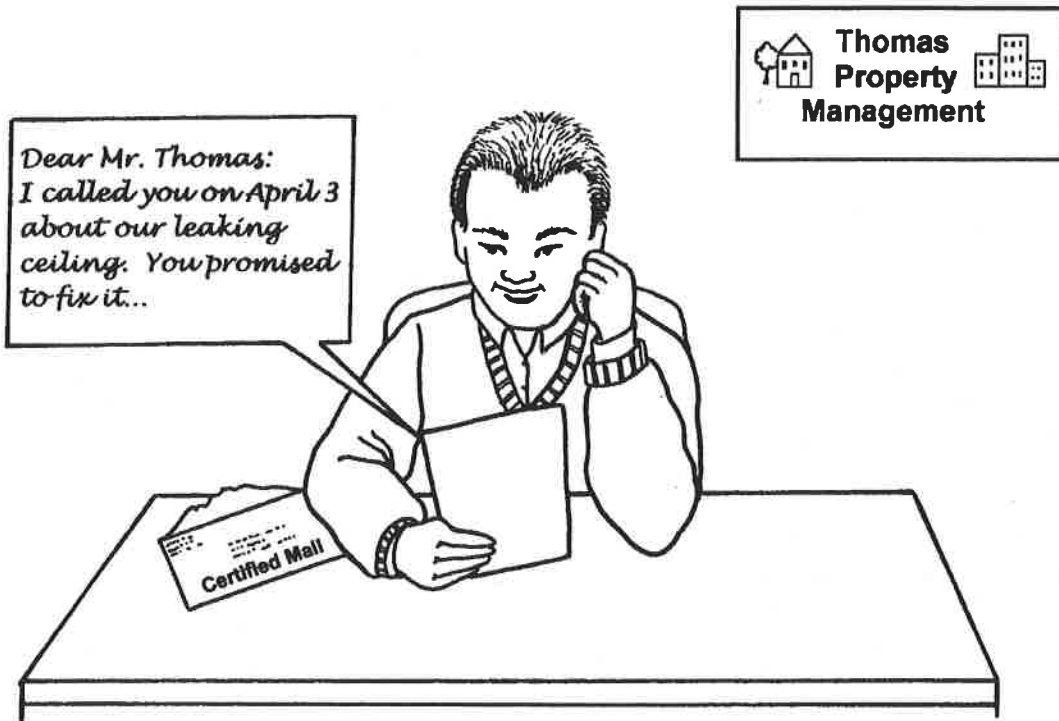
U.S. POST OFFICE



4

PICTURES FOR GROUP STORY WRITING continued

April 18



5

April 20



6

READING PASSAGE: Pre-Reading Activity

Directions: Think about housing in your community. Discuss the answers to the questions below with your classmates. (Optional: Write the answers to the questions.)

1. Do you rent a house or apartment? Or do you own your own house or condominium?
2. What responsibilities do tenants have? What responsibilities do landlords have?
3. What utilities do you pay for? If you rent, what utilities are included in your rent?
4. What can people do if they have trouble paying a utility bill?
5. Do you have a regular phone or a cell phone? What telephone services do you use? (Some telephone services are long distance, caller ID, and call waiting).
6. Does your neighborhood recycle? If so, how do you recycle things?

Questions for Homeowners

1. What can you do if you think your property taxes are too high?
2. Have you ever hired a contractor to work on your home? What happened?

READING PASSAGE

Some people buy their own houses and are called homeowners. Other people rent houses or apartments, and pay rent each month to a landlord. People who rent are called tenants.

LANDLORDS AND TENANTS

Landlords must provide a clean, safe apartment with adequate heat and drinking water. Tenants should sign a lease before renting an apartment. It is important to read the lease carefully. Tenants must:

- pay the rent on time
- keep the unit clean
- repair what they damage
- not paint or make other changes to the apartment without the landlord's permission
- give written notice before moving

Sometimes tenants have housing problems. For emergencies such as no water or heat, they should call the landlord right away. For repairs, they should also call the landlord. If the landlord does not respond after several days, tenants should contact the landlord by registered or certified mail. Tenants must pay the rent even if they are waiting for repairs.

For landlord problems, tenants can get help from:

- a lawyer or attorney (the Illinois Lawyer Referral Service can help find a lawyer)
- legal aid services if they are eligible for free legal services
- the Illinois Attorney General's Office
- the Illinois Department of Human Rights (for discrimination complaints)

A TRUE STORY

Ewa Dobras rents an apartment on the top floor of a building. Last month, the roof started to leak. When it rained, water came through the ceiling of the kitchen. Ewa called her landlord to report the problem. He said he would come to fix it.

