

Responsibility

With every right
comes
responsibility

“The price of
greatness is
responsibility.”

~Winston Churchill~



October Character Connection Theme: Responsibility

Definitions

A **responsible** person performs fixed duties in a trustworthy manner and is aware of the penalty for failure to perform and is accountable for the consequences of his actions. This person is capable of making moral decisions on his own. He takes the blame if his actions caused hurt and does his best to rectify a negative situation.¹ A responsible person completes his chores without prompting, completes his homework, takes care of his possessions, does not make excuses, is helpful before being asked,² does his best, uses self-control, is self-disciplined, thinks before he acts, and considers consequences.³

“You must take personal responsibility,” said Jim Rhon. “You cannot change the circumstances, the seasons, or the wind, but you can change yourself. That is something you have charge of.” In the words of Walter Anderson, “I am responsible. Although I may not be able to prevent the worst from happening, I am responsible for my attitude toward the inevitable misfortunes that darken life. Bad things do happen; how I respond to them defines my character and the quality of my life. I can choose to sit in perpetual sadness, immobilized by the gravity of my loss, or I can choose to rise from the pain and treasure the most precious gift I have – life itself.”⁴



Quotes

“What is right is right, even if no one is doing it.

What is wrong is wrong, even if everyone is doing it.” --Unknown⁵

“When I do good, I feel good; when I don’t do good, I don’t feel good.” –Abraham Lincoln⁶

“He who conquers himself is greater than he that conquers an army.” –Oriental saying⁷

“It is impossible for us to break the law. We can only break ourselves against the law.”

--Cecil B. deMille⁸

“The price of greatness is responsibility,” –Winston Churchill⁹

“Serving one’s own strong emotions is the greatest slavery.” --Thomas Fuller¹⁰

“I long to accomplish a great and noble task, but it is my chief duty to accomplish humble tasks as though they were great and noble. The world is moved along, not only by the mighty shoves of its heroes, but also by the aggregate of the tiny pushes of each honest worker.” --Helen Keller¹¹

Activities

**Make a musical scale using partially filled bottles of water. (A bottle filled with more water makes a higher sound because the space of air vibrating at the top of the jar is smaller.) Play a tune. Remove one bottle used in the tune and play the same tune. *Everyone in the group is important. When one doesn’t participate or do their job, the end product is hurt.*

**On a large sheet of paper trace a child’s outline. Decorate it as a community helper (fireman, teacher) and surround it with words depicting their responsibilities. On a different piece of paper, trace the child again and

¹ adapted from The American Heritage Dictionary

² Information from Heartland Education Community

³ adapted from Six Pillars of Character, Definitions for Young People, Good Ideas to Help Young People Develop Good Character, page 5

⁴TPCN-Great Quotations, http://www.cyber-nation.com/victory/quotations/subjects/quotes_responsibility.html, accessed September 5, 2002

⁵ From quotes compiled for Provo’s PACE

⁶ Quotes and Quips, 1993 Covey Leadership Center, page 21

⁷ From quotes compiled for Provo’s PACE

⁸ Quotes and Quips, 1993 Covey Leadership Center, page 11

⁹ Quotes and Quips, 1993 Covey Leadership Center, page 41

¹⁰ From quotes compiled for Provo’s PACE

¹¹ Quotes and Quips, 1993 Covey Leadership Center, page 23

have them draw or write about their own responsibilities as a citizen, family, and class member.¹² Joan Didion said, “The willingness to accept responsibility for one’s own life is the source from which self-respect springs.”¹³

**Have a stuffed animal class mascot. Students may take a day being responsible for taking the “pet” to recess, lunch, and home for the night. Older groups may wish to have class members sign up for a day to have a class scrapbook. On “his day” the class member would add one page to the book.¹⁴

**Use adding machine tape to see who can make the longest “It’s my job to. . .” list.¹⁵

**Memorize a poem such as “The Challenge” by Jim Rohn. Talk about the joy that comes from accepting responsibility for one’s self.

Let others lead small lives,
but not you.
Let others argue over small things,
but not you.
Let others cry over small hurts,
but not you.
Let others leave their future
in someone else’s hands,
but not you.¹⁶



Stories

Life is Like a Cafeteria

Brian Cavanaugh retells the story of an immigrant newly arrived in the United States. In a cafeteria, the immigrant sits at an empty table, waiting for a waiter. Of course, no one comes to take his order. Later, another patron sits down near him and explains how a cafeteria works.

Mr. Cavanaugh’s immigrant comments: “I soon learned that’s how everything works in America.” He explains, “Life’s a cafeteria here. You can get anything you want as long as you are willing to pay the price. You can even get success, but, you’ll never get it if you wait for someone to bring it to you. You have to get up and get it yourself.”¹⁷

We are responsible for ourselves. Most often, what we get out of life is directly proportional to what we put in.

Alfred Nobel¹⁸

In his father’s factory, Alfred Nobel experimented with the dangerous substance nitroglycerin in hopes of making a safe and useful explosive in construction and mining. However, his experimental mixture caused so many accidents that Nobel was almost considered a public enemy.

In 1867, he found a safe mixture and “dynamite” was invented. Nobel became one of the richest men in the world.

Later in life, Nobel felt guilty that his invention which was intended for peaceful use, was employed in the destruction of war. He placed about 9 million dollars in a fund, the interest of which would be used to award prizes that furthered science and peace. Thus was born the Nobel Peace Prize.

A responsible person is accountable for his actions and seeks to rectify the wrongs he may have caused.



The Stage Coach Driver

Three men were being interviewed for a position of stagecoach driver. The interviewer asked how well they would drive the narrow canyon roads, particularly those with sheer drops to one side.

