



Honor Element 2: Stories of Honor

Literature, Life Skills, Social Studies	Stories of Honor
<p>Grade Levels: All</p> <p>Time: 45 minutes to 3 hours, based on grade level</p> <p>Resources Primary grades: Videos and text Middle School: Text of story High School: Text of story All grades: Paper and pencil</p> <p>Objectives</p> <p>Learners will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Practice reading for comprehension and fluency.• Understand and use grade-level appropriate literary devices.• Consider how pivotal thoughts, decisions and actions may predict outcomes in a story.• Use stories as a means for exploring personal and social issues.• Share their own stories of honor.	<p>Teachers, Parents, or Self-Guided Learners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• View a storyteller video if appropriate.• Read the story best suited to their comprehension level, of the three included.• (Ask students to read the story a second time aloud, to one another, in pairs or in family groups).• Discuss the questions at the end of the story, to focus on key concepts.• Clarify vocabulary words, as needed.• Build phonemic awareness of key words for new readers.• Tell, write or storyboard stories about honor, based on grade-level instructions.

Introduction

Read the story appropriate for your grade level and discuss the follow-up questions.

Primary Students

Watch the video introduction of storyteller Charles McNair and translator Dr. Adela Castro. **Read and listen to the story, “Why Woodpecker Has a Red Head,”** in English or Spanish.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think the storyteller used a woodpecker in the story? How did the woodpecker earn a badge of honor?
2. Did others step forward to help?
3. What would the world have looked like if Woodpecker had not stepped up to help with a difficult task?
4. When someone helped you or kept a promise to you, even if it was difficult, how did it feel? Can you practice honor to do that for others?
5. Color a band of paper red. Glue or tape it at the back. Wear it as a badge of honor, to remember to act as the woodpecker did.

Primary Grades: Your Turn as Storyteller

What have you done to show honor at home? Did you keep your promises all week? Did you show trustworthiness? Did you find it easy or difficult?

How did Mr. McNair start the story? How did he end the story? When did you feel most concerned during the story? When did you feel relief? Think about the woodpecker’s story. It had a clear beginning, middle and end. You too will show a beginning, middle and end in the story of your effect on others as you show honor. Turn a piece of paper on its side. Draw three connected boxes.

Inside each one, picture the first, middle and last stages of your story. Write key words or write the story underneath the boxes.

Middle School Students

Read excerpts from a story called “**Rosemarie and Claude**” by a social worker in the UK, Ms. Rosemary Smith. The story recalls a classroom friend she knew many decades ago. Consider the questions with classmates or family members after you read the story.

Discussion Questions:

1. How did young Rosemarie honor the talents and personality of her friend?
2. Why did Claude keep his commitment to study, even when others did not believe in him?
3. These two friends made a difficult decision. How did their example demonstrate honor? How do you think it affected others around them?
4. Have you ever had to decide how you would treat someone who differed from yourself – or how to respond to others who treated you badly because you were different? How did your example affect the people around you?
5. Rosemarie lived a long career as a social worker and Claude became a teacher. What do you think they would tell students if they came, as friends, to visit your class today?

Middle School Grades: Your Turn as Storyteller

A written memory (or memoir) describes straightforward facts, while a storyteller uses dialogue to turn a story into an oral presentation.

Have you ever experienced unanticipated benefits from an honorable choice you made? Have you made an honorable choice even when it brought hardship? Or do you know a story that happened to someone else? Tell your story to a friend or classmate, using storytelling elements, or use a storyteller's approach to the tale of Rosemarie and Claude. Focus on the sense of honor each friend showed?

High School Students

Read the story “**Dry Rice Is Better,**” written by Saah Millimono, a novelist from Liberia. After reading the story, respond to the questions.

Discussion Questions:

1. What factors most tested the trustworthiness of the main character? Poverty? His wife's disapproval? His children's unhappiness? Impatience to meet the needs of his family? His own desires? How did he weigh those against his own honor? Why didn't he give in?
2. What aspect of his job tempted Mayongai to violate his principles?
3. Do you ever make a promise to yourself, then have trouble keeping it when faced with temptation?
4. What surprised him in the end?
5. Mayongai seemed to have a strong commitment to act honorably as part of his character. Do you think he would have continued to keep this commitment even if the story had ended differently?
6. What does the title suggest about wealth?

