

IDEAS 95

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



**International Online Teachers Society
Publishing Committee**



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THE 95th INTERNATIONAL ONLINE TEACHERS SOCIETY ESSAY CONTEST

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INDEPENDENCE IN A MOTHER BIRD'S PERSPECTIVE

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There comes a point in a little birdie's life when it starts to flap its wings in preparation for leaving its nest. A mother bird looks on, probably feeling pride that its little birdie has learned to use what it has to show independence, while at the same time feeling anxious that this could be the beginning of the little one's struggle to cut off the ties that bind it to its mother. Being a parent, I have felt the same thing many times over.

When my children started preschool, there was this apprehension in me, which is common among parents. Every school year marks another milestone of independence thereafter. Our children's ability to reach developmental growth milestones means they are more able to strike out a little at a time on their own. Remember when your child learned to tie his shoelaces by himself? Or when your princess learned to fix her hair with an elastic band? Those days when you did those things for your child are long gone. Pretty soon, your son will be using intricate maneuvers to tie his own shoes, or your princess will be learning really cool techniques to tidy up her hair. Time flies, and our children learn to fly away from the nest.

While we need to loosen the apron strings for our children to truly optimize their various stages of growth, it doesn't mean we need to let all hell break loose and pay them no attention any longer. In fact, during the stages of significant development towards independence that our children go through, we need to be there all the more, though in a less manipulative way. Our children will always be testaments to our quality of parenthood, but that should not be a hindrance for them to carve out their own niche and establish their own identity beyond our shadow. To be overprotective is not love, but neither is leaving our children to their own devices. We need to show them at every level that they will always have us with them, but we need to show them responsibility and self-accountability. It's a difficult balancing act, and even parents who've been at it for so long always find that one child is totally different from another. There are no hard-and-fast rules to teaching children about independence, but we can still utilize our parental instincts to find out what can work best for each of our children.

To let your child fly free takes courage and a whole lot of hope and faith. But as long as our children are given the right amount of understanding and guidance, there is no reason why they wouldn't grow up to be sources of pride for us.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Why is it difficult to teach independence to a child?
2. How would you teach independence to your own child?
3. What are the possible hindrances to a child's ability to achieve independence?
4. Would you say you were brought up to be independent by your parents? How was this accomplished?
5. Why is it not wise to use the same approach all the time in teaching children about independence?



INDEPENDENCE AS A NEVER-ENDING STRUGGLE

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We all love it when people call us independent. Young people most especially find pleasure in being called an 'independent spirit'. Who wouldn't be? Independence connotes freedom. It establishes an image of being unhampered in any way. Independence suggests the ability to proceed with life while being devoid of cares dictated by other elements. It also connotes having achieved a certain degree of maturity and self-awareness, things that have been proposed by various Oriental schools of thought (think Zen) and esoteric teachings (as in enlightenment and self-remembering).

Many are fortunate to have achieved independence. These lucky ones roam the earth as they please, doing things they like aside from being accountable only to themselves for their actions. Although many have achieved independence, there are still more out there grappling to get to it.

My country has had a historic past. Many of our ancestors have fought and died while locked in battles for independence. The reason why my country's history has been so filled with heroes from all walks of life and from virtually every discipline is the simple fact that my race has probably fought an unending battle for independence, a battle that until now has remained unwon, even seemingly lost. Mercifully, many among my brethren have created their own dents in history, such as the nation's national hero and many others in his time. Numerous of our ancestors bravely faced odds and braced themselves for bloodshed, all to show invaders that the nation's spirit was very much alive in every drop of blood that was spilt on native soil.

Independence has always been an elusive nymph, one that seems to flutter between impossible and attainable, but staying desirable just the same. We may not have completely won the fight till now, beholden as we are to the foreign relations that we treasure and the sanctity of global citizenry that we aim to have. My race may have even been mocked many times as being a "nation of slaves" by excited football fans rooting for their home team. But one thing remains unchanged: my country has independence-loving people. We are people who consider everyone as our neighbor, and as our partner in growth. Many in my country prefer not to look at color, creed or race as hindrances to growth, because we are also of a colored race, the brown one. This is a country of humble and peace-loving people, people who can enforce their own laws and respect the rights that others enjoy.

We may not be privileged enough to enjoy full independence from our very powerful allies, but we enjoy what little it is of independence we have now. Hopefully, many others in the world can see how we in my country try to break free from our bonds and become better people, one way or another.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Define independence. What are the elements of independence, in your own opinion?
2. Why does the battle of independence often connote violence and bloodshed?
3. Which hero or extraordinary individual is your personal icon of independence? Be able to talk about this individual in class.
4. Do you believe you're truly and honestly independent? Justify your answer.
5. Why is it important to be independent, in your opinion?



ON-THE-JOB INDEPENDENCE--OR TRAINING?

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It is not unusual to come across a job ad that lists among its qualifications the ability to think independently. No employer would want to be saddled with an employee who needs babysitting. In my line of work, there are often guidelines that are set by clients in the creation of write-ups. Although those guidelines more-or-less dictate to me what the employer requires to be done, it is still upon me to move along those guidelines and infuse work that I do with my own personality. Fortunately for me, clients have always appreciated what I come up with, mainly because I do my best to hew close to their requirements while at the same time allowing my unique style to shine through.

Many times, I have had to consult other sources before I even begin on a project. It pays to take someone else's work and create something new and different afterwards. As everything I have done has been purely ghostwriting, it can be a challenge to come up with something unique all the time and consistently. The web has numerous sources that anybody is free to look through, but there is such a thing as writer's ethics that sets the bar against plagiarism of any form.

I learned this lesson the hard way during the beginning of my online career.

I had finished creating a write-up that was assigned to me. I was feeling the beginnings of fatigue in me. I needed one sentence with less than 10 words to complete my allotted word count of 500. I looked through one of my sources and just decided to copy and paste the beginning sentence of the original article to my own write-up. Alas, my employer promptly gave me a warning the day after I had submitted my assignment. He stressed that he encouraged independence in all his writers, but that didn't mean we could get away so easily with independent copying. I apologized profusely and since that time have always endeavored to keep my assignments plagiarism-free.

In any career, it pays to be independent. By using all your capabilities and keeping your limitations in check, you can show your employer that you can be trusted to work independently while adhering to whatever set standards there may be. Showing your employer that you can be left alone and unsupervised and still manage to come up with good and honest work is always good advice. Independence is a learned skill that takes time to develop but will ultimately be a gift to have. Learn on your own time, but have the decency to acknowledge inability. Independent thinking is demonstrated by the ability to think fast and on your feet even when it's easier to just piggyback on others' concepts. But do not choose to get to where you want on someone else's back, and this is because you want to be independent.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What particular jobs require an employee to think independently? Be as specific as needed.
2. Would you take a job that was cut and dried or one that allowed you a certain level of independence? Why is that your choice?
3. Talk about your job. How do you practice your independence in your line of work?
4. What jobs do not really need independence? Are there such jobs in existence?
5. Do you sometimes wish you were allowed more independence on the job? Why or why not?



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