Ewa waited 2 weeks but no one came to fix the leak. She sent a letter to the landlord by certified mail to remind him about the problem. The landlord got the certified letter and called Ewa. Two days later, someone came to repair the roof and fix the leak.

UTILITIES

Utilities are companies that provide natural gas, electricity, telephone service, and water. Homeowners must pay for these services. Tenants pay for telephone service and sometimes pay for other utilities, too.

Sometimes people have problems with utilities. One kind of problem is when the utility does not work. For example, the telephone may not work, or there may be no electricity in the house or apartment. Sometimes there are mistakes on utility bills. For problems with utility service or utility bills, people should call the utility's customer service number.

READING PASSAGE continued

Utility companies have meters for gas and electricity inside or outside of every house or apartment building. Utility workers read the meters and the companies send bills every month. Sometimes the cost is very high and people have trouble paying their bills. There are different payment plans to help people. Some payment plans are:

- a budget plan to make equal payments over 12 months
- the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- the Salvation Army Sharing Program

For more information about payment plans, people can call the customer service department of their utility company. They can also check the utility's web site.

Phone bills have charges for local and long distance telephone service. Several different companies provide local and long distance service in Illinois. People should compare the rates of different companies to get the best price. Monthly phone bills show charges for phone services, including optional services like call waiting and caller ID.

PROPERTY TAXES

Homeowners must pay property taxes to the county. Taxes pay for schools, parks, libraries, and other services. Taxes are assessed every 3 years. But they may go up after 1 year if the local or state government asks for more money. When people have questions about their property taxes they can contact the assessor's office at the township or county.

BUILDING PERMITS AND CONTRACTORS

Homeowners who want to make additions or major changes to their property must apply for and pay for a building permit at city hall or the county office. The building permit gives permission to make changes. During and after the work, inspectors check the property.

People should be careful when they hire a contractor to make changes to their property. They should talk with friends and neighbors, check the contractor's references, and call the Better Business Bureau. People with serious complaints about a contractor should call the Better Business Bureau to report the complaint. If necessary, they should hire a lawyer.

SOLICITORS

Solicitors sell products and services to households. Sometimes solicitors put advertisements by people's doors or in the mail. Some solicitors call on the telephone to sell products and services. Some solicitors might also come to your door to sell things. People should be very careful before they buy anything from solicitors or give personal information to solicitors.

GARBAGE COLLECTION AND RECYCLING

Most communities have weekly garbage and recycling service. People must put their garbage and recyclables by the street or alley on the set day. Sometimes the city, village, or township provides residents with garbage cans. They may also provide special recycling containers for newspaper, glass, paper, aluminum, and plastic. The township office or city or village hall has information about garbage collection and recycling. If there is a problem with garbage collection, people can call their township office or city or village hall.

READING PASSAGE: Vocabulary Activity 1-A

Directions: Say these words after your teacher. Discuss the meaning of each word.
(Optional: Write the meaning next to each word.)

1. homeowner
2. landlord
3. tenant
4. lease
5. repair (*noun or verb*)
6. damage (*noun or verb*)
7. written notice
8. registered mail/certified mail
9. lawyer/attorney
10. discrimination
11. leak (*noun or verb*)
12. utilities
13. customer service
14. meter
15. budget plan
16. local telephone service
17. long distance telephone service

Other new words:

READING PASSAGE: Vocabulary Activity 1-B

Directions: Write the letter of the correct meaning next to each word.

- | | |
|---|---|
| ___ 1. utilities | a. paying your utility bill in equal payments over 12 months |
| ___ 2. homeowner | b. a person who practices law and represents people in court |
| ___ 3. customer service | c. telephone service for calling someone who lives in your community |
| ___ 4. discrimination | d. you can call this number if you have a problem with your utility bill or service |
| ___ 5. repair | e. companies that provide natural gas, electricity, water, and telephone service |
| ___ 6. budget plan | f. to break or harm something |
| ___ 7. lease | g. telephone service for calling someone in another state or country |
| ___ 8. tenant | h. a property owner who rents to tenants |
| ___ 9. meter | i. a person who owns his or her own house |
| ___ 10. local telephone service | j. a hole or crack where water drips or gas escapes |
| ___ 11. damage | k. a written contract between a tenant and a landlord |
| ___ 12. lawyer/attorney | l. a small machine that measures how much electricity, water, or gas is used |
| ___ 13. long distance telephone service | m. a person who pays rent each month to a landlord |
| ___ 14. registered or certified mail | n. a letter to your landlord about your plans to move |
| ___ 15. leak | o. to fix something that is broken or damaged |
| ___ 16. landlord | p. use this kind of mail delivery if you want a receipt |
| ___ 17. written notice | q. refusing to rent to someone because of race, sex, or religion |

READING PASSAGE: Vocabulary Activity 2-A

Directions: Say these words after your teacher. Discuss the meaning of each word.
(Optional: Write the meaning next to each word.)

