

CHARACTER EDUCATION

"Perseverance" Grades 9-12

DEFINITION:

Perseverance is the ability to last or continue despite pain, fatigue, or hardship. A person with perseverance stands strong refuses to buckle under or give up hope.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES:

- Consider the following synonyms of perseverance:
 - Diligence
 - Dedication
 - Determination
 - Commitment
 - Hard work
 - Persistence
 - Volition
 - Endurance

- Read the "Gettysburg Address." Discuss how Abraham Lincoln's speech relates to perseverance. Assign students to write an essay about a person or group of people that have displayed perseverance.

- Watch video clips of Men of Honor. Discuss how Cuba Gooding Jr.'s character shows perseverance in the face of adversity. Have the students write about a time that they displayed perseverance in a hard situation.

- Have students create a collage that illustrates perseverance.

- Have students create a video about perseverance.

- Ask students to take a photograph of something that symbolizes perseverance.

- Assign students to research famous people who have shown perseverance in their lives. Then have each student present their research orally.

- Read "I Have a Dream" by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Discuss the civil rights movement in America. Assign groups of students to research other important figures during this time in America's history. How did these people display the trait of perseverance? Have the students brainstorm what America would be like if these Americans had given up and not endured.

- Assign students the task of finding songs or poems that they believe illustrate perseverance.
- Have the students write an obituary for a famous person that showed determination in the face of hardship.
- Show clips from or read *Grapes of Wrath*. Have a class discussion about the themes of the movie/novel and how they relate to the trait.
- Have students make a list of five things that are easy for them. Then have them make a list of five things that are difficult. Ask the students to design a written plan for how they can overcome one of the tasks they find difficult.
- Have students write a fictional story with characters that display perseverance.
- Have students create masks of how perseverance looks.
- Read excerpts from *Unstoppable: 45 Powerful Stories of Perseverance and Triumph from People Just Like You*, by Cynthia Kersey
- Watch the movie "The Power of One." Discuss perseverance as it relates to the main character. How could it relate to other characters in the story?
- Research/discuss what opposition Galileo faced.
- Have students create a skit that shows what to do when disaster strikes as a sign of perseverance.
- Explore the healing power of music and exercise.
- Ask the class to write a piece on perseverance. Follow that assignment with peer editing/revision then the collection of the theme-based works in a class anthology to share with other classes. A cooperative venture with younger students might also be interesting.
- Research the difficulties encountered and overcome by: Hannibal (the Alps in 15 days) Julius Caesar (11 days) Napoleon the Great (5 days)
- Consider the following books for character-based literacy study:

Responsibility Requires Action

The Outside Shot

Journals of Lewis and Clark

The Circuit

Julius Caesar

Kindred

Hard Times

The Odyssey

Scary Stories

The Color Purple

Buried Onions

A Hero Ain't Nothing but a Sandwich

Antigone

Change Requires Effort

Holes
The Grapes of Wrath
Way Past Cool
A Lesson Before Dying
Bud, Not Buddy
Romeo and Juliet

Nectar in a Sieve
Their Eyes Were Watching God
Pocho
All Quiet on the Western Front
Of Mice and Men

Justice Requires Restraint

Farewell to Manzanar
A Raisin in the Sun
The Watsons Go to Birmingham, 1963
Hiroshima
Bears to Dance To
Autobiography of Malcolm X
A Child Called "It"
The Power of One

Night
A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich
Fallen Angels Tunes for
I Am the Cheese
Cry, the Beloved Country
145th Street
The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman

Courage Requires Moderation

The House on Mango Street
Red Sun
House of the Spirit
Children of the River
Hatchet
Our Town

The Joy Luck Club
Othello
Whirligig
Macbeth
Red Scarf Girl

Integrity Requires Wholeness

The Contender
Jazz
Animal Farm
I Heard the Owl Call My Name
Hamlet
Freak the Mighty

The Great Gatsby
Dragonwings
Lisa, Bright and Dark
Somewhere in the Darkness
A Man Called Dave
The Women of Brewster Place

