

IDEAS 21

**International Online Teachers Society
Debate
Educational Materials For
Advance and Upper Intermediate
Students**



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THE 21ST INTERNATIONAL ONLINE TEACHERS SOCIETY ESSAY CONTEST

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THE SPIDER AND THE WATER DRAGON---A LESSON ON PERSEVERANCE

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If you are ever uncertain about the meaning of perseverance, no matter how many dictionaries you've consulted, try to find a spider spinning its web. As the web takes its first definitive form, you will see this lowly creature patiently going about the weaving process, moving to and fro in order to attain that intricate shape. It loses its hold sometimes, but you can see how the spider uses the fine thread from its gut to get back up again and continue with the whole process. Now, if there ever was a creature gifted with so much perseverance, it is most probably the spider.

We are faced with numerous storms in life, some actual, some perceived. Those who are not made of sterner stuff give up so easily, throwing in the towel and their hands up in the air, sometimes much too soon. Only later do they realize that had they waited out the storm a little longer, they would have prevailed.

It has often been said that good things come to those who wait. I believe that even better things await those who continue trying. Lying in wait might be the best option sometimes, but waiting without doing anything is just a waste of time. Do whatever you can to change the situation, to turn it in your favor. It might be thought of as trying too hard, but isn't trying too hard a lot better than trying to stay put doing nothing?

It is difficult to be dynamic, ever moving. We all need to take stock of the situation at some point. But taking stock for too long can amount to plain and simple laziness, and in this dynamic world, those who stay put are sometimes run over in the blink of an eye. And then, they will never know what hit them. You wouldn't want to be a casualty in this sense, would you?

The mythical creature that rules the New Year is a dynamic one-the water dragon. Water is continuously moving, unless it's in some sort of container, of course. Then its only positive movement is to follow the shape of its container. But that's Science, and this is Life 101. In its natural setting, i.e., rivers, lakes, oceans and seas, etc., water seeks its own level. The dragon, a fire-breathing creature, undulates, flies, perhaps seeking its destiny. The combination is therefore dynamic.

We, as the most dynamic beings of all, owe it to the world and to ourselves to be dynamic like this year's symbolic mythical creature, and the humble spider. We must never stop seeking for greatness, we must continue trudging on even when all the chips are down. The crises that the world is beset with are not about to disappear so quickly. But persevere we must, for all these too, will pass.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Define perseverance. Is this a quality you believe you have?
2. Talk about a time in your life when you have felt lost and weary of the world. What inspired you to persevere despite everything?
3. Is there a particular individual you admire for his/her perseverance? Talk about this person in class.
4. Why is it difficult to persevere in this world?
5. How can perseverance be learned/ taught?



PERSEVERANCE---NOT JUST FOR KIDS

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Teaching a preschooler how to write the letters of the alphabet is probably one of the most trying experiences of all for a parent. Unfortunately, not all of us can afford to have our kids get into an expensive preschool program that would take the load off our shoulders. So we get tested severely with teaching our own kids the rudiments of writing. However, if we examine the entire structure of this process, we will find out that during this time, we would also be teaching our child the trait of perseverance.

We start out with a lot of patience, urging the child to form his lines, to create the curves, to make the lines intersect cleanly.

It is quite easy to lose our patience every time our child says, "I give up mama, this is all too difficult for me." The temptation to just tell the child to do it on another day is great. But that's not how learning happens. Learning is often a bitter pill that the child has to swallow, and we as parents have no choice but to administer that pill. Gentle guidance is the key: take the child's hand and guide it in the strokes of writing. Or have him follow the outlines you have prepared so he will easily gain the confidence of forming the lines on his own, eventually.

Do not incentivize everything, because the child might get the wrong notion about everything. Do not strike fear in his heart by threatening bodily harm, although the temptation may sometimes be great, too. Patience is a virtue, and this is the best setting to teach the child about it. Never give up on your child so he will not give up on his goals. Soon, he will realize that perseverance will pay off with the rewards of a job well done.

Acknowledge his efforts, no matter how small they may be. A child needs affirmation, especially when he shows perseverance in his own way. Great things start small, after all. What we are born with are only physical, the spiritual and intellectual are things we imbibe, learn, get influenced with as we develop. Therefore, it is our goal as parents---and teachers---to make the learning process as rich as possible. Let us recognize the uniqueness in each child in how he faces his own life. There are some who might be slower than others, and others who might be quicker than their peers. But the perseverance that they acquire from each and every learning process can only be measured by what and how they achieve, and we are solely responsible for the whole thing.

