

IDEAS 60

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



**International Online Teachers Society
Publishing Committee**



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THE 60th INTERNATIONAL ONLINE TEACHERS SOCIETY ESSAY CONTEST

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CURIOSITY PAYS OFF GENEROUS DIVIDENDS

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Curiosity is what has made people go exploring the unknown and discover things which we now know. The potential to find new things and experience new events is readily addressed thanks to curiosity. If people who came before us didn't have the courage or compulsion to ask questions, we wouldn't have been able to amass the huge repository of knowledge, information and technological advancements we now enjoy. Curiosity paves the road to answers, and having answers is a great progression that transcends ignorance. Although ignorance is bliss at times, it is never a cause to celebrate too much of it.

Curiosity opens a spectrum of possibilities for people to see just where their questions can take them.

If German physicist Wilhelm Rontgen had not investigated the various types of vacuum tube equipment created by Nikola Tesla, Heinrich Hertz, Johann Hittorf, William Crookes and Philipp von Lenard, he wouldn't have been able to discover the X-ray. If he had simply stopped observing and just pursued his life in the normal fashion he always had, he wouldn't have discovered the novel type of radiation that makes diagnostic radiology a science in itself. Diagnosing diseases using X-Ray equipment wouldn't have been made possible if Rontgen had not probed further to get answers to all his questions. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilhelm_R%C3%B6ntgen)

If Dutch naturalist and microscopist Anton van Leeuwenhoek did not have such insatiable curiosity, he would not have been able to discern fact from speculation and thus produce the world's first simple "microscopes". A lens grinder in his spare time, his curiosity was piqued when upon looking through a set of magnifying lenses he had put together, he saw strange-looking organisms in pond water. He later went on to examine everything he could with his "microscopes", which were more magnifying glasses than real microbiological equipment. (<http://www.bookrags.com/biography/anton-van-leeuwenhoek/>)

It was Robert Hooke however, who dared go further and built the first compound microscope and its illumination system, the iris diaphragm. Thanks to his study of slices of cork, we now have a system of microscopy that enables us to see cells, which Hooke had patiently examined, observed and described in his book *Micrographia*, which was published in 1665. His compound microscope was one of the best such instruments at the time and has formed the basis for today's more advanced instruments for microscopic observation. (<http://www.ucmp.berkeley.edu/history/hooke.html>)

Indeed, many scientists and inventors of yesteryears and even of today have contributed so much to the advancement of knowledge in all aspects of living. Perhaps we wouldn't have been able to enjoy the things we enjoy now had it not been for those who have dared asked why and how, instead of stopping at what, who and where. Truly, curiosity opens the way to progress.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Read up on famous scientists and how they stumbled across their discoveries. Be able to give a summary of their journey to discovery in class.
2. What do you think of the present crop of scientists in the modern world? Are they relatively better than their counterparts in the past? Why or why not?
3. What modern experiments, in your opinion, are the most significant for today's era? Why do you consider them significant?
4. If you were a scientist, what would you like to contribute to the world? Why do you consider your proposed contribution a necessity?
5. In your opinion, which particular field of study besides Science has given a lot of contributions to today's world? Elaborate on your answer.



TURN CURIOSITY INTO LEARNING EXPERIENCES

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Dealing with curiosity can be done in two ways: you could either give a sensible answer or a bad one. A great answer can often prove to be sufficient or it can further lead to even more questions. A bad one always leads to more questions, with none of them leading the asker to the truth. It is important that as parents and teachers, we need to learn how to give answers that satisfy the curiosity of those entrusted to our care. We also need to find ways by which those under our care can seek better answers when we ourselves are unable to provide them.

The process of learning is, ideally, never ending. Once a student or a child stops asking questions, he or she might no longer have need for us to give them answers. Where else should they find a welcoming ear to listen to their questions and provide answers for them? From their peers? The internet? Without our supervision? We all know it's not quite advisable to let loose our kids on the web. There are too many dangers lurking at every search engine corner and cranny.

I guess this is what has made cybercrime such a booming industry. With too many innocent children having access to computers at home and out, cybercriminals are having a heyday perpetuating their crimes. Those criminals know how productive riding piggyback on innocent children through the internet can be. As parents, we must stay vigilant that our children's curiosity does not lead them astray. They truly deserve more, but never in a bad or destructive sense.

