Justin was always prepared. His motto was “Never throw anything out; you never know when it might come in handy.”

His bedroom was so full of flat bicycle tires, bent tennis rackets, deflated basketballs, and games with missing pieces that you could barely get in the door. His parents pleaded with him to clean out his room.

“What use is a fish tank with a hole in the bottom?” his father asked.

But Justin simply smiled and repeated his motto, “Never throw anything out, you never know when it might come in handy.” When Justin was away from home, he always carried his blue backpack. He liked to think of it as a smaller version of his bedroom. It was so worn and stretched that it hardly resembled a backpack anymore. It was full of the kinds of things that seemed unimportant, but when used with a little imagination, might come in handy. Justin had earned a reputation for figuring things out and getting people out of otherwise hopeless situations. Many of his classmates and neighbors sought him out when they needed help with a problem.

On the first day of school, Justin’s friend Kenny came looking for him. “Do you think you have something in your bag that could help me remember my locker combination?” he asked. “I lost the scrap paper it was written on. I have science class in two minutes and if I’m late on the first day it’ll make me look bad for the rest of the year”. Kenny looked genuinely worried.

“Relax,” Justin said, taking his backpack off and unzipping the top. “Remember how you borrowed my notebook in homeroom to write the combination down? Well, I know how we can recover what you wrote.”

He took the notebook and a soft lead pencil out of his bag. The page that Kenny had written on had left a faint indentation on another page in the notebook. Justin held the pencil on its side and rubbed it lightly over the indentations. Slowly but surely the numbers of the locker combination appeared in white, set off by the gray pencil rubbings.
Ready for Anything!
By Jean Lawler

“That’s amazing!” Kenny said. “I owe you one.” And he dashed off to open his locker.

During science class, Mr. Tran was lecturing on the structure of the solar system using a model. He made a sudden gesture and the model fell apart. Planets and rings and connector rods went everywhere, rolling and clattering and disappearing under desks. The students scrambled around on the floor for ten minutes and were finally able to recover every piece except one — a connector rod that was lodged in a crack between two lab stations.

“If we had a magnet,” said Mr. Tran, “we could easily coax it out that way. But I loaned all of the magnet kits to the elementary school yesterday.”

Justin was already searching through his backpack. “I have some materials that will work just as well, I think,” he told Mr. Tran. He pulled out a battery, an iron nail, and some electrical wire and tape, while Mr. Tran and the other students looked on in amazement.

“Why do you have all of that stuff?” Louise Baxter asked.

Justin just smiled and repeated his motto. “Never throw anything out, you never know when it might come in handy.”

By wrapping the wire around the nail and taping each end to a battery terminal, he was able to make a magnet strong enough to lift the rod out of the crack.

“Bravo!” said Mr. Tran.

“No problem,” said Justin.

After school, Justin rode the bus to the mall where he worked at a music store. His boss, Gail, was taking inventory of all of the CDs and tapes in the classical music section. As he helped a customer at the register, Justin heard her exclaim, “Oh, no! I forgot my glasses! There’s no way I can read this list without them.”

Justin sighed, picked up his backpack, and walked over to Gail. “I think I can help you out,” he said, unzipping the bag.
While Gail watched in surprise, he pulled out a jar of petroleum jelly, a washer, a glass slide, and a small bottle of water. He put the jelly on the bottom of the washer, placed it securely, jellyside down, on the glass slide, and then put a drop of water in the center of the washer. He put the contraption on top of the inventory list and said to his boss, “See what happens when you look through the water droplet.”

Gail looked and her eyes widened with delight.

“Wow!” she cried. “It enlarges the print that I’m looking at, just like a magnifying glass!” She patted Justin on the back. “I’m all set now,” she said. “Thanks.”

Justin smiled. “No problem,” he said, returning to the register.

It was just another day in the life of the boy whose motto was “Never throw anything out, you never know when it might come in handy.”

1. **Why is Justin’s room a mess?**

A. He always forgets to clean.
B. He never throws anything away.
C. He has no time to clean.
D. He shares a room with his brother.

2. **What does “reputation” mean?**

A. one’s personality
B. an award
C. how one is thought of by others
D. the support of others

3. **How do most of the characters in the story feel toward Justin?**

A. Annoyed
B. Grateful
C. Disinterested
D. Angry

4. **In what way is Justin’s backpack like a smaller version of his bedroom?**

A. He uses it as a place to store objects.
B. He uses it to carry his books and sports equipment.
C. His parents tell him to clean it all the time.
D. He’s had it for as long as he can remember.
5. How does Justin help his friends?

A. He offers them advice.
B. He loans them his backpack.
C. He listens to their problems.
D. He uses the objects in his backpack.

6. What is the central idea of the story?

A. How to think creatively and solve the problems at hand.
B. How to keep your room messy.
C. How to be ready to solve any problem in the world.
D. How to be a packrat.

7. Read the sentence from the story:

He put the contraption on top of the inventory list and said to his boss, “See what happens when you look through the water droplet?” Gail looked and her eyes widened with delight.

According to the passage, what is the meaning of the word “contraption”?

A. An electrical device
B. A mechanical device
C. A shrinking device
D. A singing device

8. Which statement would Justin most likely agree with?

A. You should always help yourself before you help others.
B. Don't listen to your parents.
C. Objects some consider trash may come in handy for solving problems and helping others.
D. Backpacks should be used only for carrying books for school.

9. Read the sentence from the story:

“His parents pleaded with him to clean out his room.”

“Parents pleaded” is an example of what?

A. personification
B. assonance
C. idiom
D. alliteration