



BENJAMIN FRANKLIN'S VIRTUES

THE
Pursuit of
Happiness

K-12 CHARACTER EDUCATION

resource information

The 1975 Code of Alabama mandates that ten minutes per day of character education are required for all k-12 students. The 1995 Accountability Law mandates character education.

The Founding Fathers believed that a healthy government starts with healthy leaders who address their own flaws so that everyone can be a healthy citizen. With that idea in mind, this resource was created to address twelve of Benjamin Franklin's Necessary Virtues.

Each lesson is not contained to a ten minute limit, but can be modified to fit the needs of your classroom. Each lesson also contains a primary source such as Benjamin Franklin's daily schedule in the Order lesson, which may help address some state standards that focus on the usage of primary sources.

background information

HUMILITY

Benjamin Franklin said, ""In reality, there is, perhaps, no one of our natural passions so hard to subdue as pride. Disguise it, struggle with it, beat it down, stifle it, mortify it as much as one pleases, it is still alive, and will every now and then peep out and show itself; you will see it, perhaps, often in this history; for, even if I could conceive that I had completely overcome it, I should probably be proud of my humility."

John Adams is known for his struggle with humility. Thomas Jefferson is known for the opposite.

Franklin added humility to the list after the suggestion of a friend who was a Quaker and started to try to practice this for the rest of his life: "My list of virtues contained at first but twelve; but a Quaker friend having kindly informed me that I was generally thought proud; that my pride show'd itself frequently in conversation; that I was not content with being in the right when discussing any point, but was overbearing, and rather insolent, of which he convinced me by mentioning several instances; I determined endeavoring to cure myself, if I could, of this vice or folly among the rest, and I added Humility to my list."

LESSON PLAN 1: HUMILITY

- Targeted Grade Levels: Kindergarten through Second Grade
- Engage:
 - Ask students what they think humility is. Have them brainstorm a list of ideas. .
- Explore:
 - Discuss community helpers, why they are important, and the reasons they do their job - both positive and negative.
 - Sanitation - Keeps our environment clean but could be a smelly job!
 - Police & Fire - Keep us safe but face danger.
 - Parents - Love us but have to change diapers, clean up throw up, etc.
- Explain:
 - Choose a read aloud.
 - Suggested Titles:
 - *The World Needs Who You Were Made to Be* - Joanna Gaines
 - *Remarkably You* - Pat Zietlaw Miller
 - *The Magic in You* - Colin Hosten
 - *Be You!* - Peter H. Reynolds
 - *Masterpiece!* - Alexandra Hoffman
 - Discuss with students why humility is important in everyday life.
 - Students will understand that humble people do the following:
 - You recognize your strengths and weaknesses.
 - You practice gratitude.
 - You listen to others for understanding.
 - You don't boast about successes or strengths.
 - You apologize when you're wrong.
 - You ask for help.
- Elaborate:
 - Art Activity - Provide students will construction paper, tissue paper, etc. Have them rip it into small pieces. Talk about how each one is unique and important to the masterpiece.
 - Suggested Final Products - Make their name, make a individuality "map" of the world, etc.
- Evaluate:
 - Have students come up with a way to keep each other accountable when it comes to humility.

LESSON PLAN 2: HUMILITY

- Targeted Grade Levels: Third through Eighth Grade
- Engage:
 - Ask students what they think humility is. Have them brainstorm a list of ideas. .
- Explore:
 - Walk through some scenarios with students and sort them as an example of humility or the opposite.
 - Scenarios provided.
- Explain:
 - Choose a read aloud.
 - Suggested Titles:
 - *The Day the Crayons Quit!* - Drew Daywalt
 - *Humble Pie* - Jennifer Donnelly
 - *Fool Moon Rising* - Kristi & T. Lively Fluharty
 - *The Golden Acorn* - Katy Hudson
 - *The Big Cheese* - Jory John
 - *Worst of Friends: Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and the True Story of an American Feud* - Suzanne Tripp Jurmain
 - Discuss with students why humility is important in everyday life.
 - Students will understand that humble people do the following:
 - You recognize your strengths and weaknesses.
 - You practice gratitude.
 - You listen to others for understanding.
 - You don't boast about successes or strengths.
 - You apologize when you're wrong.
 - You ask for help.
- Elaborate:
 - Provide students with the humility and bragging practice page. Let them work individually, in small group, or whole group.
 - Discuss the scenarios.
- Evaluate:
 - Have students come up with a way to keep each other accountable when it comes to humility.

SCENARIO 1

You're playing football at recess. Tony scores a touchdown and slams the ball down in celebration. While he's celebrating, he starts yelling about how terrible the other team is.

Is Tony showing humility?

If not, how could you address this situation?

SCENARIO 2

Sarah makes an A on the math test. Ty makes a D even though he studied really hard for the test. He tells Sarah about it and she offers to help him study for the next test.

Is the friend showing humility?

If not, how could you address this situation?

SCENARIO 3

Derrick makes an A on his reading test. He is excited about it and starts to show everyone in the room. He's saying things like "I'm the smartest person here."

Is Derrick showing humility?

If not, how could you address this situation?

SCENARIO 4

Julieta has been working really hard to make the dance team. She feels very confident about her audition, but doesn't make the team. Kate is walking around telling everyone how she didn't even want to audition and didn't practice beforehand so she's so surprised she made the team.

Is Kate showing humility?

If not, how could you address this situation?

