

*Choice &
Consequences*

With every
choice there is
always a
consequence!

“ . . . We shape our
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~Eleanor Roosevelt~



Character Connection Theme: Choice and Consequences



Definition

Choice “implies the freedom to choose from a set of persons or things.” It is an option; “the power, right or liberty of choosing.”¹ A consequence is “that which logically or naturally follows from an action or condition; an effect; result.”² “*Accountable* emphasizes liability for something of value either contractually or because of one’s position of responsibility.”³ People who are accountable think about long term consequences before they act. They accept responsibility for the consequences of their choices and their associations. They fulfill their consequential duties, not because of payment, force, or fear of repercussion, but because they are living a value that gives higher meaning and purpose to life. They do not make excuses, blame others for their mistakes, act like a victim, or take credit for another’s success. Gary Ryan Blair said, “Every choice carries a consequence. For better or worse, each choice is the unavoidable consequence of its predecessor. There are not exceptions. If you can accept that a bad choice carries the seed of its own punishment, why not accept the fact that a good choice yields desirable fruit?” Life is a sum of choices. Good character is a victory, not a gift.

Quotes

“One’s philosophy is not best expressed in words. It is expressed in the choices one makes. In the long run, we shape our lives and we shape ourselves. The process never ends until we die. And the choices we make are ultimately our responsibility.” --Eleanor Roosevelt⁴

“Your attitude can take you forward or your attitude can take you down. The choice is always yours!” -- Catherine Pulsifer

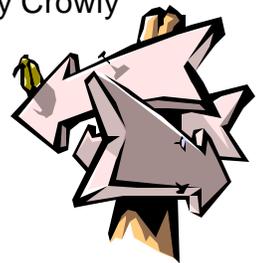
“Until a person can say deeply and honestly, ‘I am what I am today because of the choices I made yesterday,’ that person cannot say, ‘I choose otherwise.’” -- Dr. Stephen R. Covey

When you have to make a choice and don't make it, that is in itself a choice.
---William James⁵

“We are free up to the point of choice, then the choice controls the chooser.” --Mary Crowley⁶

“If you don't change your direction, you may end up where you are headed.”

“One must want the consequences of what one wants.” –Bainville



Activities

**Sprinkle pepper over a bowl of water. (Because of the water’s surface tension, most of the pepper will float.) Now place a drop of dish soap on the water. Watch what happens to the pepper. *Just as the*

¹ “choice,” The American Heritage Dictionary, page 237

² “consequence,” The American Heritage Dictionary, page 283

³ “responsible,” The American Heritage Dictionary, page 1108

⁴ The Galaxy of Quotes, <http://members.fortunecity.com/galaxyofquotes/index2.htm?roosevelt.htm~mainFrame>, accessed July 11, 2002

⁵ Quotations-Choice, Motiration.com, <http://www.motiration.com/quotations.phtml?start=10&Topic=Choice>, Accessed July 18, 2002

⁶ “Quotes” A Garden/Wisdom <http://www.digizan.com/garden/wisdom/quotes.asp> Accessed July 18, 2002

pepper moved when the soap touched the water, so do some choices cause reactions from people. How do classmates react to a boisterous student? Does the choice of eating manners influence others? What choices may repel others from us?

** Memorize a poem that talks about taking responsibility for one's destiny such as "Invictus" by William Ernest Henley; 1849-1903

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the full clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud,
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find me, unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.⁷



**Have students make a tree of choices and consequences. The trunk is the initial choice with consequences branching out. Each branch then comes to its own choice with alternatives.

Stories

Choose One Chair

"When I was a boy, my father, a baker, introduced me to the wonders of song," tenor Luciano Pavarotti relates. "He urged me to work very hard to develop my voice. Arrigo Pola, a professional tenor in my hometown of Modena, Italy, took me as a pupil. I also enrolled in a teachers college. On graduating, I asked my father, 'Shall I be a teacher or a singer?'"

" 'Luciano,' my father replied, 'if you try to sit on two chairs, you will fall between them. For life, you must choose one chair.'"

