

IDEAS 79

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



**International Online Teachers Society
Publishing Committee**



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THE 79th INTERNATIONAL ONLINE TEACHERS SOCIETY ESSAY CONTEST

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PASSING ON THE TORCH OF CHARACTER TO OUR CHILDREN

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Character is, like any other intelligence, gradually built up and adopted then lived by individuals. People have even said that the greatest adversities create the most powerful character in us. How we attack our everyday challenges and goals in life speak of the character we have. When people say, “He’s quite a character”, it simply means that a certain person has a noteworthy personal trait that makes him different from others. It would be great if the difference is something good, though.

Our character is shaped by the experiences we carry everyday. How we react to environmental stimuli, circumstances, other people and their beliefs, have a lot to do with how we become as individuals. If we grow up in a protected environment where our parents refuse to make us independent individuals with a character that’s apart from what they strictly impose on us, then we often fail to adjust to the many bacteria and viruses that inhabit the real world. By bacteria and viruses here, we mean the outlying dangers, challenges and risks that are inherently outside of our own scope and settings.

For instance, when a mother says, “Ewww! That’s disgusting!” upon seeing an earthworm on the ground, she is signaling to her listening child that the earthworm is to be loathed. But when a mother looks at the earthworm as a source of education for her young child, she becomes a contributor to her child’s attitude toward many things, whether great or small. Using the earthworm to teach her child about cultivation and plant care can signal to the child that there is much to learn and know about other creatures on this planet.

Basically, this is to say that our own parents play a significant role in shaping our personal character. Their ability to face their own challenges in life can become valuable sources of inspiration—and even desperation—for their children. Some might argue that strong parents do not necessarily raise equally strong children. However, showing strength of character at even the most mundane of things like giving back excess change to the cashier, throwing trash everywhere or bickering needlessly with a spouse can be audible signals to children that it’s perfectly acceptable to do things.

Surprising as it may seem, the character we abhor in our own kids are often that which they only derive from us. It’s not easy being a parent, but can we honestly say that it’s easy for our kids to be our children? We may give them the best that money can buy, but how much of our character do we pass on to them? How much of their character has been influenced by our own? That’s for us to find out and for our children to hopefully not suffer through.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Define character. Differentiate it from ATTITUDE.
2. What are the factors that shape a person’s character?
3. What are your character traits that you believe you have gotten from your parents?
4. What character traits do you sometimes wish you didn’t possess?
5. How will you bring up children with exemplary character? Be as specific as necessary.



MAKING OUR LEGACY LIVE ON

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I have often reiterated to my kids: YOU ARE SHAPED BY THE CHOICES YOU MAKE. Well, I would also like to add the following words of advice that my children can use in their own lives: YOUR CHARACTER IS SHAPED BY THE VERY ADVERSITIES THAT YOU FACE EACH DAY.

As a parent-and a widowed one at that- I have often faced down the most outrageous obstacles in life. Those challenges run the whole range of the most challenging (Will my next paycheck cover my child's tuition fee for this school term?) to the most mundane (Will this detergent soap suffice for a day's full laundry load?).

Sadly, I am not the perfect parent that my children can be fully proud of. But what parent can boast to be? We have shortcomings and quirks that even our own kids will always be unable to completely comprehend, much less take pride in. But in our acceptance and admission of our imperfections, let us not forget our pre-ordained part to be the role models of character for our children.

When we fail to abide by rules and regulations such as not jaywalking, sticking to deadlines, paying our community dues and remembering the obligations we have to keep, we encourage our children to do the same. Telling a child not to try smoking even when one is a heavy smoker is not the proper way to discipline a child towards doing the right thing. That doesn't work especially when a parent already suffers from the curses of smoking, such as lung cancer and respiratory disease.

Of course, there are other cases where children pick up the habit because of peer influence and provocation. That is certainly something that any parent will find absolutely surprising and hurtful at the same time. Who would want their child to suffer the consequence of actions they pick up from other people aside from those they love and that love them?

Unfortunately, our children's character will also be able to assist them in making crucial decisions such as quitting smoking. If we have molded them to be firm in their convictions and to think independently of their future, miracles can always happen and they'll finally see the error of their ways. Teaching them the right way is nearly a fourth of the battle and getting them to listen is almost half the victory. In the Lord's proper time, they will see their mistakes.

While our children are young, let us teach them good values and discipline in all aspects of their lives. Recognize every challenge for them as a learning opportunity. Invest in their character with the values we teach them at home, and then pray that they are able to carry those values well into their own parenthood. That's ensuring that our great legacy lives on forever.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What external factors influence a child's character? Justify your answer/s.
2. What external factors change character? Elaborate on your answer/s.
3. Why are we known by the company we keep?
4. What particular character traits that you possess have been influenced by people other than your parents?
5. Is there any particular character trait you wish you had? Expound on your answer/s.



WE ARE JUDGED BY OUR CHARACTER

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Our character defines us and gives other people a real glimpse of who we are. Although there may be times when we can pretend to be somebody we are not, the time of reckoning will always come. We will be liable to commit unwanted slip-ups eventually. We may work hard at keeping up the pretense, but everything will soon come crashing down to reveal what we work hard to cover up.

Even covering up is a sign that we have structured our character so weakly that we don't even dare make people aware of what we are from the inside. When people find out about the façade we build around our true selves, we come out shame-faced and bitterer than we can ever be.

In life, it helps to have a certain form of inspiration so we can strive to become better people. Many people have a golden rule they abide by. Others have the lives of influential people to guide them along their own way. If we begin to adopt a certain motivational source in the build up of our character early in life, chances are huge that we can emulate the values and virtues espoused in those very sources.

