

Courage

Personal
Bravery--
A Quality of the
Heart

“Courage is what
it takes to stand up
and speak.

Courage is also
what it takes to sit
down and listen.”

--Winston Churchill

April 2005 Character Connection Theme: Courage



Definitions

Courage is “the state or quality of mind or spirit that enables one to face danger with self-possession, confidence, and resolution.” It is bravery or valor.¹ It is being brave, accepting challenge and sometimes just coping. A person with courage recognizes danger and stands firm. It is doing what needs to be done when a course is different, difficult, or unpopular. Personal bravery is a quality of the heart.

Background

The history of our nation is filled with speeches calling our citizens to courageous acts.

On March 23, 1775 at St. John’s church in Richmond during the Second Virginia Convention, Patrick Henry argued that the colonists had exhausted all avenues of reconciliation with Britain. He closed his oration with these famous words: “Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it Almighty God-I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!”²

On February 27, 1860, the Republican presidential candidate, Abraham Lincoln, gave a speech at the Cooper Institute attacking the argument that the nation’s founders condoned slavery. He closed his remarks with these words: “Neither let us be slandered from our duty by false accusations against us, nor frightened from it by menaces of destruction to the government, nor of dungeons to ourselves. Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith let us to the end dare to do our duty as we understand it.”³

The words that inspired courage in the past can inspire our efforts of today. As Mary McLeod Bethune said, “If we have the courage and tenacity of our forebears, who stood firmly like a rock against the lash of slavery, we shall find a way to do for our day what they did for theirs.”⁴

Quotes

“Courage and perseverance have a magical talisman, before which difficulties disappear and obstacles vanish into air.”—John Quincy Adams

“The brave man is not he who feels no fear, For that were stupid and irrational; But he, whose noble soul its fears subdues, And bravely dares the danger nature shrinks from.” --Joanna Baillie

“Courage enlarges, cowardice diminishes resources. In desperate straits the fears of the timid aggravate the dangers that imperil the brave.”-- Christian Nevell Bovee

“He who loses wealth loses much; he who loses a friend loses more; but he that loses his courage loses all.” -- Miguel De Cervantes

“Courage is the first of human qualities because it is the quality which guarantees all others.”-- Winston Churchill

“A man of courage is also full of faith.” -Marcus T. Cicero⁵

¹ “courage” [The American Heritage Dictionary](#)

² submitted by PG High PTA representative. See also <http://www.inmind.com/schools/lessons/PatrickHenry/life.html> and http://longman.awl.com/history/primarysource_5_2.htm

³ submitted by PG High PTA representative, see also http://douglass.speech.nwu.edu/linc_a89.htm

⁴ http://www.cyber-nation.com/victory/quotations/subjects/quotes_courage.html

⁵ http://www.cyber-nation.com/victory/quotations/subjects/quotes_courage.html

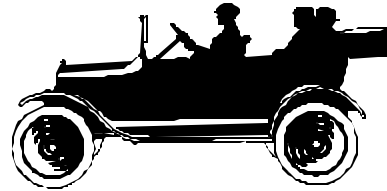


Activities

**In the early years of Texas, the citizens of Gonzales borrowed a small 4-pound cannon from Presidio de Bexar to use in defense of Indians. Later, when the Texan colonies threatened to revolt, the Mexican army sent about 100 soldiers to repossess the cannon. However, on October 2, 1835, Gonzales residents loaded the cannon with scrap iron and fired it at the Mexican soldiers. The Mexicans retreated with one casualty, and no loss on the other side. This was the “Lexington of Texas” and the Texas revolution had begun. Legend says that Sarah Seely DeWitt used the white fabric of her daughter’s wedding dress to make a six-foot battle flag. Painted on the flag was a lone star with a small cannon beneath, and emblazoned with the words, “COME AND TAKE IT” across the bottom.⁶ (See <http://www.tamu.edu/ccbn/dewitt/dewittflgs2.htm> for more history of the “Come and Take It” Flag.) *Have students draw their own flag of courage and place it on the folder of a difficult subject, the door of a very unorganized closet, or some other project that requires courage.*

** April has many historical firsts. On April 2, 1978, Velcro was first put on the market. On April 29, 1913, the zipper was patented. On April 10, 1849, the safety pin was patented. On April 11, 1906, Einstein introduced his Theory of Relativity. *Talk about the courage it takes to introduce new ideas and products into the world. As a class, memorize a poem such as “If” by Rudyard Kipling* (see http://www.everypoet.com/archive/poetry/Rudyard_Kipling/kipling_if.htm) *or “It Can Be Done.”*⁷

The man who misses all the fun
Is he who says, “It can’t be done.”
In solemn pride he stands aloof
And greets each venture with reproof.
Had he the power he’d efface
The history of the human race;
We’d have no radio or motor cars,
No streets lit by electric stars;
No telegraph nor telephone,
We’d linger in the age of stone.
The world would sleep if things were run
By men who say, “It can’t be done.”



