

IDEAS 38

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



**International Online Teachers Society
Publishing Committee**



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I FEAR

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Albert Einstein was once quoted thus, “ It was the experience of mystery—even if mixed with fear—that engendered religion.” This reminds me of something my younger brother and my second son laughingly told me about getting into the country’s premier state university: they both learned to be extra prayerful once they had gotten in. That was simply because trying to stay within the walls of the university entailed great arduous tasks. I’m proud to say that thanks to great perseverance and genuine hard work, my brother was able to hurdle his board exams successfully and my son is poised to start his final year this term. And yes, they have both become more prayerful, not religious but still prayerful.

The funny thing about the human race is that we do not learn to pray on bended knees until we get reduced to groveling for something. I, for one, had always felt invulnerable to hypertension, even laughing the whole thing off with a dismissive shrug and an if-I-die-then-I-die attitude. Working myself off with late nights and endless stress as companions had been my usual cup of tea, aside from having at least two cups of coffee to keep me awake the whole day. I had felt strong and incapable of feeling fatigue. That was all before January this year, when chest pains that went through my left side left me virtually unable to do anything for a week. When admitted to hospital, I was informed that my blood pressure had steadily gone up and my hemoglobin had crashed to dangerous levels, drastically dropping below half of normal. That really woke me up, you bet; really jolted me awake to the fact that I was but a frail human being.

Because of this episode, I have lain low for several months now. I fear endlessly for my children, who have survived without a father for nearly six years now. I fear for my mother, who has been helping me immensely in my role as provider for my seven kids. I fear for my sisters and brother, who have been helping me in the best ways possible to survive. I fear for all I love, who have come to believe that I am dependable.

I fear that I may not entirely be relied upon to give more of myself in the years to come.

But that has not stopped me from facing life more squarely this time. My children still get mad when I eat what I shouldn’t eat, or partake of things like watching movies late into the night on Fridays and Saturdays. But somehow, the fears I now possess have fueled me to make wiser choices along the way.

Fear has taught me to pray harder that my fears remain unfounded.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Has any particular event in your life made you fearful in one way or another? Talk about that event in detail.
2. What are some of the things you personally fear? Why do you fear them?
3. Why is fear sometimes necessary?
4. How do you deal with your fears?
5. Explain: There is nothing to fear but fear itself.



SNAKES AND FEARS

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I have read somewhere that dreaming of snakes could manifest the dreamer's fears in life. I guess you could call me perennially fearful then, judging by the countless nights I have had nightmares of being chased by snakes of all lengths and sizes.

However, I also believe that I am not alone in having such dreams, and therefore I am not alone in being bothered by fears, in whatever shape or form.

We all have our fears. They may range anywhere from career inhibitions to fears about living life in general. Our dreams only tell us in subtler terms that those fears do exist. Maybe having such dreams is the manner by which our subconscious tells us to see those fears as they are—as nasty, creepy creatures that are meant to be squished. In my dreams, I often find myself running away from those fearful representations, but there have been times when I have also trampled, squashed underfoot, or slain them in some of my dreams. Waking up from a highly-victorious dream often leaves me tired but somehow surprisingly feeling good inside. I don't know if that comes from having soothed my subconscious in some way or what.

Fears are often said to be precisely addressed that way: by facing them squarely and doing what one can to allay them. We have been taught from childhood how to get out into the world and carve our corner in the sun. Our own mothers had pushed us to stop being crybabies in preschool and play and learn with kids our age. This very thing we also do to our own children, present and future. We continuously encourage our children to find their own niches, share the world with others around them. By loving encouragement and motivational guidance, we eventually help our children succeed in slaying their own dragons (read: snakes) and facing their life's battles.

But our role is more crucial when taken in the leadership-by-example approach.

When our kids see us running away from our responsibilities, for instance, they learn the nuances of escapism and irresponsibility. Showing them the appropriate manner of facing our duties and upholding a virtuous existence serves as a lasting reminder for them to do so in like manner. When we fail to show our own kids how courageous we are in facing the consequences of our own actions, we fail miserably in our role as good parents. There are exemptions however, where kids who have witnessed their parents shirking from their responsibilities get a firm resolve not to duplicate what they see. But those are exemptions, as I have said.