High School Grades: Your Story as Storyteller

Write a short story set in current times that highlights a social challenge or a personal dilemma and calls for an honorable decision. Guidelines follow:

- Rather than using expository writing to describe the current situation, help the reader see the situation through the senses, images and thoughts of the characters.
- Foreshadow the inner turmoil of the main character around a decision.
- Present a pivotal moment when the character must choose whether to act with honor. Through thought and by the character's actions, reveal the choice.
- Create a surprise ending to show the impact of the act and lead to the denouement (outcome of the story).

All three stories appear on the following pages.

Story #1

Why Woodpecker Has a Red Head

Once upon a time... the world was new. Oceans and mountains were new. Forests were new. All the animals were new too.

None of the new things in the world had colors. They were black and white. Oceans. Mountains. Forests. Animals. All black and white.

The Great Spirit wanted a world of colors. So the Great Spirit came down and brought all the world's colors in clay pots.

The Great Spirit took the top off one pot and painted oceans blue. The Great Spirit took the top off another pot and painted mountains brown. Forests became green. Animals wore all sorts of colors.

All sorts of colors ... except red.

The Great Spirit could not get the top off the pot of red color.

That meant black and white apples hung from trees. Gardens bloomed with white and black roses. Autumn leaves turned white and black.

The Great Spirit wanted bright beautiful red. Nothing else would do.

Still, the Great Spirit could not budge the tight top from the clay pot.

"I need help!" cried the Great Spirit at last. "Who can take the top off the red colors of the world?"

High overhead, in a tree covered with white and black flowers, came a voice: "I can help!" And down flew a small bird with a big beak. Woodpecker.

The Great Spirit looked doubtful. "You're just a little bird," the Great Spirit said. "To pull this top off, I need an elephant! A hippopotamus! A WHALE!"

The little bird winked an eye. "Oh, you don't need those big powerful animals," it said. "You just need ... this!"

Quick as a flash – ratta-tat! rattta-tat! – Woodpecker drilled through the top of the clay pot with its marvelous beak ... and it to pieces and fell off.

Red from the pot accidentally splashed Woodpecker's head.

The Great Spirit smiled. "That red mark on your head looks fantastic!" the Great Spirit said. "I will leave it forever as a badge of honor for your help today!"

The Great Spirit then went into the world to color all the red things.

And Woodpecker, to this very day, wears a bright crown of red on top of its head.

Story # 2

Rosemarie and Claude

When I was 12 years old, a new boy joined our class. Not only was he new, while we had all been in the class for a year, but he was the only black child in the class. In the whole school there were only three children of color, so they stood out ...

Claude found it difficult to make friends because he didn't charge around like the other boys, plus they all knew each other from primary school. The teachers ... made it clear they didn't think he understood the questions that were asked in class. He would just nod and smile, and so they behaved towards him as if he was a bit slow!

I became friends with Claude. We were both outsiders. I was Irish but white...very white, however Claude and I became firm friends. I found out that Claude, far from being slow, spoke three languages, English, Dutch and his own dialect from Africa...he was also brilliant at English. The next time we had an assignment from our English teacher, who was particularly mean towards Claude, we came up with a plan. Not only would he write his essay in English but also in Dutch. When the teacher asked for an explanation for the two assignments, it was an enjoyable moment for Claude and I to watch the teachers face at the realization of Claude's ability.

I always remember this occasion, although it's a long time ago that it happened, because it taught me a lot. Claude was proud of who he was and his own worth. He didn't need the reassurance of peers to know it didn't matter what he looked like. He was gentle and kind towards even the boys who shunned his friendship because he was bigger than they were. And he made the most of the friends he did make, like me. Claude knew that education was important and knew what he was good at, and he made the most of the opportunities available to him. I heard years later, when we had all left school and gotten on with our lives, that Claude had become a teacher... I am sure he made a great teacher.

Story #3

Dry Rice Is Better

David Mayongai was sitting behind the counter counting money in his new job as a bank teller when his mobile phone rang. In front of the counter a customer, who had come to receive money through Western Union, was waiting. So Mayongai ignored the phone call, counted and handed over to the customer the money she was to receive and, when she had left, picked up the phone, pressing the response button.

“Oh, David,” his wife said. “They cut the electricity-o.”

“Oh!” Mayongai said.

“Our landlord had been stealing current,” his wife said. “So when people from LEC came to raid homes of illegal current, they went straight to the landlord. I think someone must have informed on him. And they did not only cut the current but also had the landlord arrested and taken to the police station.”

