

Community & Character

Without a Sense of
Caring... We Really
Have No Sense of
Community

CHARACTER *Connection*



“Build carefully into
your character daily
what you want to be
in old age, for you
are now becoming
what you will
someday
permanently be.”

~William Deal~

August Character Connection Theme: A Community of Character



Definitions

"It takes a long time to educate a community and it can't be done by spellbinders, moneybags, hypnotizers or magicians ... or Aladdin's lamp. Character is what matters on a paper," said Harry J Grant, Publisher, Milwaukee *Journal*¹

What is a community of character? **Community** is a group of people living in the same locality and under the same government. It is a group or class that has common interests.² **Character** is the combination of qualities that distinguish one person, group, or thing from another. It is the combined ethical structure of a group. One's character is one's moral or ethical strength or reputation.³ Commented American civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., "The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically... Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education."⁴

"If we want our children to possess the traits of character we most admire, we need to teach them what those traits are and why they deserve both admiration and allegiance. Children must learn to identify the forms and content of those traits," said William J. Bennett, author and former U.S. Secretary of Education.

Quotes

"Character is simply habit long continued." — Plutarch, Greek biographer (47-120 A.D.)

"Character is like a tree and reputation like its shadow. The shadow is what we think of it; the tree is the real thing." — Abraham Lincoln, 16th U.S. president (1809-1865)

"What lies behind us and what lies before us are small matters compared to what lies within us." — Ralph Waldo Emerson, American essayist, philosopher and poet (1803-1882)

"Most people say that it is the intellect which makes a great scientist. They are wrong: it is character." — Albert Einstein, Swiss-American mathematician, physicist and public philosopher (1879-1955)

"Character is much easier kept than recovered." — Thomas Paine, American political activist⁵

"Men acquire a particular quality by constantly acting a particular way... you become just by performing just actions, temperate by performing temperate actions, brave by performing brave actions." --Aristotle⁶

"Ability may get you to the top, but it takes character to keep you there." — John Wooden⁷

"To keep your character intact you cannot stoop to filthy acts. It makes it easier to stoop the next time." -- Katharine Hepburn⁸

"A man of a right spirit is not a man of narrow and private views, but is greatly interested and concerned for the good of the community to which he belongs, and particularly of the city or village in which he resides, and for the true welfare of the society of which he is a member." —Jonathan Edwards, American theologian and philosopher⁹

¹ <http://www.bartleby.com/63/10/8110.html>, accessed August 17, 2004

² from [The American Heritage Dictionary](#)

³ from [The American Heritage Dictionary](#)

⁴ Quotes to inspire <http://www.josephsoninstitute.org/quotes/quotecharacter.htm>

⁵ Josephson Institute of Ethics Resources—Quotes of Character, <http://www.josephsoninstitute.org/quotes/quotecharacter.htm>, accessed August 17, 2004

⁶ "Character Quotations," <http://quotations.about.com/cs/inspirationquotes/a/Character2.htm>, accessed July 31, 2004

⁷ "Character quotations" http://www.nonstopenglish.com/reading/quotations/k_Character.asp, accessed August 17, 2004

⁸ Gizmotude quotation Archives, http://gizmotude.www5.50megs.com/archive_character.htm, accessed August 17, 2004

⁹ <http://www.quoteworld.org/search.php?thetext=community&page=2>, accessed August 17, 2004



Activities

****Marble Tunnel:** Use teams of 8 people. Give each person a piece of 8½ x 11” piece of paper to roll into a tube of about 1½ inches in diameter. Use tape to fasten. Have each student write a community member (policeman, teacher, fireman. . .) on his tube. Establish a starting and ending line about 20 feet apart. The challenge is to move the marble from the starting line to the finish line through the tubes without touching the marble. *How does a community work together to help to solve problems? How does the individual contribute to the success of the community?*¹⁰

****Community responsibility** also means serving others. As a class, choose a service project to work on throughout the year. (The service project could be something like writing letters to rest homes, picking up litter in a certain area. . .)

