

IDEAS 45

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



**International Online Teachers Society
Publishing Committee**



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READING PROVIDES KNOWLEDGE THAT EMPOWERS PEOPLE

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Despite the fact that I have openly and repeatedly stressed to my children that knowledge is power and they can get so much of both from extensive reading, today's times have somehow served a hindrance to the frequency, degree and variety of reading they can actually get. Aside from the internet, the only place where they can (probably) get great reading material is the library. But who ever stays there to actually read a book, anyway?

Private reading is seldom encouraged or allowed in book stores, save for one or two particular book store/s where people can get comfortably seated while exploring the pages of whatever book that catches their fancy. I guess it's all a way of protecting the store owner's best interests, (Who can blame them?) but I still believe that the best way to get a customer to buy is to get him hooked on a few pages of a book. A cursory glance at the cover, the book reviews and an excerpt from the story just won't suffice to pique sustained interest. Experience is the key, I prefer to think.

Admittedly, I too, have gotten into a reading rut, where my reading choices have narrowed down to: Yahoo News; last year's paper/magazines; and the back of food, supplement, medicine and drink packages. I take in as much information as I can from the Nutrition Information, juggling my memory for familiar terms on the package insert, or getting impressed at the many (?!!) helpful nutrients my family can get from this or that product. By the way, did you know that the Recommended Energy and Nutrient Intake (RENI) greatly varies between genders and is relatively dependent on one's race? If that is so, then our race requires less energy and nutrients to make it through the same 24 hours than other races do. Strange, but true.

Anyway, it's virtually impossible, in today's fast-paced environment, to get some reading done and add to your arsenal of knowledge. Students from preschool to post-graduate school have to do their own readings based on their own disciplines. Seldom can anyone get me-time to sit down and relax with a good book. Kindle and other high-tech innovations will soon replace the hardbound/softbound typeset reading materials of old.

However, what is important in the accumulation of knowledge is not the amount or the frequency of stocked up information. As long as you still find a small measure of joy at flipping the pages of some reading matter, whether it's a milk carton you're turning over or the pages of an online flipping book, then the knowledge you amass remains boundless.

Who knows, you might have read an extremely vital piece of information from a milk carton that could have the greatest potential of saving the whole world. Knowledge is Power, right?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Why is knowledge powerful?
2. How do you accumulate knowledge?
3. Do you enjoy reading? What materials do you like reading?
4. What percentage of your day do you spend on reading? Are you satisfied with the amount of time you get to spend on reading? Why or why not?
5. If you were a book, what would you be about? Why?



ETERNALLY FLUMMOXED!

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Knowledge and belief are not always relative. While it may be true that a person can absolutely believe in knowledge that he completely possesses, one can not entirely know that what they believe is absolutely correct or beyond question.

For instance, I believe that Einstein's theory of relativity, or Pythagoras' theorem on the three sides of a right triangle can be proven. However, my knowledge is limited by the fact that I do not engage in strictly mathematical pursuits, so I am of no compulsion or capability to prove that my belief is true. Quantum physics experts are able to explain physical phenomena based on theories, but who is to know the limits of their knowledge except the quantum physicists themselves?

When I declare that I believe in one God, all Omniscient and all Omnipotent, I believe it in my heart to be completely true. So when someone with an entirely different faith and belief approaches me and questions the dogmas, concepts and ideals that I stand for, I can only keep my faith as my anchor, but be unsupported by absolute knowledge. Faith is immeasurable just as it is unquantifiable for most people; there's no way of absolutely knowing—all you have to do is to believe.

Which brings me to the question: can absolute knowledge guarantee absolute faith? The jury is still out on that, ladies and gentlemen. I can believe without knowing, but can I know without believing? Perhaps that's a question that learned and wise people like Confucius and Plato and Socrates and the rest of their tribe can answer. But knowing how confounding the concepts espoused by philosophers can often be, who can ever be certain?

As for people of this planet, well, there are undoubtedly many who know a lot of things and believe in a lot of concepts, too. But there can never be any one who can profess to know absolutely everything and believe in everything. There will always be mysteries we are not meant to solve, questions we can never answer, and things we will not perfectly comprehend. We may possess virtually all the knowledge there is in our particular field, but who is to know that what we do know is absolutely and completely true and beyond doubt?

Twilight zone, anyone?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What types of things confuse you or have you perplexed? Why?
2. Can you be absolutely sure that what you know is absolutely correct and true? How?
3. How is knowledge destructive? When is it useful?
4. What responsibility/ies do scientists have to mankind?
5. Why is a little learning considered to be a dangerous thing? Why is tremendous knowledge also potentially dangerous?