Do not forget that perseverance is not something a child has from the day of his birth—it is something which he often learns about from those around him.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. How were you taught writing at home? In school?
2. Was it easy for you to learn things in school? Talk about your various experiences.
3. Does learning English come easy to you? How have your teachers helped you so far?
4. How is perseverance applicable at work? Give examples.
5. Do you believe that with perseverance alone, you can eventually master the use of the English language? What other factors are necessary, if any?



THINK LIKE AN ENTREPRENEUR

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How many times have we heard it said that nothing ever comes easy in this world, especially in this day and age? Not everything comes wrapped in smart packages that tell us what to do and not to do. We have to figure everything out ourselves, to do the hard work needed to complete anything. It has become a world where the fittest survive, and those who cannot countenance a struggle or two a day are bound to fail. The odds are often larger than we expect. We might often feel overwhelmed by everything. Yet struggle we must, in order to survive.

Remember that with little strokes will fall great oaks. No matter how insurmountable everything is, if we break it down into tiny, manageable parts, taking one step at a time, we will eventually succeed. Easy come, easy go as they say. Whatever you get quickly, you will only lose just as fast. That does not only apply to money, it applies to simply everything about our individual lives. We must therefore not pray for an easy life, but for strength to prevail during the most trying times of our lives. Even kings have problems too, you know. Yet, with wisdom and proper perspective, they are able to govern wisely.

It is the same for us ordinary beings. We get our own share of little domains we need to govern. It could be our jobs, our families, our studies. If we give up easily at the earliest signs of a challenge, we will never find anything to be proud of. And what is the joy in a non-challenging life? How can you know success if you have never known about disappointments, and the joy that comes after facing down those disappointments? Be resilient, be strong. Do not give up so easily, even when it seems that all the cards are stacked against you. Play your cards right, even when they are all bad. This is the true sign of wisdom---knowing how to play your cards, whether they are good or bad.

We do not get to choose our games, and this is an unfortunate fact. But play we must, in this cruel game called life. Neither are we equipped to choose the cards we are dealt with; that is a prerogative that does not lie on our side. But we are gifted with intellect, and we must learn to use that intellect with a healthy dose of perseverance.

Entrepreneurs know how it all works—they being creatures of immeasurable perseverance. They know that the first periods of disappointments only come in the initial phase, but they believe that the tides will not forever be against them. So they keep on, move on, innovate as needed, and then find success waiting for them. Let us all be “entrepreneurs” ourselves. Oh, I don’t intend that to mean let us find something to sell. Think like an entrepreneur thinks, and you never know what awaits you.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Is there any person you admire for his/her perseverance? What field is he/she known for?
2. How can “small strokes make great oaks fall”? Be able to talk about this saying in class. (Little strokes fell great oaks)
3. Talk about a time when you felt like giving up. Share your thoughts about this particular situation in your own life.
4. Why do some businessmen succeed while others don’t?
5. In your opinion, what is the best way to handle a challenging situation?



PRESEVERANCE

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The snow blizzard was blowing harshly and there was no one around to help the poor family that got torn after the death of the family man. However, they have not lost hope so far and are not willing to, but the harsh circumstances are not making things any easier for them.

The eldest in the family had to drop school, believing it would be a temporary situation, but time has proved otherwise. He knew that all are relying on him to increase their attachment to hope, but he was dying and screaming for help from the inside until one day he decided to join the army. Of course, all of the siblings and his mother protested, knowing that would elevate the pain they were already undergoing. His plan was to send a monthly salary and to ensure his younger brothers' and sister's future. Still, they have not accepted the idea. So, one night he left without warning them and the second eldest started with his back-up plan to support the family.

There was nothing to do in the army and the salary was not a regular monthly one, actually it was all a propaganda to encourage the youth to join for free and only the desperate always join the army. Back home his family were still undergoing a bad time, as a matter of fact, no one even bothered to ask about them, even the reverend whom received a lot of support from their deceased father. The mother worked as a part time house maid in people's homes regardless of her back pain, and sometimes the daughter had to help her mother inside and outside the house. In other words, they all left school or university and held each other's hands to survive.

Six months later, the elder son came home looking pale and defeated. They have not been in touch for a while and thought that they would never see him again. His return was a failure and many of the town people mocked at the family's unreasonable behavior, but when he was strong enough to face the community and talk common sense, he announced his war compensation. The family still did not know how to deal with the situation!

Questions for discussion:

1. What was the eldest son persistent about?
2. Why did he join the army?
3. Who took over after he left to join the army overseas?
4. Where do you think this story has taken part?
5. Why was the family still unable to deal with the new situation after receiving the compensation?