1. property taxes
2. assessor
3. building permit
4. contractors
5. references
6. Better Business Bureau
7. complaint
8. solicitors
9. garbage collection
10. recycling

Other new words:

READING PASSAGE: Vocabulary Activity 2-B

Directions: Write the correct word or words in each sentence. Use the word bank for help. Each word can be used only once.

1. _____ is a community service to pick up trash and waste.
2. Homeowners pay _____ to the local government each year.
3. _____ sell products or services by telephone, mail, or door-to-door.
4. Homeowners must get a _____ from their city hall or township office to make major changes to their property.
5. Names of people who are happy with a contractor's work are _____.
6. A problem with a person or company is a _____.
7. You can call the _____ to find out if people have had problems with a business.
8. If you have questions about your property taxes, you can call the township or county _____.
9. Builders, painters, or roofers are kinds of _____.
10. Many communities have _____ programs to collect newspapers, bottles, or cans to use again.

WORD BANK

references	assessor	property taxes	Better Business Bureau
solicitors	building permit	garbage collection	complaint
	recycling	contractors	

READING PASSAGE: Comprehension Check

Directions: Take turns reading each sentence below with a partner. Decide if each sentence is TRUE or FALSE. Put an X under TRUE or FALSE.
(Optional: Correct the false sentences.)

	TRUE	FALSE
1. Landlords must provide clean, safe apartments for tenants.	_____	_____
2. Tenants can paint their apartments without permission from the landlord.	_____	_____
3. Tenants don't have to pay rent if they are waiting for repairs.	_____	_____
4. If there is a problem in the apartment, tenants should call their landlord for repairs.	_____	_____
5. Utilities are natural gas, electric, telephone, and water services.	_____	_____
6. For problems with bills, people should call the utility's customer service number.	_____	_____
7. Utilities have different payment plans to help people pay bills.	_____	_____
8. Electric bills have charges for local and long distance telephone calls.	_____	_____
9. Homeowners must pay property taxes to the state.	_____	_____
10. Homeowners do not need building permits to build additions to their homes.	_____	_____
11. People should be careful when they hire a contractor or buy something from a solicitor.	_____	_____
12. The township office or village or city hall has information about garbage collection and recycling.	_____	_____

DIALOGUE 1: Calling the Landlord About a Leak

Directions: Listen to the dialogue. Then practice the dialogue with your teacher and classmates.

Ewa Dobras calls her landlord to report a leak in her ceiling.

Mr. Thomas: Hello. Thomas Property Management.

Ewa: Hello, Mr. Thomas. This is your tenant, Ewa Dobras in 3-B.

Mr. Thomas: Hi, Mrs. Dobras. What can I do for you?

Ewa: My kitchen ceiling is leaking. Water is coming in.

Mr. Thomas: Oh, that's not good. I'll send someone to fix it.

Ewa: When will he come?

Mr. Thomas: Well I don't know, but I'll try to send someone today.

Ewa: OK. Please call me when you know.

Mr. Thomas: OK, I will. Thank you for calling. Good-bye.

Ewa: Good-bye.

Mr. Thomas: Bye.

DIALOGUE 2: Calling the Landlord About Insufficient Heat

Directions: Look at the chart below and listen to the dialogue. Practice the dialogue with your teacher and classmates. Then use the chart to practice different times.

TIME	MINIMUM TEMPERATURE*
6:30 a.m. - 10:30 p.m.	68 degrees
10:30 p.m. - 6:30 a.m.	65 degrees

Kartik Desai has a problem with the heat in his apartment. He calls his landlord to complain.

Mr. Patel: Hello. This is Ravi Patel.

Kartik: Hello, Mr. Patel. This is your tenant, Kartik Desai.

Mr. Patel: Yes, Mr. Desai. How can I help you?

Kartik: There is a problem with the heat in my apartment. It's too cold.

Mr. Patel: What's the temperature in your apartment?

Kartik: It's only 58 degrees.

Mr. Patel: Well, that's not so bad.