KNOWLEDGE IS NOT WISDOM

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Knowledge-intensive tasks require a certain degree and kind of uncommon expertise. Not everyone can be a teacher, a scientist, a mathematician. Each and every discipline has their own set of parameters that should be met by practitioners. We can not all be masters, some of us have to be servants, too. If we could all be masters, imagine the chaos there would be in this already-confused world. We may never get any work done because everyone would be too busy trying to get heard, admired or obeyed.

Knowledge-intensive tasks require dedication, both in small and big ways. If a scientist is not willing to explore tirelessly to prove knowledge, he can never hope to make truly scientific breakthroughs in his particular field. If the early mathematicians had not subjected their theories and theorems to endless tests, we in the present would not be enjoying (?!!) the world of math that we live in. If our teachers and professors from days past had not decided to explore learning with us by their side, we wouldn't have become what we have become now.

Even the great Albert Einstein once said: "The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing. One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery every day. Never lose a holy curiosity." This is why his theory of relativity stands to be the greatest transformational concept to ever rule physics and astronomy during the 20th century. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theory_of_relativity) And yet, very humbly he has also declared thus: Whoever undertakes to set himself up as a judge of Truth and Knowledge is shipwrecked by the laughter of the gods.

Those latter words are a word of caution to the wise: they should never believe themselves to be totally infallible despite their profound learning and experience, for there will always be someone somewhere greater than they are. This does not discount the fact that people with advanced degrees are infinitely more qualified to handle knowledge-intensive tasks within their field. They have invested time, effort, resources, and yes, knowledge to get to where they are. But such people should never be smug in their ivory towers because even towers will fall. So will proud men who find that self-conceit covers up for their inadequacies.

Knowledge-intensive tasks require great, humble men to perform them. They do not thrive with pride in oneself and prejudice against many others.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Why should intelligence be coupled with humility?
2. What makes absolute knowledge a source of pride for most people?
3. Is the kind of schooling a sufficient standard for one's status in life? Why or why not?
4. If you could specialize in one particular body of knowledge, what would it be and why?
5. Do you believe that all people are inherently intelligent? Inherently wise? Why or why not?



BEING A MOTHER=BEING A TEACHER

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The work of a teacher does not end with the final grade. In fact, a teacher's work continues far beyond the student's graduation. It extends to the student's life, his lifelong principles, and his field of expertise. Many of us have been inspired by the knowledge that we have gleaned through the years from our teachers. But what probably creates the greatest influences in our daily choices and interactions are the teachers we have had.

I distinctly remember getting inspired by a classroom adviser I had in my elementary years. She was intelligent yet modest, wise but unassuming. I will always admire the simple and silent way she inspired discipline among us, her advisory class. She never raised her voice nor took a heavy stick to hit any of us, despite the times when we openly disobeyed school rules. She knew her stuff, adequately providing the answers to questions we raised and being the mother/big sister to us all.

Unfortunately, although I have acquired my love for reading from her weekly book report requirements, I can never hope to duplicate her silent strength and discipline enforcement. I get mad like there's no tomorrow when my own kids do not do their homework, and become an incoherent, babbling monster when I am shown a failing mark/grade. I see the bad grade as a direct assault to my being a mother: I have not been doing enough; I have not paid attention to my children's guidance and supervision requirements. But I soon balance that with: Hey, I've got seven kids, so cut me some slack.

I sometimes fail to see that grades only quantify the knowledge that my children have learned in school but they do not completely qualify the knowledge they get from studying. Memorizing all sorts of information is essential, but it is the kind and degree of knowledge that a student retains that counts. Unlike my grade school teacher who had seen the unique potential in all of us, I as a mother often miserably fail at recognizing the innate gifts that my children possess. Because of my busyness and inhibitions about being both mother and father to them, I often fail to see that they are my offspring who exhibit various aspects of my own self in relatively surprising ways.

I can only hope that by knowing and acknowledging my inadequacies as a mother, I will be able to help my children see the infinite possibilities laid out for them to discover and explore.

Hopefully, my knowledge as a mother, with my grade school teacher's and my own sweet mother's wisdom as my inspiration, can be enough to support my kids throughout life and to guarantee a good grade come my graduation time as a mother....if that were ever to come.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What is your personal opinion on school grades/marks? How important are they?
2. What has been your usual reaction to failing grades/marks? How do you take them?
3. Give some suggestions on how best to get good grades.
4. Aside from school, where else can a student obtain knowledge?
5. How best can one use in life the knowledge he has gained from studying?



KNOWLEDGE - BOOSTING YOUR BRAIN POWER

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We were all endowed with knowledge by God, but it's all up to us if we will be boosting our brain power, that is, if we choose to do so, we will be working on it like the way we work out and make our body healthy and fit. We are actually in an age where we are bombarded with all sorts of information and knowledge from every direction. Well, we might also find it hard to adhere or live up to what our Creator imparted us. Sometimes, it comes to an extent where we get disoriented in finding a way to adapt our head to everything that is going on around us. But of course we have to train our mind to become as supple and flexible as an athlete's body. As the saying goes, "We need to have a sound and a sound body to become physically and spiritually fit."

