

CHARACTER
Connection



Responsibility

Being
Accountable For
Our Words And
Actions

“The willingness to
accept responsibility
for one’s own life is
the source from
which self-respect
springs.”

~ Joan Didion ~



January Character Connection Theme: Responsibility

Definition

Responsibility means “a particular burden of obligation upon a person who is responsible,” also, “answerable or accountable for something within ones’ power to control.”¹

Here are some different ways to be responsible:

- *Cooperation.
- *Doing things to the best of your ability.
- *Accepting credit or correction willingly.
- *Admit mistakes without making excuses.
- *Do what you say you will do.



Information

Six principles to teach responsibility:

- 1) *Every child is different.* Different children require different kinds of motivation.
- 2) *Expectations determine performance.* Children do exactly what is really expected of them.
- 3) *Example is the best teacher.*
- 4) *Consistency is crucial.* The sooner we realize that the amount of responsibility our children learn depends on our consistency and our follow through--no matter how difficult it may be--the better off we are.
- 5) *Children learn from what is really happening.* We must be genuine ourselves.
- 6) *Pride is the sustaining force behind responsibility.*²

Quotes

"Liberty means responsibility. That is why most men dread it." -George Bernard Shaw

"You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today."

-Abraham Lincoln

"The price of greatness is responsibility." --Winston Churchill

"The reason people blame things on the previous generations is that there's only one other choice." -Doug Larso

"Few things can help an individual more than to place responsibility on him, and to let him know that you trust him." -Booker T. Washington³

"I believe life is a series of near misses. A lot of what we ascribe to luck is not luck at all. It's seizing the day and accepting responsibility for your future. It's seeing what other people don't see and pursuing that vision." --Howard Schultz, Owner of Starbucks Coffee

¹ From the Random House Dictionary.

² Eyre, Richard and Linda. Teaching Children Responsibility. Simon & Schuster.

³ <http://www.quoteland.com/quotes/search/search.cgi?query=Responsibility>

"We are made wise not by the recollection of our past, but by the responsibility for our future."

—George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950), Irish-born British playwright⁴



Activities

**As a class, modernize and act out the story of "The Little Red Hen" and discuss why it is important to share responsibility and the reward. *Should the hen have shared the reward when she carried out the responsibility herself?*

**Ask students to make a list of their responsibilities at home, school, community, etc. *What happens if they choose not to do these responsibilities?* Have students talk to their parents about their responsibilities in home, community, and work. *Do responsibilities change as we get older?*

**Have students draw a picture on a white paper using milk or lemon juice on a drawing instrument (such as a Q-tip.) Let the picture dry. To reveal the picture, iron the paper. Discuss how an irresponsible act may not at first be noticed, but a hot iron and time usually bring the "hidden" irresponsibility into view.

**Have the class act out or read aloud the poem, "The Three Little Kittens," or the incident when Abraham worked for the book Life of George Washington, that was rain damaged while in his possession. Discuss how responsibility leads to reward, which leads to further responsibility.

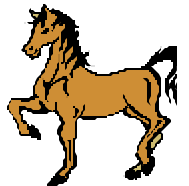
Stories



Ida Lewis: Responsible for the Lighthouse

In the 1850's, the beacon from the lighthouse directed and saved the lives of many seamen. Hosea Lewis was the keeper at Lime Rock Light when he became ill from a stroke in 1857. His daughter Ida took on the care of the light—filling the oil at sundown and midnight, trimming the wick, polishing the reflectors, and extinguishing the light at dawn. She was an excellent swimmer and boat operator. In 1858, her father watched through a telescope as 16 year old Ida saved the lives of four young men whose boat had capsized. This was the first of approximately 25 rescues that she performed in her 55 years at Lime Rock.⁵

Find out more about Ida. Talk about the way she showed incredible responsibility for the lighthouse, her family, and those on the sea.



The Bell of Atri

There once was a horse who served a knight well for a long time, and now it was the knight's responsibility to take good care of the horse. Although the knight had plenty of money, he preferred to spend his time sitting and counting his money instead of taking care of the horse. In the town of Atri where the knight lived there hung a bronze bell called the bell of justice. This bell was to be rung only when someone who had been treated unfairly needed help to right the wrong. The rope hanging from this bell was worn so the mayor ordered a new one and had a grapevine serve as the bell pull until the new rope arrived. One day the hungry horse spotted the grapevine and started eating it until the bell rung. The townspeople came to see who had rung the bell. They knew it was the knight's horse and were astonished at the horse's poor condition. The knight was brought to the square and given justice for shirking his responsibility of the horse. Learning his lesson well, the knight mended his ways took princely care of the horse for the rest of his days.⁶

⁴ <http://www.quoteworld.org/search.php?thetext=responsibility&page=3>, accessed December 2, 2003

⁵ "Lime Rock Light," <http://www.lighthouse.cc/limerock/history.html>. See also <http://users.sitestar.net/~cypress/ida.htm> and http://www.nightbeacon.com/zprofiles/Ida_Lewis.htm, accessed December 5, 2003

⁶ Treasury of Virtues. AThe Bell of Atri@. Pg. 155.

