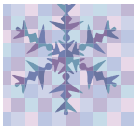


*Dependable*

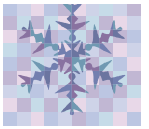
Being Someone  
Others Can  
Count on

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

--Joan Didion



# January 2005 Character Connection Theme: Dependability



## Definitions

To be dependable means to be trustworthy and responsible. When we are dependable we keep our commitments and are answerable for our actions. Dependability is an attitude that determines how we respond. We can feel confident within ourselves and will earn the respect and confidence of others when we are dependable.

## Quotes

“A man who lacks reliability is utterly useless” --Confucius

"Our grand business is not to see what lies dimly in the distance, but to do what lies clearly at hand." -Carlyle<sup>1</sup>

The only way to get rid of responsibilities is to discharge them. -Walter S. Robertson

“Good men prefer to be accountable.” -Michael Edwardes<sup>2</sup>

*“Let us do our duty in our shop or kitchen; in the market, the street, the office, the school, the home, just as faithfully as if we stood in the front rank of some great battle, and knew that victory for mankind depended on our bravery, strength, and skill. When we do that, the humblest of us will be serving in that great army which achieves the welfare of the world.” - Theodore Parker<sup>3</sup>*

"Be not diverted from your duty by any idle reflections the silly world may make upon you, for their censures are not in your power and should not be at all your concerns." – Epictetus <sup>4</sup>

## Activities

\*\*Memorize a poem such as “You Mustn’t Quit:”

When things go wrong, as they sometimes will,  
When the road you’re trudging seems all uphill,  
When the funds are low and the debts are high  
And you want to smile, but you have to sigh,  
When care is pressing you down a bit,  
Rest! if you must—but never quit.



Life is queer, with its twists and turns,  
As every one of us sometimes learns,  
And many a failure turns about  
When he might have won if he’d stuck it out;  
Stick to your task, though the pace seems slow—  
You may succeed with one more blow.



Success is failure turned inside out—  
The silver tint of the clouds of doubt—  
And you never can tell how close you are,  
It may be near when it seems afar;  
So stick to the fight when you’re hardest hit—  
It’s when things seem worst that YOU MUSTN’T QUIT.<sup>5</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Edward, Tyron The New Dictionary of Thoughts Standard Book Company, 1957, page 160

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.cyber-nation.com/victory/quotations/subjects/quotes\\_responsibility.html](http://www.cyber-nation.com/victory/quotations/subjects/quotes_responsibility.html)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.webpages.ainet.com/gosner/quotationsarch/quotations1/topics/duty.htm>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.webpages.ainet.com/gosner/quotationsarch/quotations1/topics/duty.htm>

<sup>5</sup> submitted by PG High School PTA representative, from Book of Virtues, page 536

\*\*Read “The Little Hero of Holland,<sup>6</sup>” the story of Peter who stopped a hole in the dike with his finger. Act out the story. Then, make a list of people in the community, their responsibilities, and the consequences if they were not dependable. Have each student make a list of his own responsibilities and the consequences of being dependable and undependable.

\*\*Have a group of 3 or 4 students lift a plate using only their left hand index fingers. How much weight (besides the plate) can the group lift in this manner? *What happens if one person does not do his share of lifting? Why is it important to be dependable in a group situation as well as in life? Does the responsibility still exist if a student chooses not to be dependable?*



## Stories

### The Story of Cher Ami

“During World War I, a pigeon named Cher Ami, which means ‘dear friend’ in French, saved the lives of many members of what has become known as the ‘Lost Battalion,’ part of New York’s 77<sup>th</sup> Division of the U.S. Army.

“During a battle in France, the battalion was cut off from the rest of the Allied troops. The soldiers found themselves surrounded by the enemy. Suddenly, they were being fired on by their own artillery who didn’t know they were there!

“They tried sending a message to their fellow troops by pigeon. The message read, ‘Many wounded. We cannot evacuate.’ But the pigeon carrying the message was shot down. They sent out a second bird with a message that read, ‘Men are suffering. Can support be sent?’ That pigeon was shot down, too.

“One homing pigeon was left—Cher Ami—the battalion’s last hope. The final message was, ‘Our artillery is dropping a barrage on us. For heaven’s sake, stop it!’ The men watched as Cher Ami was released. They saw him fly up and then saw him shot down. Miraculously, in a moment’s time this bird was airborne again. Hopes soared. But, as he flew over enemy fire, Cher Ami had a leg shot off. A bullet hit his breast. Still, this bird kept flying. Though severely injured, Cher Ami finally reached [his loft among] the U. S. forces with the life-saving message. The shooting stopped.”<sup>7</sup> One hundred and ninety-four lives were saved.