“But the landlord told us that he was paying for the current from LEC,” Mayongai said.

“He lied,” his wife said. “Now we’re going to stop watching TV, and the children will start crying again, especially since the TV was the only thing that kept their minds off hunger. But I won’t let them go to the neighbors’ homes to watch any TV because they have too many children watching already and shoo our children away.”

Mayongai, listening over the phone, said nothing.

“Could you get a loan from the bank?” his wife asked.

“Agnes, you read the employment letter, didn’t you?”

“Yes, I did read it.”

“And what did it say?”

“It says that you could be eligible for a loan but not until after six months.”

“So let’s wait until after six months.”

“Six months is too long.”

Mayongai’s wife was still talking over the phone when another customer came in front of the counter. Mayongai cut off the connection, again placed the phone down on the counter, and began to attend to the customer.

Later, when he was alone, he sat behind the counter thinking. There was no question of paying for current to LEC (Liberia Electricity Corporation) for the one-bedroom house he rented for his family. He had only been employed with the bank three months earlier, rent would be due in two months, and he also had to pay his children’s school fees, not to mention daily expenses for food and basic needs as well as his having to pay car far to and from work every day.

After work, he went home. His wife and children cried while he tried to assure them that he would pay for electricity as soon as he was able to get a loan from the bank. In the end, with the electricity to their house cut off and therefore no way to watch TV, Mayongai and his family had no choice but to sleep in the darkness.

But a man does not sleep when his wife and children are unhappy and when he feels that somehow he is to blame for their suffering. And so while his wife and children slept, Mayongai lay awake thinking about one thing and another. Then suddenly it occurred to him that he could steal money from the bank. His job as a bank teller made it very easy. All he had to do was to remove furtively a few hundred-dollar notes from the several bundles of money which were often entrusted to him and which he would take with him behind the counter. True, there was a CCTV camera, and someone could be watching. But he had heard that people employed to work in the banks, especially as bank tellers, would steal money from the banks where they worked and that most of the time they were never found out. Perhaps he too could steal money, and no one would know. He struggled to put the idea aside as he went to sleep.

In the morning, he went to work and, as usual, came home in the evening. He did so again the next day and the day after that. Many days came and went, and his wife tried as best she could to stop the children from going to the neighbors’ homes to watch TV. But the children paid no attention to her. And soon she was able to realize that it was better to leave

them alone because watching TV took their minds off hunger. But when the neighbors would drive the children from their homes, and they would come home crying, Mayongai's wife began to resent him and to such an extent that she refused to speak to him.

But Mayongai did not mind. He went to work every day and came home in the evening and, even though handling money at the bank tempted him each day, he refused to give in to temptation, like Job. Even the smell of money tried to sway his thoughts, but as he handed out crisp bank notes to customers and replaced new bundles in drawers, he thought of each bundle as an investment in his own honor. In this way he was able to work for about five months. This meant he now had only one month left in order to be able to apply for a loan from the bank and thus pay for the electricity to his house so that his wife and children would be happy.

Then one day he went to work and was asked to meet the boss in his office. Could it be that money had gone missing and that he was to blame? he wondered. But he had always been careful and, as far as he was concerned, none of the money entrusted to him had ever gone missing. As for whether he himself had stolen any money or not, that was out of the question. And so, with a clear conscience, Mayongai went to the boss's office.

Mayongai and the boss greeted each other, and the latter motioned him to a seat. He sat down. The boss was huge, with broad shoulders and a mop of hair which had turned almost gray, His face and chin shone, as hairless and smooth as a peeled egg. He was dressed in a black coat suit, a white shirt, and a red necktie.

"Mayongai, we've decided to raise your salary," the boss said.

Mayongai could hardly believe his ears and sat with his eyes and mouth wide open.

"We noticed that you work very hard and keep a meticulous record," the boss said. "That's something most of the people who have worked with this bank haven't been able to do and often abuse their position. And in addition to the pay raise," the boss added, "you may apply for a loan, even though you haven't yet worked for the required six months."

Later, when Mayongai came home from work, he told his wife and children the good news. His wife threw her arms around him and burst into tears. In the end, she said, "I'm sorry about the way I acted toward you and glad that you didn't give in to temptation."

"Everyone wants something good for themselves, Agnes," Mayongai said. "But if you are hungry and can't afford to have a good meal, eating dry rice with honor tastes better than stolen cake."