

M: Yes, it is. It is battery-powered, as well. It has an eight-digit display. This calculator also has a memory key.

W: How much is it?

M: It is only five dollars plus tax. It comes with a one-year warranty.

W: I'll take it.

Unit 8 Racing Robots

M: I have been interested in robots for as long as I can remember. The first thing I did when I entered high school was join the Robotech robot-making club. We get together after school every day and create our own robots. Nowadays it is very easy to find kits to build your own robot and these are what we use.

The highlight of the year for us is the annual Robot Maze race. Everyone who wants to take part has to make a small computer-controlled robot. You need to race it to the center of a maze. We work together in teams of three or four. This year, I am working with two students who won last year's competition, so I think we have a really good chance of winning.

Our robot is about 30 centimeters high. It weighs two kilograms. It should be really quick. We have been practicing often, and we have already equaled last year's speed, so we just need to get a little faster. We are keeping the design of our robot secret. If we win, we will get \$500. I hope this will be my lucky year.

Unit 9 Online Chatting

W: Philip, are you still chatting online? It's 9:30 p.m. You have an exam tomorrow.

B: Yes, Mom. I'll get off in a minute.

W: I read some articles about chatting online. I'm not so sure you should be spending so much time in front of your computer.

B: Mom, that seems unfair. It can be very educational. You meet people from all over the world who talk about lots of different things.

W: OK, maybe these people share their knowledge. I still think it is better to join clubs and socialize with real people.

B: Do you think chatting online causes bad behavior?

W: Online chatting can be very addictive, not to mention expensive.

B: Well, if you have DSL, chatting is not expensive. Also, not everyone who chats is an addict. Disabled people are better able to socialize online. You know, not every area is wheelchair-accessible.

W: True. However, I've read that there are lots of strange people online who are dangerous.

B: I'll be careful. Besides, you can always see what I am writing and who I am writing to. In my opinion, the biggest fault with chatting online is the lag time or delay in the system.

W: I agree, I have noticed that there is some lag time in you getting off the computer!

Unit 10 The Nobel Prize

W: One of the greatest achievements in the world is to win the Nobel Prize. It has been given to people since 1901. There are prizes for physics, chemistry, and medicine. There are also prizes for literature, economics, and peace. The Nobel Prize is named after Alfred Nobel. He was born in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1833. Alfred Nobel invented dynamite in 1866. Dynamite is used in mining, construction, and war. Before he died, he wrote that all of his money should be used to create the Nobel Prize. He died in 1896. The first prize was given in 1901.

Each prize has three parts: a diploma, a gold medal, and money. The money has increased since 1980. It is now ten million Swedish crowns. This is about one million euros. How are the winners chosen? Five committees secretly meet to pick the winners. The Nobel Prize for Economics is the only one that is not decided that way. That is because it was created in 1956 by the Bank of Sweden in honor of the fiftieth anniversary of Alfred Nobel's death. The Bank of Sweden decides who gets the Nobel Prize for Economics. Since 1901, over 750 people have won the Nobel Prize.

Art and Culture

Unit 11 Great Art

M: What makes a painting a great work of art? There are many answers to that question. Some people think that a painting should look pretty. Others disagree. The skill of the painter is important. The techniques used are also important. Most of all, a great painting has meaning. A great painting has a special element in it.

Sometimes, a painter's special element is the way he portrays his or her feelings in a piece of art. An example of this is Picasso's painting, *Guernica*. It has strange shapes in it. It shows suffering people, too. It is not a very pretty picture. However, it makes people understand Picasso's feelings about war.

Other times, the element is a memory or feeling. This comes from inside another person. Someone may see a painting and be reminded of a beautiful memory. A painting can also remind people of a feeling. For example, Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* is very popular. Many people like her smile. Some people say it is a mysterious smile. Others say it is a happy one. Still others make up stories about the woman in the painting.

Which element is the most important? Is it the skill of the artist or the feelings of the person looking at the painting? Whatever the case, a painting that grabs people's emotions is popular.

Unit 12 Talking Drums

B: I want to be a member of a heavy metal band. I love heavy metal drums, James.

M: I don't, Henry! They are too heavy, if you ask me. I prefer a more traditional style, like African barrel drums.

B: Barrel drums? What are those?

M: They are made with hollow logs and animal skins. First, they cut down a tree. They cut a section that's about as thick and tall as a barrel. They stretch an animal skin over the top, and tie it to the sides with wooden pegs. These pegs can be tightened to change the pitch.

B: Hmm... that sounds interesting.

M: In Nigeria, they have "talking" drums. They use a hollow tree trunk that's smaller than a barrel

drum, and leave an opening at both ends. Then they fit an animal skin on each end. There's a string between each of these ends. When a player holds the drum under an armpit and squeezes, it tightens the string and raises the pitch.

B: Why do they call it a "talking" drum?

M: The drummers are so skillful they can make the drums imitate human voices. They seem to cry, laugh, and shout.

B: I'd like to hear that.

M: Why don't you come to the community college with me tomorrow? A troupe from Africa is giving a concert, and they are supposed to have the best drummers in the world.

B: Now, that sounds great!

Unit 13 The Hot New Movie

W: The latest blockbuster movie *Robots Attack 2* starring Garrison Fort opened yesterday. Fort and Andy Robot are at it again, saving people from the jaws of death. The evil robots are invading Atlantis once again. The crowds seemed to love the sequel. Maybe they loved it as much, if not more than, the first *Robots Attack*. The special effects are fantastic! Mr. Fort seems to have worked on his fighting technique. His martial arts skills are amazing. He beats the evil robots easily.

Of course, our leading man saves a lady in distress, the fair Angie. She promptly falls in love with Garrison the hero. However, Andy Robot is jealous of this new love.

He spends a good part of the movie trying to ruin their plans. Another surprise is the evil robot, Homer, who decides he wants to become a do-gooder. His partner, Ethel, works hard to make him return to his evil ways.

Does Andy Robot succeed in rescuing Garrison Fort from love? What about Ethel? Does she bring Homer back to his evil ways? To find out, head for the theater, buy a ticket, and sit back and relax.

Unit 14 A Faux Pas

G: It happens a lot. So many people visit and live in foreign countries nowadays. The culture and manners of every country are different. It is