Kartik: But it's 9:00 a.m. The law says the temperature should be at least 68 degrees at this time.

Mr. Patel: Ok, Mr. Desai. I'll come over to adjust the thermostat.

Kartik: Thank you, Mr. Patel. I hope it will be warmer soon.

Mr. Patel: I will be there in a half hour.

Kartik: Thank you. Good-bye.

Mr. Patel: Good-bye.

***Note to the Teacher:** This dialogue is based on the Arlington Heights, Illinois Heat Ordinance mandating minimum temperatures year round as indicated in the table above. Other cities have similar laws.

DIALOGUE 3: Reporting a Power Outage

Directions: Listen to the dialogue. Then practice the dialogue with your teacher and classmates.

Twenty minutes ago, all the lights went out in Anna Rodríguez's house. She calls the electric company's customer service number for help.

Taped message: Thank you for calling PowerCo. For all billing inquiries, press 1. For all moving inquiries, press 2. To report a power outage, press 3. For all other inquiries, press 4.

Anna: (Presses 3)

Taped message: To report a power outage, press 1. To check the status of a power outage, press 2. To report a downed wire, press 3. For dim or flashing lights, or other power problems, press 4.

Anna: (Presses 1)

Clerk: Customer Service. How can I help you?

Anna: I have no electricity in my house.

Clerk: Do your neighbors have power?

Anna: Yes.

Clerk: How long has your power been out?

Anna: About 20 minutes.

Clerk: OK. Please give me your name, address, and a phone number where we can reach you.

Anna: My name is Anna Rodríguez. My address is 2801 North Major in Chicago. My cell phone number is (773) 555-5561.

Clerk: That's Anna Rodríguez. 2801 North Major. (773) 555-5561.

Anna: That's right.

Clerk: OK. We will send the first available crew to your home. They should be there this afternoon.

Anna: OK. Thank you.

Clerk: You're welcome. Goodbye.

Anna: Bye.

DIALOGUE 3 continued

Note to the Teacher: The taped message on the previous page is representative of what the customer hears after calling a utility's customer service number. However, it is important for students to hear the actual recording from their local electric company. If possible, record the actual taped message from the local electric company using a telephone pick-up device (available for about \$5 at electronics stores). Adjust the dialogue to reflect the actual taped message, and have students listen to this recording in class.

DIALOGUE 4: Calling the Phone Company About a Bill

Directions: Listen to the dialogue. Then practice the dialogue with your teacher and classmates.

Maria Corelli has a problem with her phone bill. She calls the customer service number, listens to the recorded message, and presses “2” for the billing department.

- Billing Representative: Ameritalk Billing Department. Please give me your telephone number beginning with the area code.
- Maria: (847) 555-8320
- Representative: What is the name on the account, please?
- Maria: Maria Corelli. C-O-R-E-L-L-I
- Representative: How can I help you, Ms. Corelli?
- Maria: My bill shows a long distance call I didn't make.
- Representative: What call is that?
- Maria: It's the call to New York City on January 25 for 22 minutes.
- Representative: Let me see... That's the number for New York County Hospital.
- Maria: A hospital? I'm sure I didn't make that call.
- Representative: Are you sure nobody else in your house made it?
- Maria: Yes, I'm sure. Will you take it off my bill?
- Representative: OK. Your new balance is \$55.97.
- Maria: So I should pay \$55.97?
- Representative: Yes.
- Maria: OK. Thank you.
- Representative: Thank you for calling Ameritalk. Good-bye.

ACTION RESEARCH ACTIVITY: Housing and Utilities: Important Phone Numbers

Directions: Complete this chart about housing. Use a telephone directory, your utility bills, or the Internet for help.

	NAME	TELEPHONE NUMBER
Landlord or Property Association		
Gas Company		
Electric Company		
Water Department		
Local Telephone Company		
Long Distance Telephone Company		
City/Village Hall or Township Office		

WRITING ACTIVITY: A Letter to the Landlord

Directions: Ewa Dobras has a problem with a leak in her apartment. She sends a certified letter to her landlord about the problem. Read her letter.

April 17, 2004	Ewa Dobras 357 Elm Street Harris, Illinois 56570
Dear Mr. Thomas:	
There is a problem with my apartment. Every time it rains, the roof leaks. The water comes through my kitchen ceiling. There is a big crack in the ceiling and the drip is getting worse.	
On April 3 rd , I called you about our leaking ceiling. You promised to come to fix it. Please fix it as soon as possible. Thank you.	
Sincerely, <i>Ewa Dobras</i>	

Now write a letter to your landlord or property association to ask for help with a problem.

