



Character Education Infused English-Language Arts Lessons

Character Traits: What Do They Mean?

<p>Grade Level: 7- 8</p> <p>Character Education Focus: Respect, Responsibility, and Integrity</p> <p>Summary</p> <p>Students will learn the definitions for character traits related to <i>respect</i>, <i>responsibility</i>, and <i>integrity</i>. They will describe behavioral examples and non-examples of the character traits as they appear in their own lives at school, at home, and in the community. This activity will provide the students with a common language and an understanding of each character trait. This lesson will also prepare students for classroom experiences that will make connections between coursework and character development throughout the school year. (Three 40-minute periods.)</p>	<p>Materials Needed</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Envelopes containing ICE character traits and definitions on individual strips of paper; one set of traits and one set of definitions per group2. Character traits and definitions handout3. Character Trait Examples and Non-examples handout4. Character Education Poster Checklist5. Construction paper, colored markers, and glue sticks
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Academic-Character Education Objectives

Students will:

1. Understand and define character traits related to *integrity*, *respect*, and *responsibility*.
2. Practice cooperative learning skills by working in teams.
3. Apply character traits to their own lives as they describe behavioral examples and non-examples of each trait.

California English-Language Arts Standards Addressed

Reading Grade 7

- 1.0 Word Analysis, Fluency, and Systematic Vocabulary Development
 - 1.3 Clarify word meanings through the use of definition, example, restatement, or contrast.

Reading Grade 8

- 1.0 Word Analysis, Fluency, and Systematic Vocabulary Development
 - 1.3 Use word meanings within the appropriate context and show ability to verify those meanings by definition, restatement, example, comparison, or contrast.

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Lesson Procedures

Part One

1. Tell the students they are going to be learning the definitions of character traits that will be used in class throughout the year, including respect, responsibility, and integrity.

2. Give the students some brief examples of the literature they will be reading and how the character traits relate to the stories.
3. Place students in teams of four. Establish the “quiet” signal that you want them to respond to.
4. Give each team an envelope with the ICE character traits (words only) on strips of paper (one trait per strip); also give each group an envelope containing strips of paper with the character definitions (one definition per strip) written on them. See the attached definitions handout.
5. In their team, have students spread out the words and definitions so each team member can see them. Have them match each character trait word with its definition.
6. Then give students the handout with the character trait definitions to check their work.
7. Have each team pick one character trait. Together have them create a chart and brainstorm ideas for each of these sections of their chart: What the trait “feels like”, “sounds like” and “looks like”.

Part Two

8. Ask students to give an example and a non-example of each character trait addressed by the lesson. Ask them to explain why this is an example or non-example by referring to the definitions. This will make the definitions more clear in the students’ minds. Share these examples:
 - An example of *civic-mindedness* is volunteering to help someone
 - A non-example of *civic-mindedness* is violating bike-riding laws
 - An example of *compassion* is helping someone on crutches by carrying his backpack or books
 - A non-example of *compassion* is laughing when someone falls on the playground or during physical education class
9. Assign each group a different character trait. Using the handout “Character Traits Examples and Non-Examples,” instruct the groups to list behavioral examples of the character trait and non-examples for each trait. Have them consider how the trait is demonstrated in school, at home, and in the community.
10. Have each team take their examples and create a poster. Explain the rubric for the poster by using the “Character Trait Checklist”.
11. Each group will assess their own poster, using the checklist, and can also exchange them for peer grading.
12. Posters and checklists are turned in for teacher review and recording.

Part Three

13. Display completed posters in the room. Have the students participate in a gallery walk to view all the posters. Give each student five post-it notes to use to make comments about the posters. Encourage them to make positive comments, constructive suggestions, and ideas for additional examples and non-examples. Provide them examples of possible positive comments.
14. Administer the quiz to check students’ understanding of traits and definitions. (See “Character Traits: A Matching Quiz” handout.)