Our minds are filled with various thoughts and ideas, and these are the knowledge that makes our brains work and exercise its power to do and fulfill a lot of things to man and most especially to God. To exercise our mind is adapting to the world of knowledge with which our minds are confronted. Growing our intelligence will actually help us build our future in life and it allows us to expand our perception of things, which will help us develop and discover things. If we often use our minds in the right way, then we become a more skilled thinker. More so, we also increase our ability to focus in life. Our brain therefore needs to be exercised just like a muscle, to become more powerful and put out the best in us.

On the other hand, when we do not use our brains or never use it at all, then our ability to think and learn will actually deteriorate. This is very much the opposite when we exercise our brains. Our inquisitive minds will absorb all the things that we deem important and learn a lot of things that add up to our knowledge. Thus, we broaden our horizons and boost our brain power too. One of the best ways of boosting our brain power is to read, whether it be books, magazine, newspaper; whatever we can lay our eyes on. Apparently, interaction with other people plays a big difference too, for we can learn a lot of things when we mingle with people.

I know for a fact that our minds are too busy every day, because our lives are having hectic schedules. Along with these busy schedules of ours, we should also take time to stop and reflect, because by doing so; we can get the chance to organize our thoughts and prioritize our responsibilities too. It is easily done and said for if we take time to reflect, we could have a better understanding of what is truly important and what is not. Our minds will be less encumbered if we fully realize what the unimportant stuff is and we could focus more on what is really important. With our knowledge comes responsibility, so there is that great need for us and greater task of boosting our brain power!

Questions for discussion:

1. How could you broaden your knowledge? In what ways could you show it?
2. Do you show your knowledge by doing your best in all the aspects of life?
3. What would you do if you find out that there's someone who knows better than you do? Explain your answer.
4. What are the ways in which you could boost your brain power?
5. How could you impart your knowledge to others?



KNOWLEDGE - SHARING YOUR EXPERTISE

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Many of today's influential people and leaders of any society share their knowledge by means of sharing their expertise on whatever they are good at, and this is through service. We all try to build our knowledge in one way or another. ...Whatever the case may be, each and every one was endowed by God with knowledge. We have our set of ideas in our mind that forms some knowledge of a kind. Whichever the case maybe, we would always want to share our knowledge to the people around us for in doing so we experience fulfillment in life.

Definitely, we would like to retain our knowledge and share it to others, but knowing how to do it is another question. When we share our knowledge, it is tantamount to sharing our expertise too. Apparently, to get ahead at work, an individual needs to develop skill, knowledge and expertise that nobody else really had. This is therefore the reason why we need to be proactive in sharing your knowledge at work. Retaining that knowledge will mean seeing you as an expert in all levels of the organization, and this gives you more access to opportunities and a better chance of being retained in any one part of the organization.

Developing depth knowledge is essential in sharing your expertise. In order for an individual to do so, one needs to focus in his work responsibility area and try to take steps to learn more about it too. Develop your speaking skills and consequentially share your expertise in whatever field you excel or best like. It will give you the opportunity to talk about subject matters that you are an expert of. Start sharing your expertise with someone who is maybe with you in a work area, a friend or maybe somebody in an organization. Eventually, this will lead you to speaking engagements too.

You can develop your writing skills too. As part of sharing your knowledge, you'll be asked to document what you know, thereby organizing a format for a company. This will force you to develop your literary skills and business writing skills at the same time. By sharing your expertise you also open the door to that greater possibility of moving on. You will be creating your own opportunities for that matter. By sharing your knowledge with your associates, you might be stumbling on ideas that might be implanted to help your company. Moreover, maybe you could write an eBook or develop a website of this material. Just make sure that you are legally entitled to do so and that you are not disclosing a trade or company secret.

If your expertise is pertinent to the local community, you can check on opportunities of conducting one or two sessions of classes at a local school or a community college. This will give you the chance to promote your book or website too. Apparently, this may lead to news coverage and even paid speaking engagements. There are a thousand and one reasons to share your knowledge by sharing your expertise, wouldn't you want to impart and share it with the people around you?

Questions for discussion:

1. What avenues do you use to develop or share your expertise?
2. Do you feel adamant in sharing your knowledge? Why or why not?
3. Would you be more than glad to share your expertise to the people around you? Explain your answer.
4. Can you think of other benefits other than those that I have mentioned and discussed? What are they?
5. Have you tried imparting your knowledge to anyone? Justify your answer.



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