"I chose one. It took seven years of study and frustration before I made my first professional appearance. It took another seven to reach the Metropolitan Opera. And now I think whether it's laying bricks, writing a book--whatever we choose--we should give ourselves to it. Commitment, that's the key. Choose one chair." (Guideposts)⁸

Aesop's Tale: The Donkey and His Masters⁹

In the days of Roman mythology, a donkey belonged to a seller of herbs. The donkey was sure that he was given too much work and too little food. He petitioned Jupiter for a change. Jupiter warned him that he would regret his request, but nevertheless decreed that he should be sold. Shortly afterwards, the donkey found himself in the employ of a tile-maker. The loads he carried now were heavier and the food seemed less. Again the donkey petitioned for a change of masters. Jupiter warned that this would be the last time his request would be granted. This time, a tanner bought the donkey. The work was harder. And considering his master's occupation he moaned continuously about his fate:



⁷ "Poetry Worth Knowing, John Robertson, <http://www.bestclips.com/poem-invictus.html>, Accessed July 18, 2002

⁸ Sermon Illustrations.com <http://www.christianglobe.com/illustrations/theDetails.asp?whichOne=f&whichFile=focus>, Accessed July 18, 2002

⁹ Aesop's Fables, Online Collection, <http://www.pacificnet.net/~johnr/cgi/aesop1.cgi?sel&TheAssandHisMasters>, Accessed July 19, 2002

“It would have been better for me to have been overworked and starved than to serve my current master, who by tanning my hide will continue to use me even after I die.” *He that finds discontentment in one place is not likely to find happiness in another.* Viktor E. Frankl wrote in *Man’s Search for Meaning*, (p.104) “Everything can be taken from a man but ...the last of the human freedoms - to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.”¹⁰



Writing or Discussion Topics

**Have students talk to their parents about choices and the questions they ask themselves before they make an important decision. Make a list of these questions. Questions to ask before making a choice could include: “Is it hurtful or unfair?” and “Are moral standards involved?” (See <http://www.ethicsweb.ca/guide/>)

** Francie Baltazar-Schwartz writes a story of a restaurant worker named Jerry entitled “Attitude is Everything.” Jerry’s philosophy is stated: “Each morning I wake up and say to myself, Jerry, you have two choices today. You can choose to be in a good mood or you can choose to be in a bad mood. I choose to be in a good mood. Each time something bad happens, I can choose to be a victim or I can choose to learn from it.

“I choose to learn from it. Every time someone comes to me complaining, I can choose to accept their complaining or I can point out the positive side of life. I choose the positive side of life.”

“ . . . Life is all about choices. When you cut away all the junk, every situation is a choice. You choose how you react to situations. You choose how people will affect your mood. You choose to be in a good mood or bad mood. The bottom line: It’s your choice how you live life.”

Read how Jerry chooses life at <http://www.buildfreedom.com/power/attitude.html>. Have students make a list of choices of the day’s actions, words, thoughts, and emotions, and what governed the choice. What does attitude have to do with quality of life? Talk about the character traits of people in the community that have chosen to participate and succeed despite mental or physical handicaps.

**Brainstorm common justifications for not being accountable such as: “Everyone is doing it,” “It doesn’t hurt anyone,” and “It’s legal, permissible, necessary, or not illegal.” *What is harmful about rationalizing?*

Role Plays

**Hose’s parents have asked him to stay away from a certain part of the city because of its reputation for drugs. As Hose leaves the house with his friends, his parents remind him of their request. Hose assures his parents that he remembers. Hose and his friends head toward the basketball courts. A few blocks later, they look around, see no acquaintances, then head for the forbidden part of town. *What are the potential consequences? What happens if Hose does not tell his parents on his return? What is the relationship between being trusted and making good choices?*

**Harry does not like geometry. For a while his boredom in geometry class is relieved by reading a book and drawing, then by making paper airplanes, and finally by making obnoxious remarks during the discussion. *What are the potential consequences of Harry’s actions? Do the perceptions of Harry by the other students change because of his actions?*

Book List

Pinocchio (many versions)

Good Job Oliver by Laurel Molk

Summer My Father Was Ten by Pat Brisson/Andrea Shine

The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks by Katherine Paterson, illustrated by Leo & Diane Dillon (*Choosing to live a moral life at first seems to earn misery but is later rewarded.*)



OCTOBER : **RESPONSIBILITY**

NOVEMBER : **DILIGENCE/ STICK TO IT**
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DECEMBER : **RESPECT**

¹⁰ “Victor Frankl Quotation,” <http://www.geocities.com/~webwinds/frankl/quotes.htm>, Accessed July 19, 2002

Choice and Consequence

Jean-Paul Sartre said, "We are our choices."¹ Fill the circle with a collage of magazine pictures depicting the choices that make up **you**: activities, books, foods, friends. . . On the outside of the circle write some consequences from choices you have made. For instance, choosing to be friendly and to smile may lead to friends and favorable circumstances. Choosing to play the violin may lead to a position in an orchestra. Choosing to collect insects may lead into a science career.



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¹ International TPCN—Great Quotations, http://www.cyber-nation.com/victory/quotations/subjects/quotes_character.html Cyber Nation, Access July 18, 2002