*Cher Ami was one of 600 birds owned and flown by the U.S. Army Signal Corps in France during World War I. He delivered 12 important messages within the American sector at Verdun, France.<sup>8</sup> In moments critical to the lives of many men, Cher Ami’s dependability was a source of hope and life.*

### A MESSAGE TO GARCIA

*Condensed from an essay by Elbert Hubbard, 1899*



In all this Cuban business there is one man stands out on the horizon of my memory like Mars at perihelion. When war broke out between Spain & the United States, it was very necessary to communicate quickly with the leader of the Insurgents. Garcia was somewhere in the mountain vastness of Cuba - no one knew where. No mail nor telegraph message could reach him. The President must secure his cooperation, and quickly.

What to do!

Some one said to the President, "There's a fellow by the name of Rowan will find Garcia for you, if anybody can."

Rowan was sent for and given a letter to be delivered to Garcia. How "the fellow by the name of Rowan" took the letter, sealed it up in an oil-skin pouch, strapped it over his heart, in four days landed by night off the coast of Cuba from an open boat, disappeared into the jungle, & in three weeks came out on the other side of the Island, having traversed a hostile country on foot, and delivered his letter to Garcia, are things I have no special desire now to tell in detail.

The point I wish to make is this: McKinley gave Rowan a letter to be delivered to Garcia; Rowan took the letter and did not ask, "Where is he at?" . . . It is not book-learning young men need, nor instruction about

<sup>6</sup> submitted by PG High PTA representative, from Book of Virtues pages 533-535

<sup>7</sup> <http://birds.cornell.edu/ppw/pigeonstories.htm>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.shoalhaven.net.au/~jimjen/warbirds.html>

this and that, but a stiffening of the vertebrae which will cause them to be loyal to a trust, to act promptly, concentrate their energies: do the thing - "Carry a message to Garcia!" . . .

My heart goes out to the man who does his work when the "boss" is away, as well as when he is at home. . . .Anything such a man asks shall be granted; his kind is so rare that no employer can afford to let him go. He is wanted in every city, town and village - in every office, shop, store and factory. The world cries out for such: he is needed, & needed badly - the man who can carry a message to Garcia.<sup>9</sup>

Read "How I Carried the Message to Gracia" by Colonel Andrew Summers Rowan at <http://www.eng.uci.edu/students/mpontius/hartley/219-229.html> and compare the obstacles that we overcome as we strive to be dependable in relatively mundane matters.

### **The Pony Express Trail**

"Wanted-young, skinny, wiry fellows, not over 20. Must be expert riders, and are willing to risk their lives for the job. Orphans preferred. Wages twenty five dollars a week," was the ad that John Upson answered. Pony Express had a goal: deliver mail 1,966 miles between Missouri and California in less than 10 days. In a relay system, each rider would travel 100 miles night and day, stopping every ten to twenty miles to change to a fresh horse. In all, there would be 190 stations along the Pony Express trail.

In April 1860 John Upson made his Pony Express first run. His route took him east from Sacramento, California, and across the Sierra Nevada mountain range. The night of his ride, a blizzard tested Upson's courage and strength. Some bet Upson could not make it across the mountains. However, he was determined to uphold the Pony Express motto: "The mail must go through." The reputation of the new mail service depended on him. Snow covered the wagon tracks and landmarks along the way, making it difficult to find the route. At times, Upson had to walk, leading his horse. At other times, his sure-footed mustang cut the trail. He traveled through steep canyons where a misstep could mean death. Finally he reached his home station and passed the eastbound mail on to the next rider. A few days later, the westbound mail arrived and Upson crossed back over the snowy Sierra.

Less than 2 years later, the telegraph replaced the Pony Express. But, the legacy of dependable service lives on. In less than 19 months, riders had covered 650,000 miles and carried 34,753 pieces of mail. Only one mail sack was ever lost.<sup>10</sup>



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### **Writing or Discussion Topics**

\*\*Have students discuss with their parents why an employer wants to hire someone who is dependable, and ways to be dependable in a family. Compare responses, and then have students write a journal entry on what it means to be dependable, ways to practice dependability, and whether or not others see them as being dependable. Have students make a new year's goal of improving in dependability in some area.

\*\*Have students write a story set in a world where nature obeys no laws. Talk about the importance of dependability in people as well as nature. Discuss dependability in simple clocks and complex machines.