- Use these quotations for discussion starters/warm-ups or journal entries. Have students consider their relationship to the concept of perseverance.
 - "I never could have done what I have done without the habits of punctuality, order, and diligence, without the determination to concentrate myself on one subject at a time." Charles Dickens
 - "Dignity does not float down from heaven; it cannot be purchased nor manufactured. It is a reward reserved for those who labor with diligence." Billy Hybels
 - "The constitution is the ultimate custodian of social will and its making should be accorded all due diligence." Mwai Kibaki
 - "Victory belongs to him who has the most perseverance." Napoleon
 - "The difference between perseverance and obstinacy is that one comes from a strong will, and the other from a strong won't." Henry Ward Beecher
 - "Don't be afraid to give your best to what seemingly are small jobs. Every time you conquer one it makes you that much stronger. If you do the little jobs well, the big ones will tend to take care of themselves." Dale Carnegie
 - "When you come to the end of your rope, tie a knot and hang on." Franklin Delano Roosevelt.
 - "Consider the postage stamp: its usefulness consists in the ability to stick to one thing till it gets there." Josh Billings
 - "Fall seven times, stand up eight." Japanese proverb
 - "If one dream should fall and break into a thousand pieces, never be afraid to pick one of those pieces up and begin again." Flavia Weend, Flavia and the Dream Maker
 - "He conquers who endures." Persius
 - "Perseverance is the hard work you do after you get tired of doing the hard work you already did." Newt Gingrich
 - "It's not that I'm so smart, it's just that I stay with problems longer." Albert Einstein
 - "People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are. I don't believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and, if they can't find them, make them." G. B. Shaw, Mrs. Warren's Profession
 - "The drops of rain make a hole in the stone not by violence but by oft falling." Lucretius
 - "With ordinary talent and extraordinary perseverance, all things are attainable." Thomas Foxwell Buxton
 - "Don't let the fear of the time it will take to accomplish something stand in the way of your doing it. The time will pass anyway; we might just as well put that passing time to the best use possible." Earl Nightingale

- Use a thesaurus to study words related to perseverance and their shades of meaning. Divide the class into groups to work on the lists as parts of speech, other languages, and/or phrases.
 - a. Nouns: volition, continuance, firmness, constancy, steadiness; singleness of purpose, tenacity, persistence, plodding, sedulity, pertinacity, stamina; backbone, grit, indefatigability, bulldog courage
 - b. Verbs: persist, hold on, hold out, stick to, cling to, adhere to, stick to one's text, keep on, keep to one's course, keep to one's ground, maintain one's course, go all lengths, go through

- fire and water, bear up, keep up, hold up, plod, stick to work, follow up, die in harness, die at one's post
- c. Adjectives: constant, steady, steadfast, undeviating, unwavering, unfaltering, unswerving, unflinching, unsleeping, unflagging, steady as time, unremitting, plodding, industrious, strenuous, true to oneself, unconquerable, indomitable, game to the last, untiring, unwearied
 - d. Adverbs: through evil report and good report, through thick and thin, through fire and water, without fail, sink or swim, at any price, vogue la galere <http://thesaurus.reference.com/roget>

SOURCES:

Kersey, Cynthia. Unstoppable: 45 Powerful Stories of Perseverance and Triumph from People Just Like You. Emmaus, Pennsylvania: Rodale Books, 2005.

www.brainyquote.com

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www.randomhouse.com/teachers/themes

www.writersweekly.com/print/success_stories/002161_11032004.html

www.constable.net/arthistory/wri-inspiration.html

www.humanityquest.com

www.quotegarden.com/perseverance

www.thesaurus.reference.com/roget

<http://www.goodcharacter.com/ISOC/Diligence.html>

<http://www.goodcharacter.com/YCC/DoningRight.html>

<http://www.randomhouse.com/teachers/junieeb/character.html>

http://humanityquest.com/topic/art_activities/index.asp?theme1=perseverance

<http://www.teachervision.fen.com> (lesson options)