That's precisely the reason why we also have TV and movie censorship. This era has been able to produce a tremendous amount of movies, documentaries, reality shows, TV fare. As parents, we should strive to encourage more intelligent viewing, both for TV and film. If we simply let our kids choose which film to watch or which TV program to follow, they will ultimately lose their set of values. Don't we all work hard to push great concepts into their minds? Can staring at the boob tube the whole day ever replace one hour of book reading or studying with us? In these busy times, many of us most likely have so much on our plate that we sometimes tend to neglect our responsibility to be primary providers of wisdom and knowledge to our kids. Our kids are beautiful creatures who will never stop asking questions till they're old enough to find answers on their own. And even when they reach that stage, we should always be there for them to answer whatever life questions they need to ask.

Remember: when a student or your child stops asking questions, he might not have use for your answers any longer. That is always a fearful stage to contemplate getting into.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Do you remember being curious as a child? Describe that stage in your life.
2. How do you satisfy your curiosity? What or who are your main providers of answers?
3. What are the potential hazards of being too dependent on the web for answers to our questions? How is this magnified in children?
4. Why do many children get addicted to the internet? Be as specific as needed.
5. What questions about life at large do you seek answers to? Have you found good answers so far? Why or why not?



WHEN CURIOSITY IS NO LONGER CUTE

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Have you ever heard the saying, “Curiosity killed the cat”? A search online will yield what the idiom means: that too much inquisitiveness about something could prove dangerous, even lethal to some respects. Considering that cats are purported to have nine lives, that saying is certainly something to be feared. When a cat dies, it’s supposed to have several more lives left. So when it gets killed, then that’s really saying something about how dangerous curiosity can be, right?

But does this mean that we have to quit being curious?

I have read somewhere that we must never stop asking why. Victor Hugo once said “Diamonds are found only in the dark places of the earth; truths are found only in the depths of thought.” When we put our thoughts to work mulling things over and over again, poking and turning them this way and that, we facilitate learning.

When we were kids, those who asked questions were said to be the intellectual ones. The fact that no answer would ever suffice for them made them great learners, eventually good leaders. We’d hear remarks like, “My son’s so inquisitive, always asking questions. He might turn out to be a scientist when he grows up.” Or some other lofty profession.

Those of us who simply kept quiet were relegated to the mediocre group, having absolutely no ambition.

Now, I beg to differ.

Although I encourage my children to ask questions, I do so with sensible advice. I tell them to ask sensible, thought-provoking questions, ones that entail a chain of other intelligent questions. I dislike it when they merely caption the obvious. Of course, some of you might say I just don’t have the time to answer all their questions. But the truth of the matter is, I want them to learn to find answers using the tools they have at their disposal. I do not have all the answers. When we were kids, we didn’t have online dictionaries and thesauruses, but now they do. At one click of the mouse, they can find information they want. They have online newspapers, phone applications and all manner of technological systems at their disposal.

Nowadays, answering questions that pertain to life and survival are pertinent, while minor ones need to be done hard work on. I encourage my kids to learn to use the computer while guiding them on what sites are not reliable or good to see.

I guess with the pace we live in now, curiosity has attained its own time and space. If we let our children rely on us for all the answers in the world, they might grow up to be dependent on others for answers. Sometimes, it’s best to teach them to rely on their own ability to find good, reliable answers for themselves, sometimes not necessarily the truth. But at least they are able to exert effort to satisfy their own curiosity independently.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. When is curiosity good? When is it bad?
2. Why is curiosity an important part of learning?
3. How do you satisfy your own curiosity?
4. Is it advisable to completely rely on online sources for all questions that we have? Why or why not?
5. How would you encourage learning in your own child?



The effects of Curiosity

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To live life curiously is to have a meaningful life. Curiosity has sparked the interest of many inventors, which then led to the creation and discovery of various things. In 1928, an amazing thing happened because of mere curiosity. Alexander Fleming, a Scottish biologist, noticed that there was a strange fungus which was left in his workstation. He became curious about the fungus and then he started several experiments. He noticed that the bacteria did not seem to thrive like in other specimen cultures. His curiosity and his research led to the discovery of Penicillin, which is an antibiotic based on penicillium moulds. His discovery helped shape the medical field and has saved millions of lives.