Finish Line

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I have never consider myself an athlete, though I have joined some sports activities in past. I was a volleyball and badminton player from elementary to college but never have I competed for some sort of nationals or anything that goes higher than the campus courts. Nevertheless, I have always known that athletes always put half of their life in their vocation in order to make a good fight in the end.

Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get the crown of glory, to get proud of. They beat their body and make it slave. They exert time and effort to reach for the strength that they need. They work out to be fit enough. They eat just the right amount of food. They sacrifice and kill their cravings. They discipline their body and mind and stay on focus. They prepare their selves for the good fight.

They do not run like any man running aimlessly. They do not fight like a man beating the air. They've got a goal, a purpose, something to look forward to. A visible and lucid target is the reason for finishing the game. They may stumble during the fight. They may fall down sometimes. But one thing is more important; it is finishing the game and winning it. It doesn't matter how many time they got side tracked for as long as they know that what they will get in the end is worth it, they'll never give up. They will finish the game.

I guess, people should start being like an athlete now. We should start aiming for something that's worth it. We should learn how to work it out. We should be ready to face the consequences and win over them. We should never give up.

There are two reasons that I found really important; reasons why we should not give up. One is that the pain is just temporary. The muscles may sore for a little while and give you body aches but at the end of the day, you'll get the nice shape that you have always wanted. You may have deprived yourself from the less likely and nutritious food but in the end, you'll get healthier. Pain were not made to accompany you in your whole existence, they are like part of the test to push you harder to pursue. Second is that God's faithfulness remains forever, to infinity and beyond, so, you do not have to worry. So, just focus yourself on what you are doing and strive for it. You'll get into it; after all, you have already suffered for it.

Keep going! According to Justin Bieber, "Never say never," and you can say, "I have fought a good fight and finished the race."

Question for discussion:

1. What attitude can we connect to perseverance?
2. Is being an athlete difficult?
3. What are your plans for yourself in the future?
4. What are you doing to reach them?
5. What are the sacrifices you've done to finish what you've started?



THE GIFT OF PERSEVERANCE

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When a person feels weary and tired, exhausted from a tedious work but still has to finish a task that is needed to be done, that individual will never cease to lose faith and continue moving and trying the best that he could, to go on and on and on till he finally reaches the goal that was set before him. As the saying goes, "Try and try until you succeed" will hold true in every manner. Have you ever been so determined in life that not even hardships that you encounter and whatever wound you sustain deep inside your heart can stop you from attaining your goal in life? To feel so used up and bone-tired from doing what you believe you are supposed to do, can be very discouraging and at times will make you feel that you are not going anywhere at this point and time of your life. Then, you stop and think of the real reason behind all these circumstances encountered just to realize that it is a part of life's challenges.

Yes, when that happens, it's time to pick up the pieces and try to regain your confidence and turn to God, who is the author of our faith and to which everything emanates from. Like what the Scripture says in Hebrews 10:35-36, "So do not throw away your confidence, it will be richly be rewarded. You need to persevere so when you have done the will of God, you will receive what He has promised." To ponder in the words of God gives you the inner strength, hope and the courage to go on. The only way for us to keep on trying is through the Lord's help for it is prevalent that persistence is the measure of faith in you. The person who has the gift of perseverance will do what all prudent travellers are supposed to do when he is about to set out on a journey. For a person to be able to maintain the track of where he is headed with tenacity in one fixed path, it will be truly indispensable if you know where it exactly leads you. Increase your strength tenfold so as to battle out all difficulties in life.

In spite of the pitfalls that life brings on our way and anything that we encounter, walk steadily on the path that you have chosen. Stay on that course that leads us to the right track. Accept the gift of perseverance so as to give us the wisdom to admit our incompetence. Continue to have that clear vision and a panoramic view of our goal that will give us the clarity of our thoughts to journey the path to success. Our persistence of purpose will inevitably bring out the qualities needed to hasten the accomplishment of the end that we have envisaged. Yes, the gift of perseverance is the power that we need to debacle the obstacles in life and what the world brings to us. Receive it for it is a free gift from God to us.

Questions for discussion:

- 1.Are you easily discouraged by the set of events that turn out in your life? How do you fight it?
- 2.How can a person be persistent with his purpose in life when faced with a lot troubles?
- 3.How can you describe the true meaning of perseverance?
- 4.Have you set your goals in life?
- 5.In what way could you acquire the gift of perseverance? Explain your answer further.



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