¹² Information from *Character Education*, Instructional Fair, TS Denison, page 19

¹³ TPCN-Great Quotations, http://www.cyber-nation.com/victory/quotations/subjects/quotes_responsibility.html, accessed September 5, 2002

¹⁴ Information from *Character Education*, Instructional Fair, TS Denison, page 18,19

¹⁵ Information from *Character Education*, Instructional Fair, TS Denison, page 17

¹⁶ “The Motivating Tape company,” <http://www.motivatingquotes.com/challenge.htm>, Accessed September 5, 2002

¹⁷ Cavanaugh, Brian T.O.R. *More Sower’s Seeds: Second Planting*, Mahwah, NJ Paulist Press, 1992, page 53.

¹⁸ “Nobel, Alfred Bernhard,” *World Book Encyclopedia*, 1988, page 443

The first man said that he could get as close as 2 inches from the edge and still keep his coach safely on the road.

The second man bragged that he could drive that road with the edge of the rear wheel hanging halfway off the cliff and yet the stagecoach and horses would never be in danger.

“And how would you drive this road?” the interviewer asked the third man.

“I would drive as far away from the edge as possible,” he replied.

Which driver would you hire? Which driver would you want to be responsible to get you to your destination? Which driver are you like when you have responsibilities?

Writing or Discussion Topics

**Read Hey Al (story by Arthur Yorinks, pictures by Richard Egielski) and talk about the rewards of having responsibilities. Allow students to ask their parents about their responsibilities. What rewards do they receive by being responsible? What intangible or tangible rewards do the students receive from being responsible?

** Gilbert Arland said, “When an archer misses the mark, he turns and looks for the fault within himself. Failure to hit the bull’s-eye is never the fault of the target. To improve your aim - improve yourself.”¹⁹ Talk about the reasons for not being responsible and ways to overcome these obstacles.

**Retell “The Little Red Hen.” *Why is it important to share the responsibility as well as the reward?*

**List different modes of travel through the community. *What responsibilities are required in each mode of travel?*

** John D. Rockefeller said, “I believe that every right implies a responsibility; every opportunity an obligation; every possession, a duty.”²⁰ Have students talk to their parents about the rights we have as United States citizens, the opportunities we have to develop talents, the many possessions we have and the responsibilities we have because of these favorable circumstances. What are the impacts of being responsible in the work force? Have students write their insights in a Character Journal.

Role Plays

*Talk about the reasons for not being responsible. Young children may enjoy acting in the role play as animals or people such as: Responsible Rob, Lazy Larry, Hurried Hippo, Forgetful Fish, Tired Tim, or Procrastinator Pete.*²¹

**Your friend tells you how disappointed he is that he cannot ride his bike today because his tire is flat. Later another friend brags to you about how many bike tires he has punctured. *If you are _____ (Lazy Lorna or Responsible Rhea) what would you do? Is it possible to be responsible and still keep both friends? What are the short and long term consequences?*

**You have a spelling assignment that you almost finished in school. Now the bell rings and you race off to soccer practice. Just before you reach the soccer field, you remember your spelling assignment. *If you are _____ what do you do? What are the short and long term consequences?*

**The school officials have asked for volunteers to do some weeding around your school yard. *If you are _____ what do you do? What are the short and long term consequences?*

Book List

The Library by Sarah Stewart, Illustrated by David Small Farrar, Staruf, Giroux

The Gardener by Sarah Stewart, Illustrated by David Small Farrar, Staruf, Giroux

The Paper Dragon by Marguerite Davol, Atheneum, 1997

The Best Town in the World by Byrd Baylor, Illustrated by Ronald Himler, Aladdin books, 1982

The Signmaker’s Assistant by Tedd Arnold, Dial Books for Young Readers, 1992

Miss Rumphius by Barbara Cooney, Viking 1985

Officer Buckle and Gloria by Peggy Rathmann, G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1995



NOVEMBER: Diligence/ Stick to it.

DECEMBER: Respect

JANUARY: Generosity

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¹⁹William C. Wilson, Jr, “QuoteNotes,” <http://brightpath.hypermart.net/QN/Society/Institutions/Accountability.htm>, accessed September 5, 2002

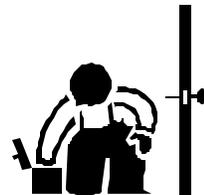
²⁰ TPCN- Great Quotations, http://www.cyber-nation.com/victory/quotations/subjects/quotes_responsibility.html, accessed September 5, 2002

²¹ Adapted from *Character Education*, Instructional Fair, TS Denison, page 19

Responsibility Word Search

J U D G E T H I T R U S A N S B
 R E S P O N S I B I L I T Y R T
 E T Y E S P A C T O N S I B I H
 L H H R I T C D E C I S I O N I
 R I T F E S C P O N S I B I E C
 L C R O P R O M I S E I T Y L A
 R A O R E J U D G M E N T T B L
 R L W M E S N P O N I S I B A P
 L E T A A C T C O U N T A D I R
 U T S N Y E A N S W E R A B L E
 O M U C I S B L A M E E A N S W
 E R R E B L L A C T T R U S T W
 O R T H Y D E C D U T Y I O N F

Responsibility*Accountable*Promise*Duty*Ethical*Blame
 Answerable*Liable*Judgment*Ethical*Act*Trustworthy
 Decision*Performance



I have met many wanna-be's.

I distinguish the wannas from the gonnas because the wanna-be's all think someone else is to blame for their problems

–By contrast, gonna-be's say:

“What? There's no door here? I'll build one.” --K. Callan¹

Responsible people do not blame circumstances, conditions, or conditioning for their behavior. Their behavior is a product of their own conscious choice.

—Stephen R. Covey²

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¹ Franklin Covey, The Portable 7 Habits: Choice, page 69

² Ibid., page 100