NAME: _____

DIRECTIONS: READ EACH STATEMENT AND DECIDE HOW YOU WOULD RESPOND BOTH WITH HUMILITY AND AS A BRAG.

- You made an A on a difficult test.
 - Respond with a brag: _____

 - Respond with humility: _____

- You didn't make the team.
 - Respond with a brag: _____

 - Respond with humility: _____

- You are going on a trip to Walt Disney World!
 - Respond with a brag: _____

 - Respond with humility: _____

- You didn't get everything you wanted for your birthday.
 - Respond with a brag: _____

 - Respond with humility: _____

- Your friends refuse to pick up trash outside because they don't think it's their job.
 - Respond with a brag: _____

 - Respond with humility: _____

- Create your own scenario: _____

 - Respond with a brag: _____

 - Respond with humility: _____

LESSON PLAN 3: HUMILITY

- Targeted Grade Levels: Ninth through Twelfth
- Length: Two 50-minute class periods. Could be adapted to a one-day lesson.
- Objectives:
 - Students will understand the concept of humility as defined by Dr. Franklin and John Adams.
 - Students will analyze Franklin and Adams to identify examples of humility.
 - Students will reflect on their own experiences and the role of humility in personal growth and character development.
- Materials:
 - Excerpts from Franklin's "Autobiography"
 - Copies of Franklin's "13 Virtues"
 - Whiteboard and markers
 - Journals for personal reflection
 - Multimedia resources (videos or articles about Franklin's life)
- DAY 1 - Warm-Up Activity
 - Define humility as a class and then ask students to write a quick reflection about what humility means to them. Encourage them to think of personal experiences where humility played a role.
 - Begin with a thought-provoking quote from Franklin or Adams about humility.
 - Franklin - "It is in the character of the wise to be humble."
 - Franklin - "In reality, there is, perhaps, no one of our natural passions so hard to subdue as pride".
 - Franklin - "To be humble to superiors is a duty".
 - Franklin - "An expression of gratitude is an expression of humility"
 - J. Adams - Do justly; Love mercy; Walk humbly; This is enough for You to know and to do"
 - J. Adams - "The longer I live, the more I read, the more patiently, I think and the more anxiously I inquire; the less I seem to know".
 - J. Adams - "Humility, patience, and moderation, without which every man in power becomes a ravenous beast of prey."

- Introduce Benjamin Franklin and John Adams: their roles as Founding Fathers and philosophers. Highlight achievements by both.
- Discuss Franklin's "13 Virtues," focusing on humility. Provide context for why he considered humility essential among other virtues.
 - Temperance: Eat not to dullness. Drink not to elevation.
 - Silence: Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself. Avoid trifling conversation.
 - Order: Let all your things have their places. Let each part of your business have its time.
 - Resolution: Resolve to perform what you ought. Perform without fail what you resolve.
 - Frugality: Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself: i.e. waste nothing.
 - Industry: Lose no time. Be always employed in something useful. Cut off all unnecessary actions.
 - Sincerity: Use no hurtful deceit. Think innocently and justly; and, if you speak, speak accordingly.
 - Justice: Wrong none, by doing injuries or omitting the benefits that are your duty.
 - Moderation: Avoid extremes. Forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve.
 - Cleanliness: Tolerate no uncleanness in body, clothes or habitation.
 - Tranquility: Be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable.
 - Chastity: Rarely use venery but for health or offspring; never to dullness, weakness, or the injury of your own or another's peace or reputation.
 - Humility: Imitate Jesus and Socrates.

- Explain that humility, for Franklin and Adams, involved a recognition of one's limitations and an appreciation for the contributions of others.
- Divide the class into small groups and assign each group a virtue from Franklin's list. Each group will find a corresponding quote or passage from Franklin's "Autobiography" that exemplifies their assigned virtue.
 - <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/20203/20203-h/20203-h.htm>
- Groups should discuss how their virtue relates to humility and present their findings to the class. Encourage them to think critically about how these virtues interplay with humility. How are they similar or different to Adams and Franklin?
- Reconvene and invite each group to share their insights. Foster a discussion by asking questions such as:
 - How does humility enhance other virtues?
 - Can you think of modern examples where humility is undervalued?
 - What would Dr. Franklin and Mr. Adams think of our society today from a humility standpoint?

Day 2: Reflection and Applying the Information

Warm-Up

- Begin with a brief recap of the previous lesson, focusing on the importance of humility in Franklin and Adams' lives and its implications in today's world.
- Personal Reflection Activity
 - Ask students to write a reflective essay in their journals about a time when they exhibited humility or witnessed it in others. Prompt them with questions:
 - What were the circumstances?
 - How did that experience shape your perspective?
 - What impact did it have on your relationships or personal growth?

- Personal Reflection Activity
 - Ask students to write a reflective essay in their journals about a time when they exhibited humility or witnessed it in others. Prompt them with questions:
 - What were the circumstances?
 - How did that experience shape your perspective?
 - What impact did it have on your relationships or personal growth?
 - Encourage students to draw parallels between their experiences and Franklin's and Adam's advice and teachings.
- Closing Reflection
 - Have students conclude with a final journal entry where students articulate one action they can take to cultivate humility in their own lives as an example to both Adams and Franklin. Encourage them to set a specific, achievable goal, such as practicing active listening or acknowledging others' contributions more openly.
- Assessment:
 - Participation
 - Reflective essays
 - Closing reflections