Once there was this guy named Aladdin. Not that Aladdin. That Aladdin had no stuff, no stuff at all. This Aladdin was different. This Aladdin had stuff. Stuff like a red bicycle with a small dent in the fender, a soccer ball that was autographed by a really famous soccer player and had a stain of some kind on it, a cowboy hat with no feather in the hatband…some pretty nice stuff.

You’d think that having some pretty nice stuff would have made Aladdin happy. But you’d be wrong. It didn’t, so he wasn’t. “Some” stuff wasn’t good enough for Aladdin.

“If I had a lot of stuff, maybe I’d be happy,” he told his mother.

And he sighed a deep sigh, frowned a sad frown, and started moping around the house. A sigh and frown = (demonstrate a sigh and a sad face).

Now, when I say Aladdin moped around the house, I mean exactly that. He actually went outside and walked in a circle around his house, all the while repeating the word “mope” over and over again.

Of course, this upset Aladdin’s mother quite a bit. She wanted her son to be happy and smiling.

“Okay,” she said. “You say having a lot of stuff might make you happy? Then I will get you a lot of stuff!” And she wasn’t kidding around. She got Aladdin all the stuff she could afford. And when she ran out of money, she
sold the car, their house, and even her favorite earrings so she could get him even more stuff.

She got him a new bicycle without a dent, a new autographed soccer ball without stains, and a cowboy hat with a feather in its hatband. And that was just for starters.

I could tell you everything she bought him, but that would take way too long. Let’s just say that she got Aladdin so much stuff that it would have been totally impossible to fit it all into their house...if they still had one.

Aladdin’s mom was sure that he’d be happy now. But he wasn’t.

“Mom,” Aladdin said, “You’ve gotten me a lot of stuff, and I really appreciate it. But I am still not happy! Of course, maybe I would be happy if I had a lot more stuff...”

And then he said, “Excuse me, Mom, I’ve got to go do that sighing, frowning, moping thing again, if it’s okay with you.”

“No problem,” his mom said. “In fact, I think I’ll join you.”

And she did. But because they no longer had a house, they had to mope around the pile of stuff, which was now as big as their house used to be. “Mope, mope, mope!” they said.

Say to the students: Next time, we’ll learn whether Aladdin ever gets enough stuff to make him feel happy.
A Different Aladdin: Part 2

By Norman Stile

While Aladdin and his mom were moping, an old man with a long gray beard flew in on an ancient-looking magic carpet. “I saw a story on the news about a kid who had a lot of stuff but thought he needed more stuff to be happy,” the man said, “and I wanted to help out.”

He tossed a grungy old oil lamp, made of brass, to Aladdin. “It’s not much, kid, but it’s all I’ve got,” he said, and then he flew off in a cloud of dust.

Aladdin’s mother coughed and said, “He should vacuum that carpet more often.”

“He should clean his lamp once in a while, too,” Aladdin added. And he started rubbing the lamp.

The lamp shook and glowed and made some pretty weird noises and out came a genie.

“I am the genie of the lamp!” the genie declared. “See, it says so on my name tag.”

“Wow, a genie! Now I can wish for enough stuff to make me happy!” Aladdin exclaimed to his mother, who just stood there with her mouth open, speechless.

“Hold on,” said the genie. “I didn’t come here to grant your wish.”

“What?” said Aladdin. “What kind of genie doesn’t grant wishes?”

“A genie who already gave away all his wishes. That’s what kind of genie. I’m tapped out. No wishes left. Sorry.”
“Then why *did* you come?” Aladdin asked.

“Well, actually, I wanted to ask if you would mind granting *my* wish,” the genie said, very nicely.

Now *both* Aladdin and his mother were standing there with their mouths open, speechless.

“I’ll take that as a yes,” the genie said, and then he told Aladdin his wish. “Oh, great Aladdin, Aladdin with a lot of stuff….I wish I had a bicycle. I never had one.”

Aladdin snapped out of it. “You never had a bicycle?” he asked.

“Never one of my own,” said the genie. “Please grant my wish. One without dents would be nice. You don’t have to, of course. Only if it will make you happy.”

Aladdin didn’t think that giving away a bike would make him happy, but he shrugged and gave the new bike without dents to the genie anyway.

“Thank you, Aladdin. Thank you.” The genie said. And then he hugged Aladdin, jumped on the bike, and started riding around, doing wheelies.

“My very own bike!” he cried. “Whee!”

A strange, new expression suddenly flickered on Aladdin’s face, and the sight of it was enough to shock his mother back to her senses.

“Is that a smile?” she marveled. She spit out a mosquito that had flown into her mouth while it was open.

“Could be,” he answered. “You know, I kinda *liked* giving away that bicycle.”

*Say to the students:* Next time, we’ll read the end of the story about “A Different Aladdin.”
A Different Aladdin: Part 3

By Norman Stile

After trying out his new bike for a few minutes, the genie rode up to Aladdin, hugged him again, and said, “Toodle-oo! Gotta go. You have filled my genie heart with joy!” And he started to ride back into the lamp.

Aladdin was crestfallen. “Wait!” he yelled. “Don’t you want to wish for more stuff?”

“No, thanks,” the genie said. “You’ve given me more than enough.” And he was gone.

Aladdin sighed a deep sigh and frowned a sad frown.

“If I could give away more stuff, I’d be happy,” he said to his mother, and you guessed it. He started moping around the pile of stuff again.

“Mope, mope, mope!”

“Stop moping!” cried Aladdin’s mother, surprised by the new strength in her voice. “You say giving away more stuff will make you happy? Well then, go find some folks who have little or no stuff, and give stuff to them!”

And that is exactly what Aladdin did. Before long, he had given away so much stuff that it was easy to fit what was left into their house...which he was able to buy back for his mother, along with her car and her favorite earrings, because he returned the rest of the new stuff she’d bought for him and got a refund.

Aladdin’s mother was overwhelmed with gratitude.
“But,” she said, “All you have left is the dented bicycle, the stained soccer ball, the featherless cowboy hat...basically the same stuff you had before this story started. Are you happy now?”

“Mom,” he said, “I don’t see how I could be any happier.”

Just then a little girl and her mother walked by, carrying lots and lots of shopping bags. Aladdin heard the little girl say to her mother, “If I had a lot of more stuff, maybe I’d be happy.”

The little girl sighed a deep sigh, frowned a sad frown, and said, “Let’s hurry home so I can mope around the house.”

The little girl and her mother were walking as fast as they could, but before they had gotten very far, a boy wearing a cowboy hat without a feather rode up to them on a dented bicycle.

“I couldn’t help but overhear that you wanted more stuff,” the boy said, reaching into his bicycle basket, “and I’d like to help out.” From underneath a soccer ball with a stain on it, he pulled out an old brass lamp, and tossed it to the little girl.

“It’s not much,” he said, “but it just might solve your problem.” And he rode off in a cloud of dust.

“Hey, he got dust all over my lamp!” the little girl complained to her mother, and she started rubbing the lamp.