Writing or Discussions Topics

**Discuss the quote by Bernard Shaw, "Liberty means responsibility." *Have students write about why they think liberty mean responsibility.*

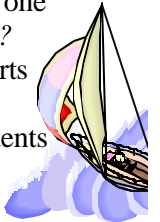
**On June 6, 2007, the Washington Post printed an editorial entitled "A Note on D-Day: Words to carry in a wallet" It said in part, "In these times it seems particularly appropriate to recall one act that would serve today's leaders in every branch of government as lesson and example.

"On the day before the invasion of France, the supreme allied commander, Dwight D. Eisenhower, wrote a note to be read in the event of the mission's failure and put it in his wallet. It said simply, 'Our landings in the Cherbourg-Havre area have failed to gain a satisfactory foothold and I have withdrawn the troops. My decision to attack at this time and place was based on the best information available. The troops, the air and the Navy did all that bravery and devotion to duty could do. If any blame or fault attaches to the attempt it is mine alone.'

"That note is, of course, familiar to those of the generation that best remembers D-Day and World War II. But it is about more than warfare; it speaks to the responsibility of all who would order the affairs of others, then and now. . ."⁷ *Discuss the character traits needed to take responsibility for a failed project.*

**Discuss why part of the definition of responsibility includes "accepting credit or correction willingly." *Are we taking responsibility for our actions when we give credit or blame to others?*

**Tim O'Brien writes, "In a hair salon in Florida: 'Are you having a good day?' The stylist asked her client. 'Yes,' he replied, 'but if I wasn't, it would be my fault.'" Despite poor situations or other people's inconsiderate actions, " 'It's still my responsibility. I can't control the situations, but I can control my responses to them. No one can upset me unless I allow them to.' "⁸ *How can you take responsibility for your attitude and circumstances?* O'Brien comments, "The biggest problem with blaming a situation or another person for our problems is it hurts our ability to learn from them. How? If outer circumstances or other people determine our fate, then we can't develop effective goals for our future." Read Ella Wheeler Wilcox's poem, "The Winds of Fate."⁹ Have students write their own editorial or poem on the importance of being responsible for outlook and situation.



Role Plays

**Mary knows it is her turn to do the dishes but she decided to play with her friends instead. *Who suffers the consequences when someone doesn't do what they say they will do?*

**Jon says he will help out with the bake sale at his school by making the signs. He discovers that it is a bigger job than he thought but still does it to the best of his ability. *What does a person learn from taking on a responsibility that is challenging?*

**Steve offered to bring the cups to his school party. When he realized he forgot he told his classmates that his mom had forgotten to bring them. *Why is it hard to admit mistakes without making excuses?*

Book List

The Fortune Tellers by Lloyd Alexander

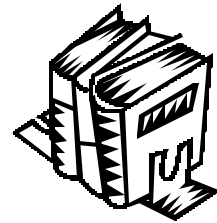
The Rainbabies by Laura Krauss Melmed

Mr. Gumpy's Outing by John Burningham

Heckedy Peg by Don and Audrey Wood

On My Honor (4th Grade and up) by Marion Bauer

The Children's Book of Virtues "Over in the Meadow" by William Bennett.



February: **Forgiveness**

March: **Respect**

April: Compassion/Caring

May: Loyalty

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7 <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/06/05/AR2007060501838.html>, accessed Aug 1, 2007

8 O'Brien, Tim, Knight Ridder/Tribune News Service "Life is your choice and your responsibility," Daily Herald 5 May 1999.

9 "The Winds of Fate," <http://www.ceeme.com/poetry/windsfate.htm>, accessed December 4, 2003

Name _____

Responsibility Word Scramble

1. MEOTMCTMNI _____

2. CLOUBATCAEN _____

3. NCEOESEUCQN _____

4. YDUT _____

5. NBOGTOILAI _____

6. TIAEHCL _____

7. ELBLAI _____

8. WRTOHSTYUTR _____

9. RBEANESLAW _____

10. LTRNSOYIPBIEIS _____

11. RPESMOI _____

12. LAECPAB _____

duty
trustworthy
capable
liable
commitment
ethical
responsibility
accountable
obligation
consequence
answerable
promise