The great Martin Luther King, Jr. stated in his highly-acclaimed speech I HAVE A DREAM: I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.(http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/01/17/i-have-a-dream-speech-text_n_809993.html) Right here we see how important character is in the judgment passed to us by other people. Character is even more important, in fact, than the color of our skin or any other physical consideration. We may possess the most beautiful smile or the healthiest body on the planet, but when our character is weak and easily crumbled, everything else will remain hollow.

Education and religion are often factors that contribute much to the content of our character. So is the upbringing we receive from those before us. How we bring up our own offspring will reflect just how our character has evolved and how it will affect the future. Our children are products of how we deal with life while optimizing our character traits. It is vital that we realize our faults at the soonest time possible so that we will not pass on the weaker points of our character to our children. There will always be exceptions, of course, where our descendants become better where we have failed. This is the best case scenario that any parent can hope to have. However, since those cases are rare, it is therefore upon us to live exemplary lives and work towards good character concepts in order to prove good role models for our own children.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Name some factors that can contribute to the build up of one's character.
2. How can character be the yardstick for judging an individual? Cite examples to illustrate your point.
3. Cite some examples of how a child may build up undesirable character traits.
4. Interview people you know and who know you most of all. What are your most desirable and least desirable character traits, according to them?
5. What is your action plan on your undesirable character traits? Elaborate on your answer/s, when necessary.



The slow decline of Character

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Today, character is needed in every student and in every person around the world. A person's character is important because it helps us to define one another. It is what defines us and it is an important aspect in life. To have character is to have dignity and worth. Most people would rather sell their dignity in order to earn a little bit of money. Some actors and writers also do this in order to earn just to earn wealth.

So why is human dignity and integrity slowly declining? Is it because of the media? Is it because of the parents? Is it the economy? Well, all of these things have made a deep impact in the morals of the society. The media has made a significant effect in changing our ideas about dignity and integrity. Each day, artists bare their souls to the public. Singers make songs about drugs, alcoholism and spending money. Most writers make articles about product reviews based on useless and dangerous products. Even the media shares news about smut and vulgar controversies. They do undignified things in order to get money. By doing so, they are making a bad example which can be idealized by the youth.

Parents also have a significant impact in their children's morality and dignity. Most parents are bad examples for the youth. They often break families, have bad addictions and even punish their children severely that their children will also be traumatized. Once those traumatized children grow up, they often practice unusual acts which are deemed immoral by the public. Most children who were beat up by their parents will most likely be abusive when they also have their own children. Instead of being bad examples, parents should be the ones who will lead the way to their children's futures. They should be the one to teach their kids about morality and dignity.

Lastly, how does the economy have an effect in man's character? Because of the problems with the economy, many are led to immoral jobs like theft and prostitution. Most people tend to run away from their responsibilities, such as their debts, because they do not have the capabilities for being responsible. Because of their actions, both the economy and the essence of human character is slowly diminishing. Most children are led to cruel and evil acts just because they lack the education. Since parents cannot provide the right education for their kids, most children spend most of their time in the streets. They often work rather than study and because of the lack of education they also do not have any ideas about the concept of morality and character. If such things continue, then human decency and character will surely be diminished.

Questions:

- 1) What are the various reasons for the decline of human dignity?
- 2) How is morality affected today?
- 3) What should parents do in order to help their children?
- 4) Why is character important?
- 5) Why is education important?



CHARACTER TRAITS - DEFINED PERSONALITY

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Everyone has good and bad character traits and these can be referred to as the defined personality of every individual. What makes up a person's personality are all these different character traits that every individual possesses. All aspects of our behavior and attitudes make up a person's personality and these therefore are what we call character traits. Actually, it is also prevalent even with the characters that we see in a book. They all boil down to character traits which are often shown by descriptive adjectives such as kind, patient, loving, caring, jealous and a whole lot more.

We all have character traits but we must admit that it differs from one another. Character traits can be described or measured and these are the distinctive features which can be seen and are actually exhibited by all members of a common group. Like for instance in our family, I am a very showy person and I may say that I am a very loving, sweet, thoughtful and down-to-earth person. But of course my sons and my daughters acquired some of these traits. Although I may say that it still differs from what kind of person each one of them are.

Some of them have only one or two of these traits, while the others have them all. But whatever character traits they may have or possess, they are all different from each other and that is their defined personality. Character traits are attributes of a character, whether it is physical or emotional. So far, I have not yet met two persons who have the same character traits, for each one is a unique person. We all have our defined personality and a distinct one at that.

One can be an abrasive person, absent-minded, obnoxious, brave, anxious, stubborn, light-headed, intelligent, adventurous, affectionate, sincere and independent. Very common character traits are careful, loyal, strong, responsible, lovable, humorous, helpful, kind, open-minded, caring, charming, compassionate and generous and many more. Some may be positive character traits but others can also have negative character traits. You can still add up to these long list and think of other traits but just the same, we consider these traits as defined personality of a person. Whatever character traits a person may possess, these traits make him different from any other person.

In our everyday life, we use the term character or identity. Personality characterizes a person and it can be considered stable too. Our personality does not change overnight. It doesn't change only from one day to another. It doesn't change at all. If there may be changes, they may be very limited or slow. If it does so happen, it is caused by trauma or life-changing experiences.

Yes, our personality is something that we take with us and it affects our thinking, feelings and behavior. Our character traits are the parts that make up the personality of a character. Therefore, character traits are the defined personality of a person.

Questions for discussion:

1. What are your very distinct character traits? How does it describe your personality as a whole?
2. Do you have what it takes to build that character in you? Explain your answer.
3. What is your attitude when it comes to the character traits of other persons? Justify your answer.
4. Are you willing to change your bad character traits? How will you do it?
5. Do you agree that our character traits define our personality, of who we really are? Explain further.



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