When our kids confide their dreams of snakes to us, let us tell them the truth about such dreams: that those snakes are fears we may or may not yet have, but slaying them in our dreams is tantamount to having conquered them subconsciously. Perhaps, this way, they will learn to face their real fears in the real world.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Have you ever had dreams of snakes? Do you remember distinctly how you have felt while having those dreams?
2. Why should we learn to face our fears?
3. What becomes of someone who never learns to face their fears?
4. What are your most common fears in life? Have you ever had a traumatic experience that has led to any of those fears?
5. Talk about a fearless person you greatly admire.



THE IDES OF MARCH

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The movie *The Ides of March* is a gripping story of political drama, loyalty, betrayal, and is also for me, a movie that demonstrates fear in distinct aspects.

In the movie, George Clooney is Democratic presidential candidate Pennsylvania governor Mike Morris. Ryan Gosling is Stephen Meyers, Morris' Junior campaign manager. Events unfold that have Stephen questioning his decision to support Mike Morris, because he has personally found out about a political scandal that could bring down Morris' campaign and topple his reputation. After suffering from one setback to another, Stephen mans up and faces his uncertainties by playing his cards right, a skill which he has learned from being in politics in one way or another.

The film taught me a lot about how the American electoral system works, but it has also taught me so much about facing life squarely especially when one is left just clutching at straws to survive. Young as he was, Stephen Meyers had already been exposed to the cynicism of the arena he has worked in, but had initially refused to play dirty and continued doing his job as best as he could instead. When confronted with the bitter reality of his candidate's indiscretion (read: sexual liaison with an intern), Stephen starts searching inwardly for answers to some of his questions. His predicament wasn't any easier because he had formed a strong bond with the intern herself, who relied on him for answers to her own nagging uncertainties.

In the end, the protagonist learns that beating people at their own game will ultimately bring him the results he needs. But his painful moments of realization can leave the viewer feeling similarly helpless. What is one to do when someone they admire and support turns out to not be what they think he is?

In life, we are all faced with uncertainties. We constantly fear such uncertainties, often wishing for them to go away on their own. But there are just challenges in life which we can not simply brush off dismissively with a flick of the wrist. They will hound us, those uncertainties and challenges will, and without let up. It is therefore upon us to work hard all the way up and out, not letting go of our principles in whatever way possible. When we lose our life's ideals and the values which we live by, we also lose the most vital weapons we have for facing our future fears. We open ourselves to outright attacks, to vicious personal attacks that will eventually hurt us in more ways than one.

When we face life, let us not forget that our fears are part of living. Accepting this fact is in itself the beginning of victory in all that we do.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What would you do if you were confronted with a similar situation to what Stephen Meyers had?
2. Why should we never let go of our values and ideals when facing our fears?
3. Is it ever easy to face one's fears? Why or why not?
4. Talk about a specific instance in your own life when you successfully faced your fear.
5. Why do people fear what they do not know? And why do they fear the consequences of knowing?



OF THE FEARLESS HEROES IN ALL OF US

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There is a hero in every one of us waiting to be unleashed. We may not have the special powers of our superheroes, but what we do have we can readily put to good use. Superman has his X-ray vision, superhuman strength and speed; Captain America has his mighty shield and other special powers; the Hulk has his well, hulk to scare off his enemies. And so do other superheroes immortalized in children's comics and blockbuster movies.

We might only have our own humanity to be proud of, but its strength is immeasurable, yes, in more ways than we can think of.

It is the strength of the human spirit that made heroes in history stand up for what they believed was right. It was the essence of humanity that drove those very human heroes to speak up and question the evil that they had witnessed, and to prove to the world that the only way for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing. That saying was not set in stone to only remain so, but for everyone, for the hero in each one of us to come forth when needed.

These times have been filled with much injustice, cruelty and ineptitude. Those who serve in politics find out early in the game that to be able to survive in such a highly-volatile arena where affiliations get easily changed, they must learn to virtually do as the Romans do. Politics does make strange bedfellows. It is an arena where unholy alliances are forged by enemies being forced to work together by various circumstances (http://www.phrases.org.uk/bulletin_board/45/messages/158.html). Unfortunately, such unholy alliances are not meant to last, only intended until the next electoral exercise.

