

CHARACTER EDUCATION

"Courage" Grades 9-12

DEFINITION:

Courage is the willingness to face obstacles and danger with determination.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES:

- Have students watch the video on local Keller ISD student, Lyndon LaPlante. (The video is available through the KISD Communications Department). Discuss how Lyndon demonstrated courage on the football field, in his classroom, with his friends and in his life.
- Have students bring in articles from magazines and newspapers describing situations in which moral courage is an issue. Discuss who is acting courageously and who isn't. What difference does it make?
- Have students, either individually or in groups, identify acts of courage by people in the news or by people in the school or community. Why do these people appear courageous? What are their similarities? Differences? What can students learn about themselves from the selections made? What have they learned from the people selected? Have each individual or group make a presentation to the class and conduct a discussion.
- Discuss some issues teenagers may face in which they can demonstrate courage. Some examples are substance abuse, violence, cheating, relationships, etc.
- Role play some typical situations that require a courageous stand against a group or individual. After each improvisation, have a discussion. What important principle was at issue or stake? How well did the individual stand up? What could he/she have done better? What did you learn from this?
- Have students write a letter to someone in the news whose courage has impressed or inspired them.
- Discuss the quote by Confucius, "To see what is right and not do it is a lack of courage." Have students write about a time when they had to choose between what was right and what would be the popular decision. What was the outcome? Did he/she show courage? If he/she could change what happened, would he/she? Why or why not?
- Read *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Susan Douglas. Have student analyze a character from the novel that exemplifies courage. Determine how pride affects the character's courage.

- Have student search the web for quotations and other inspiring or provocative writings on courage. Compile these into a book.
- Write an essay about a historical event in which courage played a major role. (The Civil Rights Movement offers many good examples like Martin Luther King, Marion Wright Edelman, Rosa Lee Parks or Harriett Tubman.)
- Have students interview two adults to find out times in their lives where they had to show courage. Have student share some of their stories with the class.
- **In** groups, have students make a list of specific ways they can show courage in different situations and briefly discuss what it means to have the courage to be yourself. How is it possible?
- Consider the following behavioral definition of what courage means:
 - *Stand up for what is right, even if you stand alone.*
 - *Don't cave in to negative peer pressure.*
 - *Don't avoid trying something for fear of making a mistake or failing.*
 - *Don't be afraid to express yourself just because some people might disapprove.*

Have students write an essay on any or all of the points in this definition of courage.

- Make a list of famous people who display courage. Then have each student research and make an oral report on how this person has demonstrated courage in his or her life. Examples might include John Glenn, Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Lee Parks, Harriett Tubman, Marian Wright Edelman, The Wright Brothers, Joan of Arc, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Christa McAuliffe, Ronald McNair, Lance Armstrong, Rick Husband, Todd Beamer, Cassie Bernall and Rachel Scott.
- Have students read *Brian's Song* and/or show excerpts from the movie. List the various ways the main characters of Brian Piccolo and Gayle Sayers displayed courage.
- **In** class discuss athletes who exemplify courage and why. Examples might include Jackie Robinson, Brian Piccolo and Lance Armstrong.
- Have students find a community cause to make a personal conviction, whether it ecology related, feeding the homeless, or visiting the elderly. Encourage the students to document their community service for college applications and to recruit others to participate with them.
- Discuss how to show courage in the choices athletes make about the use of steroids, tobacco, alcohol and drugs.
- Examine the life of Christopher Reeves, the actor and the hero. Analyze differences in what courage the hero, "Superman," portrayed versus the courage the person of Christopher Reeves exhibited.

- Listen to the inaugural address of Franklin D. Roosevelt, "The only thing we have to fear is..." Discuss the meaning of his statement. Have students think of a time when they have overcome their own fears. Write an essay describing the challenge faced and how they found the courage to meet the challenge.
- Ask the students to respond to these questions in writing. "What was the hardest stand you ever had to take with your friends? Did it cost you anything (not a financial cost, obviously)? What were the benefits?"
- Have the students write about a time when he/she had to give up friends because they became a negative force in his/her life. In what way did that act take courage?
- Have students create a collage or mural by bringing in pictures from magazines or doing drawings that illustrate a quote relating to courage.
- Have students compose an original song, rap, acrostic or poem about courage.
- Discuss the life of Marian Wright Edelman and her quote, "Courage is just hanging in there when you get scared to death."
- Discuss Thomas Jefferson's statement, "One person with courage is a majority." What does this statement mean to you? Do you agree?
- Have students make a list of challenges in their everyday lives that require courage. Examples might include facing fearful situations, dealing with a loss or choosing not to run away from painful feelings.
- Have students learn the words for "courage" in other languages. Discuss the likenesses and differences of the meaning of courage in other cultures and find examples.
- Read *The Diary of Anne Frank* or view excerpts from the movie of the same title. Discuss how her personal diary of life under Nazi terror was an example of courage. Ask students to keep a personal diary, listing examples of times when they have to show courage in their daily lives.
- Read excerpts from *Teens with the Courage to Give* by Jackie Waldman. Discuss how these teens have overcome personal tragedy and found the courage to help others.

- Read *Let's Roll: Ordinary People, Extraordinary Courage* by Lisa Beamer and Ken Abraham. Discuss the theme of the book and how students might have responded to the same or similar situations.
- Discuss the definitions of courage and fear. Discuss whether the two concepts are related. Have students read *The Red Badge of Courage*. Have students write an essay that describes their understanding of Crane's portrayal of courage and fear. Compare their beliefs regarding courage and fear to those expressed in the novel.
- Have students listen to music that was popular during different wars and write down the thoughts and feelings it evokes.
- Have students interview someone who has been in combat and ask him/her about courage and fear. Students should discuss in small groups what they have learned from their interviews.

SOURCES:

Birdville ISD Virtue Education Model

<http://www.characterworks.com>

<http://followyourdreams.com>

<http://www.GoodCharacter.com>

<http://www.wisdomquotes.com>