### **Role Plays**

\*\*Karen has promised her mother that she would be home from her friend's house at 4:10, just in time to take the twins to their 4:30 drill team pictures, on the way to her 4:30 hair appointment. At 4:25, Karen is still not home. *Pantomime the different people and situations that Karen's undependability has potentially affected? If Karen is trying to be dependable, how should she act?*

\*\*Sean awakens with a terrible case of the flu. He cannot get out of bed and does not even feel like thinking. Unfortunately, his group's report on germs is due today. His part needs only a final paragraph. *If Sean is trying to be dependable, what should he do?*

### **Book List**

*The Dog Who Had Kittens* by Polly Roberts

*A Day's Work* by Eve Bunting

*Pink and Say* by Patricia Polacco



**February: Truthfulness**

**March: Respect**

**April: Courage**

**May: generosity**

**June: Family Goals**

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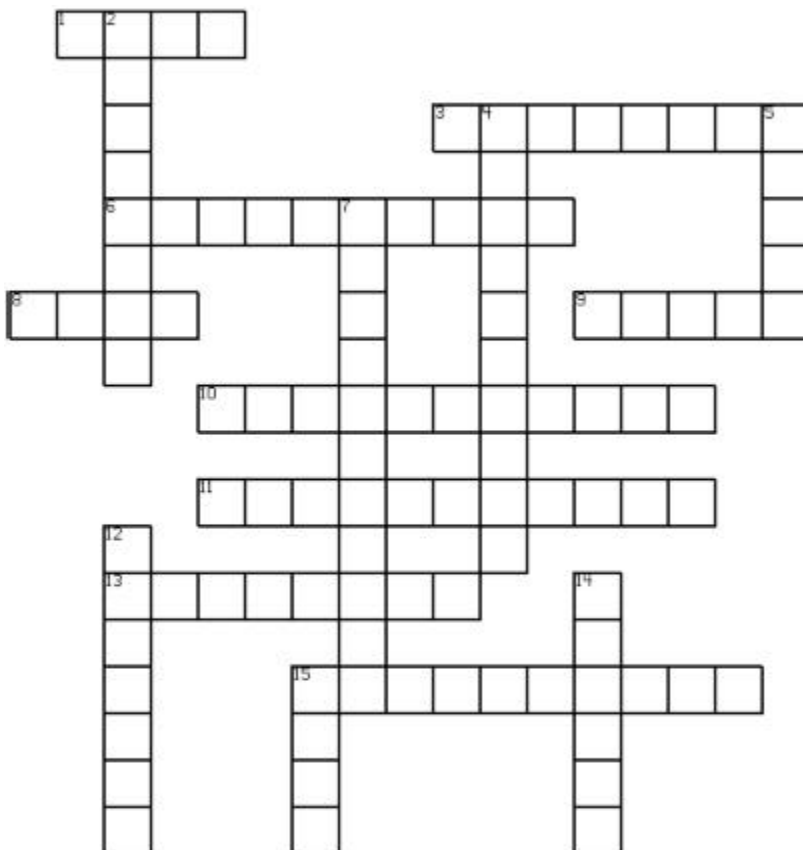
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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.eng.uci.edu/students/mpontius/hartley/217-218.html>

<sup>10</sup> adapted from Kenton Curtus, "The Story of the Pony Express" <http://members.tripod.com/~pnyxpress/history.html>

# Dependability Crossword Puzzle

dependable  
trustworthy  
trust  
reliable  
rely  
bank  
count  
responsible  
answerable  
liable  
accountable  
amenable  
duty  
obligation  
contract  
promise



## ACROSS

1. To have confidence in; rely
3. An agreement between two parties, especially one that is written and enforceable by law
6. Moral or contractual commitment subject to a resolution by a higher authority.
8. Trust confidently
9. To have confidence; to believe or consider to be; deem
10. Liability for something of value either contractually or because of one's position of responsibility
11. Warranting trust
13. That can be relied upon
15. Capable of being depended upon

## DOWN

2. The condition of being subject to control or review
4. The act of binding oneself by a social, legal, or a moral tie
5. Firm reliance on the integrity, ability, or character of a person or thing; confident belief
7. Involving personal accountability or ability to act without guidance or superior authority
12. A declaration that someone will or will not do something; a vow
14. Legal responsibility, as in the payment of damages, or to obligation to perform service, such as military service
15. An act or a course of action that is exacted of one by position, social custom, law, or religion; moral obligation