_____	_____
_____ :	_____

PAIR ACTIVITY: Tenant and Landlord Responsibilities

Directions: With a partner, look at the following list of responsibilities. Decide together if a landlord or tenant is responsible for each. Write L or T on the line. Then explain your answer to the class.

L = Landlord

T = Tenant

- _____ 1. Makes sure the apartment meets the local health and housing laws.
- _____ 2. Pays the rent on time.
- _____ 3. Tells the landlord when there is a problem with the apartment (for example, a leaking toilet).
- _____ 4. Keeps the apartment clean and undamaged.
- _____ 5. Can charge a late fee for late rent.
- _____ 6. Pays to repair damage caused by the tenant (for example, the tenant's child breaks a window).
- _____ 7. Provides heat and clean drinking water.
- _____ 8. Gives written notice before moving.
- _____ 9. Decides the amount of rent and security deposit.
- _____ 10. Enters the apartment only with the tenant's permission except in an emergency.
- _____ 11. Pays to repair apartment damage not caused by the tenant (for example, a leaking ceiling).

CULTURAL COMPARISON ACTIVITY: Housing

Directions: Think about housing in your native country and in the United States. Discuss the answers to the questions below with your classmates. (Optional: Write the information in the chart.)

	IN _____ (native country)	IN THE U.S.
1. Do most people rent or own their homes?		
2. What responsibilities do landlords have? What responsibilities do tenants have?		
3. What can tenants do if they have problems with their landlords?		
4. What utilities do people pay for? Who supplies utilities – private companies or the government?		
5. Do all people have telephones in their homes? Do many people have cell phones?		
6. Do people recycle? Which items? Who collects garbage and recyclable items?		
7. Do people pay property taxes? How does the government use money from property taxes?		

EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVITIES

As a class, identify an important issue that affects the group. Some ideas are:

- Handling landlord problems
- Understanding a rental agreement/lease
- Starting utility service
- Reporting a gas leak
- Reporting a power outage
- Questioning a telephone charge
- Investigating utility payment plans
- Finding out the community recycling policy
- Appealing property taxes
- Getting a building permit
- Investigating a prospective contractor
- Reporting a bad contractor

Determine the best course of action from the suggestions below or have students generate their own plan of action. Choose an activity requiring a response by a local official, utility representative, or other appropriate authority. Also select an activity in which students have a vested interest so that they will follow through to a satisfactory conclusion.

1. Invite a guest speaker to talk about landlord/tenant issues of interest to your class. Possible speakers might be a representative from the local housing authority, a lawyer, or someone from the Illinois Department of Human Rights. Have students prepare questions in advance.
risk: low – medium
language level: high beginning – advanced
2. Have students contact the local housing authority by telephone to request that information on tenant/landlord rights and responsibilities be mailed to them.
risk: high
language level: intermediate – advanced
3. Have students contact the local housing authority by telephone to request a copy of the local ordinance regulating heat in apartments. (This information may also be available on the local government's web site).
risk: high
language level: intermediate - advanced
4. Visit a local senior citizen residence to learn about senior housing in the United States and to engage in conversation with the residents. Call ahead to arrange a tour. Have students prepare questions in advance to ask the staff and the residents.
risk: low – medium
language level: all
5. Invite a guest speaker to address mortgages and home buying. There may be a local program to assist low-income home buyers. Have students prepare questions in advance.
risk: low – medium
language level: high beginning – advanced

EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVITIES continued

6. Invite a guest speaker from a local bank, credit union, or social service agency to provide information about how and why to establish a credit history. Have students prepare questions in advance.

risk: low – medium

language level: high beginning – advanced

7. Bring apartment ads from the community newspaper to class. After you explain the usual abbreviations, have students explain individual ads. More advanced students can actually call to inquire about apartments (including the cost of utilities) and report back to the class.

risk: low – high

language level: all

8. Have pairs or small groups of students go to the web site for the Better Business Bureau. Have them choose a business to enter and investigate. They may choose a business from an ad in the community newspaper, an ad received at their home from a solicitor, or information they received from a telephone solicitation. Have them present their findings to the class.

risk: low

language level: intermediate – advanced

9. Contact the city/village hall or township office for information about building permits. Find out what kinds of changes or improvements require permits, how to obtain them, and what they cost. (This information may also be available on the local government web site.)

risk: medium – high

language level: intermediate – advanced

10. Visit the local recycling facility. Call ahead to arrange a speaker and tour. Have students prepare questions in advance.

risk: low – medium

language level: all