Stories



The Blue Train

In July of 2004, Lance Armstrong won his sixth straight Tour de France. His win was built on a solid foundation of talent, determination, hard work, and the clock-like precision of teammates working together.

Whether known as the Big Blue, the Blue Train, the Blue Team or the U.S. Postal Service cycling team, eight cyclists were working together to give the victory to their team mate: Lance Armstrong.

“The Blue Train is the muscle behind it, is the brawn,” Armstrong said. “This is the best team ever.”¹¹

And what does the team do? On the flat terrain, a rider can use 50 percent less energy by letting his teammates break the wind and staying in their draft.¹² During the race, the nine riders start out together as a group. In technical and exhausting rhythm, one will take the lead, then fall behind for a break, with another coming to the front. Teammates shield Lance Armstrong from “threats such as wind and the close battles among the sprinters.”¹³ They set the pace for the race and deliver water bottles. And in the end, they delivered Lance Armstrong his sixth Tour de France win.

Why do they do it?

Comments newspaper writer Ann Killion, “They make a good living. They are handsomely rewarded by Armstrong with bonuses. And they are winning. ‘It makes me proud to ride with Lance,’ [teammate] Azevedo said. ‘It makes me proud to be part of a Tour where Lance goes for six wins.’

“Sometimes, being the best is reward enough.”¹⁴

What are the benefits of working together in a neighborhood or a city on a winning project?



The Beetle and the Ant



There once was a beetle who lived by himself in a hole in the ground. He preferred this solitary life for he could not stand to do any work that did not directly help himself.

One sunny day he happened upon a choice picnic morsel at the same time as a foraging ant. Selfishly he wanted the entire thing for himself. However, although the ant was several times smaller, the ant was also determined to get his fair share. At last the ant struck a bargain with the selfish beetle. They would both take the portion that they could engineer away. The larger beetle closed his eyes in satisfaction, reasoning that the ant could hardly carry anything away and went to work cutting and chopping a piece to take home.

Meanwhile the ant called to his companions and together they formed an ant brigade. By the time the beetle opened his eyes, a chain of ants had carried the biggest portion of the morsel away.

Overwhelming tasks are easily accomplished with teamwork.

Writing or Discussion Topics

****"Not in time, place or circumstance but in the man lies success,"** observed James Joyce. Thomas Carlyle

¹⁰ Adapted from Jackson, Tom, Still More Activities that Teach, Red Rock Publishing, pages 138-141

¹¹ “Armstrong riding the ‘Blue Train’ express: Tireless, selfless teammates always paving way for star”

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/5462540/>

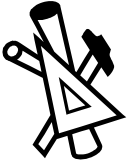
¹² Lai, Garrett “USPS is delivering 6th title for Armstrong: Star not best rider at Tour, but he and team are deadliest combo” <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/5460970/>, accessed August 17, 2004

¹³ “Armstrong relies on team in drive for sixth Tour victory”

http://www.scmtny.org/transcendence/cyclingtranscendence/armstongteam/newsitem_view, accessed August 17, 2004

¹⁴ Killion, Ann “Big Blue shows meaning of teamwork” <http://www.mercurynews.com/mld/mercurynews/sports/9221429.htm?1c>, Accessed August 17, 2004

said, "Instead of saying that man is the creature of circumstance, it would be nearer the mark to say man is the architect of circumstance. It is character which builds an existence out of circumstance. From the same materials one man builds palaces, another hovels; one warehouses, another villas; bricks and mortar are mortar and bricks until the architect can make them something else."¹⁵ *Have students think of their own character building experiences. Were there pivotal circumstances, influential teachers or ideas that helped establish character traits? Suggest that students talk to their parents about events that shaped their moral ideas.* Ralph Waldo Emerson suggests, "We should make a notch every day on our characters, as Robinson Crusoe on his stick. We must be at the helm at least once a day; we must feel the tiller-rope in our hands, and know that if we sail, we steer."¹⁶ *Have students write a how-to paper on building and maintaining character. Discuss and memorize a poem such as this one by an unknown author:*



We are building every day
 In a good or evil way;
 And the building, as it grows
 Shall our inmost selves disclose,
 And, in every arch and line,
 All our faults and failings find.