Many of us have become jaded already. We no longer see it worthwhile to pursue protesting against a cruel circumstance or tyrannical rule. We have lost the will to question what evil there is in society and to topple evil schemes and connivances. When one starts to question, he is accused of imagining conspiracy theories that do not exist. He is subsequently ridiculed and put to shame.

We live in a cruel world where whistleblowers are implicated in evil plots, where those who march out into the streets in protest are given ultimatums to cease and desist from such actions. We live in a world where heroes are said to be searching for firing squads to gun them down eventually.

But I believe that among us, there are still heroes who are willing to risk their necks to uphold the truth. There are still a few good men out there who will willingly give of themselves until nothing of them is left, and only the welfare of the majority is protected.

There will always be fearless heroes in the delicate web of our humanity.

Questions for discussion:

1. Why are modern-day heroes difficult to find? How different are they from historical heroes?
2. Do you agree that exceptional individuals like Mother Teresa of Calcutta and Pope John Paul II can be considered heroes in their own right? Why or why not?
3. What makes a hero, in your opinion? Can heroism only be demonstrated by fighting in war?
4. How can you, in your own way, become a modern-day hero?
5. Why are our fears different from the fears of ancient people? Be as specific as you can.



GREATEST FEAR

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Our mind can be flooded with a lot of thoughts and the thought of being afraid is what really frightens us most, hence this is the greatest fear that a person can have. There is nothing more than putting us in danger than what our mind ...has conceived or created. Actually, when that thing that we are frightened of happens, we realize that it is not as bad as we have imagined though. I don't really think that there is ever a protection against fear. We still experience that uncertainty that we still wonder if we can rely on our defenses whenever we think we have found some safety and this destroys our security.

In case we have not really notice it, we are actually the one that creates our own fear. If this is the case, we can also uncreate it for it is just like a habit that can be broken too. So next time you feel it and you feel helpless, you have to confront your worst fear instead. A good remedy against it then is to provoke it. If you are frightened of losing something, then all you've got to do is to give it away. If you are afraid of heights, then climb to a high place. If you feel terrified of speaking in public, then stand before an audience. This is the simplest way of mastering fear.

The process of normal fear turning into phobia only means that our minds are strongly exaggerating the situation, simply because it goes out of control. It is just like turning the height of the chair into a ravine or maybe our mind turning the spiders into monsters. Fear can be a very uncomfortable feeling. We also need to identify what kind of fear we are experiencing for us to eliminate and extricate it from our life. So that means to have a remedy to this phobia means to habituate our minds back to the normal reaction.

There are many types of fear/phobia that can be identified. Some of these common fears are the following: Acrophobia, which refers to the fear of heights; Aracnophobia, the fear of snakes; Agoraphobia, referring to the fear of open spaces and also the Claustrophobia, which refers to the fear of confined spaces. There is also the Belonephobia, referring to the fear of needles; Brontophobia, which refers to the fear of thunder and lightning; Thalassophobia, the fear of the sea. You also have the Surinophobia, which refers to the fear of mice and/or rats; Hamartophobia, refers to the fear of sinning and Thalassophobia which refers to the fear of the sea. Not to mention Pentheraphobia, this refers to the fear of the mother-in-law and Xenophobia, referring to fear of strangers or foreigners.

There are also some common fears that we can think of like Althazagoraphobia, this refers to the fear of being forgotten or ignored; Metathesiophobia, which refers to fear of changes and Kakorrhaphiophobia, which is the fear of failure. Then there is our most basic fear which is the fear of death, called the Necrophobia. When we feel a sudden rush of blood to our face, making it red or pale, you get to be frightened or afraid and even with the mere thought of being afraid alone constitutes our greatest fear.

Questions for discussions:

1. What do you consider as your greatest fear? Why?
2. Have you developed more than one kind of fear or phobia? Which among them do you consider as your greatest fear? Why?
3. In your opinion, do you believe that our mind can conceive our greatest fear? Why or why not?
4. What do you think is the remedy to our greatest fear?
5. What is your reaction when you feel that greatest fear in your life? Explain your answer



THE REALITY OF FEAR

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We all have reactions to different situations that happen to us and have a lot of worries and fears in life, thus the reality of fear is the most common, intriguing factor that comes to our mind thinking that something may happen to us in the future. In ...that case, it clearly shows that fear is a mental process that sets a projection in our mind that tries to predict the future. It's something that hasn't happened yet and therefore, it is just a fantasy of our mind and not actually a fact. Although we have come into a realization that we all experience problems and pains and that we are all subjected to the discomforts of this life that we have right now. Everybody has the fear of discomfort that leads them to a goal of trying to find a way to end it and discover a way out of it.

