

# CHARACTER



Respect

March 2004

**RESPECT: "to esteem the worth or excellence of a person; to revere, consider, admire or heed."  
"Respect commands itself and it can neither be given nor withheld when it is due."**

*Eldridge Cleaver*

Many adults believe that the only familiarity the younger generation has with the word "respect" is the classic Aretha Franklin song. The older generation bemoans the loss of teenage respect for property, others, and themselves. As educators and parents, we need to reemphasize the age-old virtue of respect.

The original meaning of respect comes from the Latin meaning to "look back at" or "regard, consider". By the sixteenth century it developed its more modern meaning of "deference" or "esteem". We need to "look back at" others and recognize their worth. All people deserve the respect of others for simply being members of the same human family. It's easy for teens to respect one they truly revere or admire, but the trick is to help them recognize the need to respect even those with whom they may disagree. Former President and General U.S. Grant and General Robert E. Lee provide us with an excellent example of respecting those with whom we may not agree. At the close of the Civil War, as Generals Grant and Lee drew up the orders of surrender, General Grant made a magnanimous offer. The Confederates could keep their side arms, personal possessions and their own horses, as it was planting season. He then offered rations to the famished Confederate army. Grant then forbade his troops from cheering at the announcement of the surrender, reminding his troops that "The war is over. The Rebels are our countrymen again." Three days later, at the formal surrender service, the tone of respect started by Grant continued. Major General Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain of the Union ordered his troops to salute their fallen comrades.

The Confederate General John B. Gordon recalled, "Chamberlain called his men into line and as my men marched in front of them, the veterans in blue gave a soldierly salute to those vanquished heroes "a token of respect from Americans to Americans." Lee never forgot Grant's kindness and years later as the president of what would later become Washington and Lee University, a professor made an unfavorable comment about General Grant. Lee replied, "Sir, if you ever again presume to speak disrespectfully of General Grant in my presence, either you or I will sever his connection with this university."



These are men who fought on the opposite sides of the most costly war in American history and yet they both saw the intrinsic value of the other. General Grant later said of his opponents that he felt "sad....and depressed at the downfall of a foe who had fought so long and valiantly and had suffered so much for a cause, though that cause was, I believe, one of the worst for which people ever fought." He didn't agree with slavery or secession but he valued and respected his foes for their valiant fight. If we can instill the same sentiments in our youth and children, we can have the hope of a more peaceful future. Some ways in which we as educators and parents can emphasize respect is by showing respect to others, ourselves, disagreeing with dignity, and looking for the intrinsic value in others. If we can create a respectful attitude in our classes and homes, perhaps our children will follow suit.

*Ann Merrill  
History/AP Government Teacher  
Pleasant Grove High School*

"When you are content to be simply yourself and don't compare or compete, everybody will respect you."

*Lao-Tzu*

"America has furnished to the world the character of Washington. And if our American institutions had done nothing else, that alone would have entitled them to the respect of mankind."

*Daniel Webster*

"There are countless ways of achieving greatness, but any road to achieving one's maximum potential must be built on a bedrock of respect for the individual, a commitment to excellence, and a rejection of mediocrity"

*Buck Rodgers*

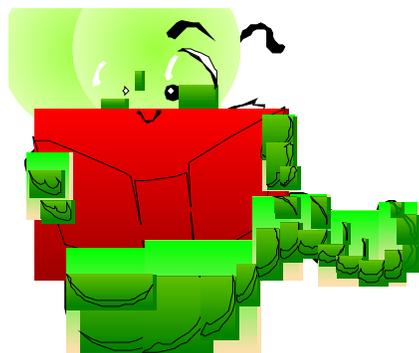
## Book List

**Thank you Mr. Falker**  
by Patricia Polacco

**Chester's Way**  
by Kevin Henkes

**The Rag Coat**  
by Lauren Mills

**Twenty and Ten**  
by Claire Huchet  
Bishop



## Family Activities

-During family discussion times talk about ways to respect the person who is talking. Use a "talking feather." (The person who holds the feather has the turn to speak. The others listen intently and practice good eye contact with the feather holder.)

-Have a formal family dinner where good manners are emphasized. What does courtesy have to do with showing respect?

-Alexander Graham Bell, born on March 3, 1847, once told his family that he would rather be remembered as a teacher of the deaf than as the inventor of the telephone. How can we show respect and make life better for those who have different abilities?

By Laura Clement

## Kid's Corner

### Respect Dos and Don'ts

#### Dos

During class if someone is talking to you, try to get them to be quiet.

Raise your hand if you want to make a comment. If you see people doing something like vandalism, tell a teacher. Walk in the halls. If there is a new kid in your school, include him. Follow your teacher's directions. Listen when announcements are made. Respect others' religious beliefs. Respect people of all skin colors.

#### Don'ts

Don't goof off during a lesson. Don't put others down or make fun of them. Don't run in the halls. Don't hurt someone for any reason. Don't make fun of the way other people dress. Don't spread gossip. Don't make fun of teachers.

By Braden Hallam

We, at Character Connection would like to focus on helping parents access character materials this year by using the web site located at [www.thecharacterconnection.com](http://www.thecharacterconnection.com). If you are interested in receiving a monthly reminder of the character traits and access to resource materials, please e-mail your address to [arlainea@isquaredinc.com](mailto:arlainea@isquaredinc.com)

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