Stories

William Berret Travis and the Alamo

The Alamo was a Spanish mission established by Padre Olivares in San Antonio, Texas in 1718. When the people of Texas decided to declare their independence, the Mexican general Santa Anna, approached San Antonio with an army of 5,000 soldiers. Lieutenant Colonel William Berrett Travis’ force of about 150 Texans retreated to the Alamo. Travis wrote to “the people of Texas and all Americans of the world” requesting reinforcements. Wrote he, “I shall never surrender or retreat.” Unfortunately, on February 23, 1836, before a significant number of soldiers could arrive, Santa Anna laid siege to the Alamo. Ammunition in the Alamo began to dwindle. When Travis saw the dire situation, he drew a line in the sand with his sword and gave his men a choice: to cross the line and fight to the end with him in defense of the Alamo, or to leave. All but one man crossed the line. On March 6, waves of Mexicans attacked again and again. Finally, Mexican soldiers scaled the Alamo walls and engaged the surviving Texans in hand to hand combat. At the end of the battle, 1600 Mexican soldiers lay dead and another 500 were wounded. All of the 187 Texan soldiers were killed. However, this heroic defense inspired later soldiers as they won independence for Texas. “Remember the Alamo!” became a call to courage.⁸

Vittorio Alfieri commented, “Often the test of courage is not to die but to live.” What situations require the same courage as defending the Alamo?

⁶ <http://www.theoutlaws.com/alamolegends.htm>, <http://www.lsjunction.com/events/gonzales.htm>

⁷ submitted by Pleasant Grove High School PTA representative from the [Book of Virtues](#)

⁸ <http://www.graceproducts.com/travis/life.html>, “Alamo” World Book page 284

Marla Runyan, a Story of Courage

Marla Runyan was born January 4, 1969, in Santa Maria, California with normal vision. However, when she was in the fourth grade she could not see the blackboard. She struggled to see the print on books held even an inch or so from her eyes. At 9 years of age she was diagnosed with Stargardt's disease, a form of macular degeneration. Having this genetic disease meant that although she could see objects in her peripheral vision, she could not see objects in front of her. She described her vision as, "It is almost like having a "hole" in the back of your eye. This hole also causes me to see "holes" when I look at things. Objects and sometimes people directly in front of me sometimes "disappear" and then "reappear" when I shift my gaze." Glasses or contact lenses cannot correct her vision and she is considered legally blind.



She competed in gymnastics and soccer until she could not see the ball, and then focused on track and field. During high school she competed on the high jump and started the heptathlon in college. She was the first legally blind runner to qualify for the Olympics. She commented, "I have been legally blind for 20 years. I am very used to my eyes and how the world appears to me. In fact, I am so used to it that I often forget I see things differently from everyone else. . . .Sure, there are things I may never be able to do because of my vision impairment. But hopefully making the Olympic Team isn't one of them!"⁹

Writing or Discussion Topics

**Baron Pierre De Coubertin said, "The most important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle. The essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well."¹⁰ There is a poem that talks about the courage of the one that loses:

Let others cheer the winning man,
There's one I hold worthwhile;
'Tis he who does the best he can,
Then loses with a smile.
Beaten he is, but not to stay
Down with the rank and file;
That man will win some other day,
Who loses with a smile.¹¹



Have students write about the kind of courage it takes to do your best, even when you are losing.

** David Ben-Gurion said, "Courage is a special kind of knowledge: the knowledge of how to fear what ought to be feared and how not to fear what ought not to be feared."¹² Make a list of some foolish fears and then a list of some rational fears. Have students talk to their parents about the courage they have used in overcoming difficult situations. Look for examples of courage in the lives community members, then have the students write a Chronicle of Courage about someone's life of valor.

Role Play

**Carlyn has taken piano lessons for 1 year. However, she is also very shy. Her first recital is in one month. She is terribly frightened of the event. *What does courage have to do with accomplishing tasks despite emotional, physical, or mental handicaps?*

Book List

One More Border by Killiam Kaplan and Shelley Tanaka
The Legend of Sleeping Bear by Kathy -jo Wargin
The Lost Sailor by Pam Conrad
Seven Brave Women by Betsy Hearne
Number the Stars by Lois Lowry
Lou Gherig: The Luckiest Man by David A. Adler
Cello of Mr. O by Jane Cutler



May: Generosity

June: Family Goals

July: Family Service

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⁹ <http://marla.flynnsports.com/vision.htm>, accessed 2001

¹⁰ http://www.cyber-nation.com/victory/quotations/subjects/quotes_courage.html, accessed 2001

¹¹ submitted by PG PTA representative, from the Book of Virtues

¹² http://www.cyber-nation.com/victory/quotations/subjects/quotes_courage.html, accessed 2001

Name : _____

Courage Word Search

How many times can you find "courage?"



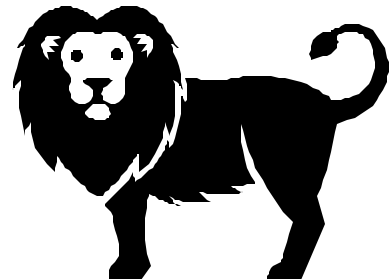
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"Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear--not absence of fear." --Mark Twain¹³

"All our dreams can come true, if we have the courage to pursue them." --Walt Disney

"Success is never final and failure is never fatal. It's courage that counts." --Jules Ellinger

"The greatest test of courage on earth is to bear defeat without losing heart." --Robert Green Ingersoll¹⁴



I will face _____ with courage by _____.

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¹³ <http://www.quotationreference.com/quotefinder.php>, accessed 2001

¹⁴ http://www.cyber-nation.com/victory/quotations/subjects/quotes_courage.html, accessed 2001