

Finding the Right Home

1 Looking for an Apartment

Directions: Read or act out the following passage.

Dimitri and Isabel Gonzalez are looking for a new apartment to rent. They are a young couple with two children, ages 2 and 3, and they are expecting another child in five months. The Gonzalez's old apartment is too small. Now with a baby on the way, they will need even more room.

Dimitri and Isabel have seen several places. Now they are looking at an apartment in an old house on Elm Street. The landlord is with them. The scene opens with Dimitri looking down into the basement.



Dimitri: Look, Isabel, this apartment has a basement.

Isabel: That's great. We can store some of our things down there.

Landlord: [*Guides Isabel and Dimitri through the kitchen.*] There is enough space in here for a small table.

Dimitri: Yes. I saw the kitchen. I like it, but I think we need more storage space in the kitchen for our pots and pans. What do you think, Isabel?

Isabel: I don't know. I like the kitchen. This apartment is larger than some of the others we have seen. The children will have more room to play.



Dimitri: I guess you are right. They could also play outside. This seems like a quiet street even though it is in the city.

Isabel: [Turns toward the landlord.] Is this apartment near public transportation?

Landlord: Yes. There is a bus stop two blocks from this apartment.

Dimitri: Where is the closest laundromat?

Landlord: The laundromat is on the corner. There is a small grocery store around the corner, too.

Isabel: How much is rent? And would we have to pay a security deposit?

Landlord: OK. I do not charge a security deposit. I do ask that you sign a lease and pay me the first and last months' rent. The rent is \$700 each month and that does not include utilities such as electricity or heat.

Dimitri: [Looks around.] Is the heat gas or oil?

Landlord: It's gas.

Isabel: How much does it cost to heat this apartment?

Landlord: It costs about \$100 each month to heat. Of course, the winter months will cost much more than \$100 and the summer months will cost much less; \$100 is an average figure.

Dimitri: I see you have storm windows in the apartment. That's good.

Landlord: Yes. I installed those last year.

Dimitri: It sounds good to me. I think we would like to take the apartment. But, before we sign anything, I would like to ask you if

there is lead in the apartment. I noticed that this is a fairly old house. I understand that many of these older homes were painted with lead paint. I noticed that the paint is peeling and chipping on the windowsills and doors. My wife is pregnant and I am worried about her health, the health of our new baby, and the health of our young children. Do you know if this paint has lead in it?

Landlord: Gee, I don't know.

Isabel: Would you check for us?

Landlord: Ah . . . I guess so.

Dimitri: Thanks.

Landlord: Here's the lease. Look at it and let me know what you think. I suggest you decide fast. I have other people looking at this apartment.

Dimitri: OK. We will call you about the lead paint. Thanks again. You should hear from us soon. Goodbye.

2 Activity

Directions: Draw a map of the neighborhood. Where is the bus stop, the laundromat, and the grocery store? You will need to add more details.

3 Vocabulary

Directions: Review the vocabulary words below and define each using simple English terms.

large (*adj.*)
transportation (*n.*)
street(s) (*n.*)
available (*adj.*)
utility(ies) (*n.*)
rent (*v.*)
landlord(s) (*n.*)
kitchen(s) (*n.*)
apartment(s) (*n.*)
bedroom(s) (*n.*)

heat (*n.*)
lead (*n.*)
parking (*n.*)
lease(s) (*n.*)
electricity (*n.*)
family(ies) (*n.*)
tenant(s) (*n.*)
dining room(s) (*n.*)
laundromat(s) (*n.*)
security deposit(s) (*n.*)

4

Review and Discuss

Directions: Review “Looking for an Apartment” and answer the following questions in English.

1. Why are Dimitri and Isabel looking for a new apartment? _____

2. Describe the apartment they want to rent. _____

3. What questions do Dimitri and Isabel ask the landlord? Why do you think they ask so many questions? _____

4. Why is Dimitri worried about lead in the apartment? _____

5. According to the landlord, does the apartment have lead in it? _____

5

Topics for Discussion

Directions: Describe some of your personal experiences in looking for a home. Answer the following questions.

1. What do you look for when buying or renting a home? What are some of the characteristics you want your home to have? What location do you prefer? _____

2. What are some of the concerns you have when looking for a house or an apartment to buy or rent? _____

3. How many times have you moved? _____

4. Describe your relationship with your landlord or tenants. _____

5. Do you know if the house you rent or own has lead in it? _____

6 Act Out the Scene

Directions: Many of us may feel uncomfortable confronting landlords and others about the condition of our homes. Using the information below, act out a scene between a tenant and a landlord.

Tenant: You are looking at an apartment. It is in an old house. What kinds of questions would you want to ask the landlord? Think about rent, lead, security deposits, storage, or other things that interest you. For example, you think the house contains lead paint. What would you say to the landlord about this issue?

Landlord: You own an old house. There are some problems with the house, but you would really like to have good tenants. How would you answer the tenants' questions? How would you make the house safer for the tenants?

Deciding on the Right Apartment

Directions: Read or act out the following passage.

Dimitri: Isabel, I called the owner of that apartment on Elm Street.

Isabel: Oh yes, I liked that apartment. It has plenty of room and a nice kitchen. Did you find out about the lead paint in the apartment?

Dimitri: No. The landlord is still telling me he does not know about the lead.

Isabel: Oh? Then there's a chance that the apartment has lead paint.

Dimitri: Yes. What do you think we should do? I like the location of the apartment. It is convenient. It is also inexpensive.

Isabel: I don't know. I'm worried about the lead paint in the apartment on Elm Street. You saw how the paint on the windowsills was peeling. I think our children will not be safe there. Maybe we should choose the first apartment we saw. Do you remember the apartment on Maple Street? The location is not as good as the one on Elm Street, but the Maple Street apartment appeared to have less lead. There was no chipping paint, the windows were new, the floors were covered with carpet, and the wood trim was not painted.

Dimitri: You are right. The Maple Street apartment will probably be safer for the children. Besides the landlord admitted that there was a little lead paint in the apartment.

Isabel: True. Even if we do rent the Maple Street apartment, we will still have to take some steps to protect our children from lead poisoning.

Dimitri: I know. We will have to make sure that we clean the children's hands before they eat. We'll also have to clean toys and other objects that they like to bite and put into their mouths.

Isabel: Don't forget that we will have to vacuum the carpet often.

Dimitri: These are good habits anyway. We can work with the landlord to make the final necessary changes so that the apartment is lead-free.

Isabel: Oh, yes, there's one more thing. The water will have to be tested for lead. That's easy to do.

Dimitri: OK. I'll call the landlord of the apartment on Maple Street and tell her we want to sign the lease. Then, I'll call the landlord of the apartment on Elm Street and tell him we are not interested in that apartment.

Note to Student: Each family will have its own decision to make when it rents an apartment. The family should consider factors such as convenience, cost, amount of space, and hazards like lead in paint and water. Discuss how you would decide in this case.