We may build a palace grand,
 Or a wreck upon the sand
 Do you ask what building this,
 That can show both pain and bliss,
 That can be both dark and fair?
 Lo, its name is Character. . .



**Many have stated what they believe is the best method of appraising moral fiber: "A person's treatment of money is the most decisive test of his character, how they make it and how they spend it," said James Moffatt, Scottish theologian and scholar. Abraham Lincoln commented, "Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power."¹⁷ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe noted, "Men show their character in nothing more clearly than by what they think laughable."¹⁸ Observed Mignon McLaughlin, "You can't truthfully explain your smallest action without fully revealing your character." "How a man plays the game shows something of his character; how he loses shows all of it," declares the Tribune, a newspaper of Camden County Georgia. Finally, a Japanese proverb states, "When the character of a man is not clear to you, look at his friends."¹⁹ *What is a good way to evaluate character? How does the way a person performs in one area of his life influence other areas of performance? As a class devise a character test and a plan for character improvement.*

**Older students may wish to read and discuss the remarkable collaboration in bringing care and healing to Ma'rwā, a young Iraqi wounded by shrapnel from an errant mortar shell at "[Army Therapist Helps Find Care for Iraqi Child](http://sciact.org/articles/articlepage.asp?Pageid=90)" <http://sciact.org/articles/articlepage.asp?Pageid=90> and Sharon Cohen's AP August 14, 2004 article, "A wounded Iraqi girl's struggle to walk again and the strangers who came to her rescue" at http://cbs2.com/national/MarwasJourney-aa/resources_news.html.

Role Plays

**Jason is at a friend's birthday party. The conversation starts to turn to younger brothers and sisters. One friend declares that his younger siblings are pests. Jason thinks about his sister coloring in his notebook just this morning. *What should Jason say? What if the talk is negatively directed about a parent, another friend that is not present, or a local government official? What impact does what Jason says about others have?*

**The teacher has asked for a group of students to work together and write an article for the school newspaper. Writing is very challenging for Carrin, yet she is one of the few who have not yet volunteered for this assignment. *What should Carrin do? If she volunteers, how can she effectively involve all members of the group?*

Book List

The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks by Katherine Paterson, Illustrated by Leo & Diane Dillon (*Yasuko and Shozo help two mandarin ducks who in return help them.*)

Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel, story and pictures by Virginia Lee Burton (*The entire community comes to cheer on Mike Mulligan and his steam shovel because, "We always work faster and better when someone is watching us."*)

The Yellow Star, by Carmen Agra Deedy and illustrated by Henri Sorensen (*"What if every Dane, from shoemaker to priest, had worn the yellow Star of David?"*)

September: **Steadfastness** October: **Honesty** November: **Citizenship**.
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¹⁵ Gizmotude quotation Archives, http://gizmotude.www5.50megs.com/archive_character.htm, accessed August 17, 2004

¹⁶ Gizmotude quotation Archives, http://gizmotude.www5.50megs.com/archive_character.htm, accessed August 17, 2004

¹⁷ "Character quotations" http://www.nonstopenglish.com/reading/quotations/k_Character.asp, accessed August 17, 2004

¹⁸ "Character Quotations," <http://quotations.about.com/cs/inspirationquotes/a/Character2.htm>, accessed July 31, 2004

¹⁹ Gizmotude quotation Archives, http://gizmotude.www5.50megs.com/archive_character.htm, accessed August 17, 2004

A Community of Character

Along many highways are signs featuring people that have character traits worthy of emulation. Imagine that you are one of these famous people. Draw your picture and write on the torch your character traits that you wish to pass along.



The final forming of a person's character lies in their own hands.
--Anne Frank

Good acts have more power to establish a good character than the best arguments from the most eloquent speaker. --Unattributed