

IDEAS 99

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



**International Online Teachers Society
Publishing Committee**



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ONE'S OWN WORST ENEMY

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The enemy of my enemy is my friend. In politics, there are no permanent friends, but only permanent interests. These statements go to show just how fleeting friendship and enmity can sometimes be. We may have an enemy now, but once that enemy becomes the enemy of another of our enemies, he immediately turns into one of our friends. Remarkable, isn't it?

Though those two statements directly contradict all I've ever been taught since my youth, the concept of loving your enemy is, without a doubt, a most bitter pill to swallow. Who among us will instantly turn from hatred to love when an enemy gets his comeuppance? Who is saintly enough to embrace someone from the opposite side despite knowing how that individual has made them suffer in many ways? To be loving and sympathetic to the plight of someone we barely know is hard enough; how much harder can it all be when that other person happens to be our sworn enemy?

But as worthy inhabitants of this borrowed world we reside in, the teaching "a tooth for a tooth, and an eye for an eye" needs to be put behind us, especially when there's so much suffering involved and our integrity is at stake. Enmity needs to be sacrificed at the stake of human fellowship, if only to show our own children that hatred brings no worthy returns. While it is so much easier to harbor ill feelings and negative emotions towards other people, what makes individuals more special is the way in which they can look beyond themselves-and their negative feelings-and find compassion and sincerity for others. Noble is the man who sees his mother's face in his enemy, or the one who sees a greatly loved person's countenance in a sworn enemy's face. We each deserve a place in the sun, and those that prosecute us and make us sorry we ever lived deserve nothing less, too.

It may not be all that easy, but think! Why continue keeping a heavy chest with every sight of that enemy? Why subject yourself to the same torture of an invisible hand clutching your heart tightly every time you hear your enemy's voice? Why even bother to keep the air unclean or impure with scoffs and words of derision for the one you hate? Is it ever worth it? Certainly, there are more ways to spend your time than merely being on the lookout for your enemy to fail or make a mistake. Why not just focus on yourself? Would you honestly want to be a friend of yourself? Do you consider yourself good enough friend material? Why not stop building walls and start building bridges instead? Yes, that will be the day!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What are the qualities of a friend? In contrast, what are the characteristics of someone you would consider an enemy?
2. Are you a good friend? How are you as an enemy?
3. Why is it easier to hate an enemy than to love them?
4. Would you "dance on the grave" of your greatest enemy? Why or why not?
5. Do you have enemies? What would make you come to love/like them?



LOVE THY ENEMY

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When I watch a film or a TV show where the initially oppressed come to be the oppressors in the end, I can't help but cheer for that protagonist. I feel a thrill when the less privileged become the recipients of kindness and sincerity from other people. I applaud when known tyrants fall or when wicked people get what they deserve. The thing is, fortune has a most predictable way of turning for the oppressor and the oppressed. It's never a toss-up on who gets the greater sympathy and greater blessings in the end; it is always the one who starts at the bottom.

We are taught by religion not to intentionally inflict harm on others, lest we become recipients of harmful circumstances ourselves. We need to guard what we say and do, because those are a reflection of who we are. Unfortunately, a great majority of us are not beyond pointing an accusing finger at others when we feel we are at a disadvantage if we point a finger at our selves. It is easier to let somebody else take the blame, more especially so when that somebody just happens to be someone we particularly dislike. Human nature dictates that we harbor negative feelings for people who just rub us the wrong way, or with whom we get off on the wrong foot. Unfortunately, first impressions last, and once it is made, it would take a remarkable amount of work to reverse that impression.

Keep your friends close and your enemies closer, they say. Wise advice for today's generation. The world nowadays is filled with people who are ready to pounce on the biggest mistakes we can make, endlessly munch on them like a chew toy, and regurgitate them to spit into our face. No matter how hard we work and how well we keep all our bases covered, there will always be one thing that can make us vulnerable to our enemy's attack, a weakness perhaps, a skeleton in the closet, an unconscious lapse of judgment we made in the past.

To combat all the evil notions that are prevalent in this world, we need to be on guard at all times. How can that be managed? By living an exemplary life or by living up to the values we subscribe to. While it is true that people always notice a dark spot on an otherwise spotless surface, we can still work hard toward living an upright life and adhering to fundamental human concepts. Love your enemy and pray for those who persecute you. That was not just a statement on a piece of papyrus that could dissolve so easily. It was declared by a Great Man Himself, who had preached to His enemies about love and who laid down His Own life for them. and look: He rose from the dead!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Is it easy to love your enemies? Why or why not?
2. What is it in another person that can make you hate him/her instantly?
3. Do you believe that we sometimes hate others because we see so much of ourselves in them? Elaborate on your answer.
4. If you had to spend a year of your life living with your greatest sworn enemy, what would you do?
5. What have you been taught in your youth about loving your enemy? Be able to talk about this concept in class.



SLEEPING WITH THE ENEMY

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Watching the trailer for a new local TV show once, I got reminded of a film starring my favorite pretty woman: *Sleeping with the Enemy*. The 1991 opus was about a woman who had been married to a wealthy, abusive and controlling husband, and who decided to fake her own death by, you guessed it, drowning. The female lead character changed her name and her complete identity to elude her abusive spouse. Eventually, the husband caught up with her in her new home. He even endangered the woman's new guy friend. In the end though, the woman was able to bring an end to her husband's threat of danger, and hopefully, to find a better and more respect-filled relationship.

Many of us have had to 'sleep with the enemy'. That enemy could be one of our friends or relatives. They are usually people we trust. However, we fail to see those people as they really are: vile, pernicious individuals out to draw first blood when they see us all helpless and at our most vulnerable. Many of them are hard to detect because they've become so good at keeping their ugly interior hidden from us. But watch out! During those periods when we least expect it, they will come and snatch our self-respect away and undermine our credibility. Yes, the world is filled with hypocrites, but the good news is, in Dante's *Inferno*, such people have a place under the mud with their heads driven down and their legs flailing wildly up in the air. But we also need to take care that we don't end up where they will.

We have been taught to do unto others as we want others to do unto ourselves. Perhaps, that is the most effective way to gain more friends and not to drive enmity between others and ourselves. No matter how it can be difficult to do that, we are duty-bound to still observe that rule. It's a way of ensuring harmony in our relationships, and of instilling trust on us from others. We surely wouldn't want to have a larger collection of haters and bashers than of people who genuinely like us. We work hard for our reputation and to take care of the good name that we merely inherit from our own parents. My late father once told me: Your name is your honor. Once you lose that, there will be nothing left of you. My father died an honorable man, perhaps not having a battalion of friends, but with his good name intact. I can only hope that what name he has bequeathed me with will be something I can manage to nurture and protect for the rest of my days, whether I have to sleep with the enemy or not.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Do you have friends or relatives who you think might not be all that sincere? Without revealing their identities, be able to elaborate why you think they are so.
2. Our best friends turn out to be our worst enemies. Why is that so?
3. Do you consider yourself a true friend? Why or why not?
4. With an honest look at your own self, do you believe you are your own worst enemy? Why or why not?
5. Why is it easier to find fault in others than to praise them? Which are you, a fault-finder or a flatterer? Justify your answer.



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