Academic–Character Education Assessment

- Assess posters using the checklist.
- Give the character trait quiz. Answers: 1.C 2.J 3.E 4.G 5.N 6.I 7.M 8.B 9.L 10.D 11.H 12.K 13.A 14.F

Reflective Journaling Prompts

- Have students write about their “strongest” character trait and how they demonstrate that trait. You may want them to share with a partner.
- Have students write about the character trait they would like to further develop in themselves and some things they could do to improve their demonstration of that character trait.

- Ask students to think about their classmates and the adults in the school community. Which trait do they think everyone should try to improve? Why do they think this is important? How could they go about it?

Extensions and Variations

Students can interview family members for their ideas regarding examples and non-examples of character traits.

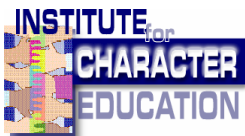
Students look for examples and non-examples of the traits in one of their favorite television programs. Have them log the examples and non-examples. Conduct a class discussion regarding television programming positive and negative influences on character development.

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Character Traits and Definitions

Respect	Treating others the way I want to be treated. Being considerate and honoring the feelings, opinions, and property of others.
Self-respect	Being good to myself and not putting myself down; taking care of myself.
Self-discipline	Making responsible choices in what I say and do to reach my personal goals.
Responsibility	Being accountable for my own actions and choices (and their consequences) without blaming others.
Dependability	Doing what I say I will do; completing my home and school responsibilities.
Perseverance	Working hard to set and achieve my personal goals; not giving up.
Civic- Mindedness	Getting involved in and contributing to my school and community; helping others.
Integrity	Having the courage to do what is right, even when it's difficult.
Honesty	Being truthful with myself and others.
Academic Honesty	Doing my own work; not cheating or copying; not using others' work without giving credit.
Fairness	Treating others equally and being open to all points of view.
Trustworthiness	Being reliable, keeping promises, and following through on my word.
Compassion	Being kind, caring, and forgiving, even when others might not be.
Courtesy	Being polite, listening to others, and using positive language.



CHARACTER TRAIT POSTER CHECKLIST

Group Members: _____

Criteria	Group		Peer		Teacher	
	Yes	Not Yet	Yes	Not Yet	Yes	Not Yet
1. We have the character trait and its correct definition.						
2. We have clear examples of the character trait behaviors.						
3. We have clear non-examples of the character trait behaviors.						
4. Overall, our poster is neat, has color, and looks appealing.						
5. All of our first and last names are on the back of the poster, along with the period of our class.						

TEACHER COMMENTS: _____



**CHARACTER TRAITS:
EXAMPLES AND NON-EXAMPLES**

Character Trait: _____

Definition: _____

Examples of Behaviors at HOME	Non-Examples of Behaviors at HOME
Examples of Behaviors at SCHOOL	Non-Examples of Behaviors at SCHOOL
Examples of Behaviors in the COMMUNITY	Non-Examples of Behaviors in the COMMUNITY

CHARACTER TRAITS

A Matching Quiz

Match the character trait with its definition.

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| ___1. integrity | a. working hard to set and achieve my personal goals; not giving up |
| ___2. academic honesty | b. being kind, caring, and forgiving, even when others might not be |
| ___3. honesty | c. having the courage to do what is right, even when it is difficult |
| ___4. fairness | d. being polite and listening to others, and using positive language |
| ___5. trustworthiness | e. being truthful with myself and others |
| ___6. respect | f. getting involved in and contributing to my school and community; helping others. |
| ___7. self-respect | g. treating others equally and being open to all points of view |
| ___8. compassion | h. being accountable for my actions and choices (and their consequences) without blaming others |
| ___9. self-discipline | i. treating others the way I want to be treated; being considerate and honoring the feelings, opinions and property of others |
| ___10. courtesy | j. doing my own work; not cheating or copying; not using others' work without giving credit. |
| ___11. responsibility | k. doing what I say I will do; completing my home and school responsibilities |
| ___12. dependability | l. making responsible choices in what I say and do to reach my personal goals |
| ___13. perseverance | m. being good to myself and not putting myself down; taking care of myself |
| ___14. civic-mindedness | n. being reliable, keeping promises, and following through on my word |