As a matter of fact, be it realistic or not, fear is an uncomfortable feeling. The irony lies in the fact that it should work to give us comfort and yet it is uncomfortable itself. If we simply let fear override us, then we will be at a standstill, making us completely helpless. Some of us are afraid of irrational things whereas they do not really pose as a threat or a danger to us. Take for instance the fear of spiders, the fear of open spaces or the fear of confined spaces and some other fears for that matter. We sometimes make our life too difficult because of these delusions that take over our normal, rational mind.

This feeling of fear called Paranoia is simply an exaggeration of what our mind can conceive and this forces our rational mind to rule over and even control our emotions. In reality, fear is false evidence which is trying to appear as something real and the only way to get over it is to face it head on. Another reality of fear is that it can be healthy for us. It is simply because it makes us aware or keeps us alert of a dangerous situation for our self and even for others too. Lastly, the ultimate fear which is fear of death is in reality a loss of our ego and a loss of everything that we have.

Apparently, fear is nothing but a form of attachment to us. It is a delusion making us hold to the reason as to why we are holding on to our life. Let us go and try to reach that unshakable citadel of realization of the absolute essence of life's uncertainty. Let us not have the idea of realizing our fears and never let it dwell and allow them to wait in the shadows of our mind. Instead let us try to discover the true reality of fear.

Questions for discussion:

1. Have you realized what fear is really all about? Explain your answer further.
2. Do you believe that the reality of fear only exists in the mind? Why or why not?
3. Have you experienced fear to be a delusion in your mind? Explain how?
4. Do you agree that to have a rational mind, we have to eradicate fear in our mind? Justify your answer.
5. How do you combat fear in your life? Elaborate on your answer.



WHEN FEARS ATTACK

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Fear is an anxious feeling. It is a kind of feeling that is caused by danger or something perilous. There are various conditions wherein the feeling of apprehension arises. This is an emotion which is hard to control especially in an overwhelming risky situation. People are alarmed because we are reminded to picture of a dangerous scenario. It results to a panic condition. People suffer in an uncontrollable state because of too much fear and anxiety. There are many reasons why people are afraid of something. What and why are people worried about due to a fact that fears aren't controlled. These conditions are quite threatening and very dangerous to them. In a certain context, fear seems a universal emotion because every one of us, consciously or unconsciously, has fear in a particular situation and the like. We have the ability to recognize danger because we can feel it. We anticipate what are the dangerous things will happen.

All people have the instinct to react to an expected danger. Whatever the sources of that fear are factors that control a person's life. The famous Martin Luther King, Jr. once quoted "We must build dikes of courage to hold back the flood of fear". In his quote, it clearly tells and informs about the different fears surrounding us that in any moment, are ready to attack. However, we must have to gather some blocks of sufficient bravery and fortitude to fight and combat or even eliminate these fears. But the question is how we are going to do that. Where will you get your energy to accomplish all of these? A person must be totally courageous to stand against these bothering apprehensions. He or she must be seriously aware to fight against these anxieties. The flood of fear won't stop when a person remains weak and is not capable to respond and give an appropriate counterpart to push them away. How strong your dikes depend on how much strength do you possess. The lesser a person has the higher the possibility that he or she will be drowned by his or her fears. On the other hand, the more a person has the lower the probability that he or she would not be swallowed by his or her anxieties.

It is vivid and clear that we are responsible to handle everything when fear is going to attack us. We are going to help ourselves to overcome any fears that will come across our journey. In his inaugural address, Franklin D. Roosevelt uttered, "Let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself". If we let fears overshadow us, we will surely lose. But if we remain brave to fight with them and believe ourselves to subdue all the fears, we will be the undefeated champion. They are no match with us. We remain strong and not affected. It will help us boost the confidence that we need to use and face all the fears in life.

Questions for discussion:

1. What notion can you give about this word "fear"?
2. Why do people feel anxious to dangerous situations?
3. What's your greatest fear in life? Explain.
4. How do you subdue fears when they attack? Cite an example.
5. What are the common fears that surround us in our daily life? Explain further.



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