In 1907, another thing happened because of curiosity. During that time Shellac was the primary insulator in various circuits. Shellac was an effective insulator yet it was expensive and most companies cannot buy it. Shellac was actually made from Southeast Asian beetles, which is quite rare in America and the only way to get it is through import. A chemist named Leo Hendrik Baekland became curious about the production of Shellac and he wanted to find a better and cheaper alternative to the product. He then experimented on moldable materials which can be used as insulator for high levels of temperature. He found the product named Bakelite and he then applied it in his experiments. His experiments then led to the creation of plastic, which is used in telephone wiring and even food packs.

Along with the creation of different items, curiosity has also led to the expedition of conquistadors and explorers. Ferdinand Magellan, a Portuguese explorer, was obsessed in looking for a new passage to the Pacific and because of his curiosity about undiscovered lands he accidentally discovered a group of islands. The archipelago was named Philippines, derived from the name of King Phillip II of Spain. In 1492, another explorer found several Caribbean islands by accident. Genoese explorer, Christopher Columbus discovered the islands and later was actually the southwestern part of the United States.

Albert Einstein pointed out that the important thing is to not stop questioning since curiosity has its reasons for existing. He pointed out that curiosity is important and it exists in order for us to improve in life. People who are often curious are the ones who learn more from life. A child who is more curious than other kids is often the one who excels more in school. The reason for this is that a child who tends to be curious often tries to find answers by reading or by asking his teachers. He only stops asking questions once he gets the right answer.

Questions:

- 1) Who pointed out that the important thing is to not stop questioning?
- 2) Who discovered America?
- 3) What did Alexander Fleming discovered?
- 4) Who is Ferdinand Magellan?
- 5) What is Shellac?



THE INSTINCT OF CURIOSITY - A NATURAL TENDENCY

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In our everyday living we always encounter something new or different that arouses our curiosity and I believe that it is basically an instinct for we have that natural tendency to be curious. We have that desire to know and discover whatever we are faced with. Mind you, we won't really just shrug off our shoulders and put this thing or incident aside. That desire inside us to know that particular thing started when we were still a child until now that we are in the peak of our lives. You cannot discount the fact that curiosity taught us more than anything else when we stepped into this world.

Yes, we have been exploring everything around us out of curiosity ever since we were toddlers and these things shaped us into what we are right now. When we entered the adult world, we began to see things in a different perspective. We have tried and wanted to know more and venture into more complex things. Apparently, we experienced personal growth which inevitably led us to a fulfilling life. Nevertheless, curious people always explore new things. We go out of our comfort zone to try out something new.

Curious people develop that inner sense of well-being and it keeps us high-spirited. By means of trying these new activities, we also overcome our fears and we feel a deeper sense of accomplishment. This is in fact skyrockets our motivation levels until it reaches the peak of our interest and makes us excel in different fields. It can even play as a factor to success and because of this underlying factor there are a lot of people who have been successful in their respective businesses. In the sciences, inventors and scientists prove to have remarkable inventions and discoveries not to mention Thomas Edison, Alexander Graham Bell, Isaac Newton and many more. These inventors were not only defined by luck and timing but they have it imbibed in their DNA's which is spawned by unbridled curiosity.

These are not only the people who have proved to be a success. How about a genius child? They were also raised by parents who have instilled a driving curiosity in the world that they have built around their children, just to find out and be amazed of how incredibly gifted their kids are. Yes, it is more than rewarding to raise a quick, curious, sensitive and introspective child. Definitely, as time goes on that child who was raised in this kind of environment will not only excel in his own field but can also prove to be a genius later on.

To make it more personal, I can say that because of curiosity my relationships with people have been developed tremendously. At present, I have more enhanced my interests with other people's lives whether they are my family, friends, even my work colleagues or just mere acquaintances. I have learned to lend my ears to these people and made efforts to remember their partners and children's names, even their birthdates too. This gave me the realization that approaching life with a curious attitude gave a great impact in my entire life.

People always have that tendency to approach life with a curious attitude. These are actually people who have an open mind for the sole reason that if you have this kind of attitude the more it broadens your knowledge. Rediscover your love for learning and be a lot smarter than before. By having that curious attitude you could have an understanding of how things work. This will make you a lot more interesting to other people. Have that instinct of curiosity and acquire that natural tendency to have the pleasure of finding things out and eventually be an eccentric genius.

Questions for discussion:

1. Are you curious with the things that are happening around you? Why or why not?
2. Do you agree that by having that curious attitude you can be a keen observer? How?
3. Do you believe that curiosity is an instinct? Why or why not?
4. In your opinion, is curiosity an advantageous attitude? Explain your answer.
5. How can you arouse your curiosity?



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