

Forgiveness

Character... It starts with me!

MONTHLY EDUCATOR BULLETIN

Vs. Rejection

I WILL:

- be quick to forgive
- not cover up my own wrongs but will be quick to ask for forgiveness
- not seek revenge
- respond kindly to those who hurt me
- not take up offenses for others

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Clearing the record of those who have wronged me and not holding a grudge

Did you know that many snakebites are actually from dead snakes? People assume that the decapitated heads are safe to touch but they are as dangerous as a live snake. The same goes for harboring a hurt. Without forgiveness, you can still be 'bitten' by the sting of bitter memories.

Forgiveness for deep hurts is often a journey rather than an event. We may make the decision to forgive but then we need to

work through our emotions until we can feel empathy and compassion for that person. Forgiveness doesn't require remorse on the part of the offender. It is a gift. It can result in reconciliation with the offender but reconciliation isn't required. Offering forgiveness only requires one person.

What about the reverse of asking for forgiveness, of apologizing? When we offer sincere and heartfelt apologies, it allows the one we have hurt to see us

differently. They can now feel empathy and compassion towards us allowing them to move toward forgiveness. Forgiveness and apology - it doesn't matter which comes first to arrive at the same conclusion.

This month, the focus is on asking for and granting forgiveness.



Perdón vs. Rechazo
Borrar la cuenta de los que me han ofendido y no guardar rencor alguno contra ellos



Go to the Root



Forgive comes from the Old English *forgiefan*. It was a compound word combining the prefix meaning "up" or "away" with the word meaning "to give". Can you see how forgive is giving up a claim against someone?

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"People will accept your idea much more readily if you tell them Benjamin Franklin said it first." -David H. Comins

Character Quotables

"Forgiveness is me giving up my right to hurt you for hurting me."

Anonymous

"Friends may come and go, but enemies accumulate."

Thomas Jones

"There is no revenge so complete as forgiveness."

Josh Billings

"Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the one getting burned."

Buddha

"An apology is the superglue of life. It can repair just about anything."

Lynn Johnston

"For every minute you are angry you lose 60 seconds of happiness."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

"He who angers you conquers you."

Elizabeth Kenny

"I can forgive, but I cannot forget, is only another way of saying, I cannot forgive."

Henry Ward Beecher

"Forgiveness is the key to action and freedom."

Hannah Arendt

"Bitterness is the poison we swallow, while hoping the other person dies."

Skip Gray

"To be wronged is nothing unless you continue to remember it."

Confucius

"I refuse to let any man belittle my soul by making me hate him."

Booker T. Washington

"Forgiveness is giving up all hopes of a better past."

Petrea King

"The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong."

Mahatma Gandhi

"Hate is like acid. It can damage the vessel in which it is stored as well as destroy the object on which it is poured."

Ann Landers

"To understand all is to forgive all."

French Proverb

"Anger makes you smaller, while forgiveness forces you to grow beyond what you were."

Cherie Carter-Scott

"Forgiveness is not an occasional act: it is an attitude."

Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Forgiveness is almost a selfish act because of its immense benefits to the one who forgives."

Lawana Blackwell

"We must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive. He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love."

Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Doing an injury puts you below your enemy; Revenging one makes you but even with him; Forgiving it sets you above him."

Benjamin Franklin

Curriculum Connection



Biology



When you are angry or holding a grudge, the body produces harmful enzymes that increase stress, raise cholesterol levels and blood pressure. Studies have shown that after forgiving a person who has hurt you, individuals showed lower heart rates, lower blood pressure and significantly lowered cortisol levels in their bloodstream. Other positive health benefits of forgiveness include improved oxygen and nutrient supply to cells and tissues, less headaches, improvement in chronic pain, improved symptoms from arthritis, resolution of digestive problems and a faster recovery from injury. In addition, the immune system strengthens being better able to fight off infections and illnesses and breathing becomes deeper and more regular. For more information visit:

<http://www.marcgopin.com/2010/03/15/the-biology-of-forgiveness/>

<http://www.mysahana.org/2010/11/biology-of-forgiveness/>

http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2008-01-03/features/0801030138_1_forgiving-prefrontal-cortex-mccullough

http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/forgiveness_instinct

The Amish, Model of Forgiveness

In early October of 2006, a lone gunman entered a one-room Amish school house in Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania, ordered the boys and teacher to leave then shot the girls, killing 5 and leaving the others critically wounded. He shot himself as police stormed the building. But the real story was the forgiveness that the families of the slain and injured offered to the grieving gunman's family immediately. They attended his funeral and shared the proceeds from a donation fund set up to pay for the funerals and care of the victims.

Marie Roberts wrote an open letter to her Amish neighbors thanking them for their forgiveness, grace, and mercy. She wrote, "Your love for our family has helped to provide the

healing we so desperately need. Gifts you've given have touched our hearts in a way no words can describe. Your compassion has reached beyond our family, beyond our community, and is changing our world, and for this we sincerely thank you."

Three weeks after the shooting, "Amish forgiveness" had appeared in 2,900 news stories worldwide and on 534,000 web sites surpassing the coverage of initial tragedy.

When asked why they were so forgiving, it was explained that forgiveness is a main tenet of their faith. They believe that their salvation is tied to their ability to forgive each other.

Several books and plays have been written about the events and a Lifetime Movie was made of one of the books and it

became the highest-rated and most-watched original movie in Lifetime Movie Network's history.



For more information visit:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amish_school_shooting

<http://gurmeet.net/spiritual/stories-of-forgiveness/>

Team~Building Activity

Building a culture of good character requires building the class into a community. Here is this month's teambuilding activity:

Gift of Forgiveness

Wrap a large empty box with a solid color paper and decorate with a bow. Explain that forgiving someone is like giving a gift to both the one who is forgiven and the one who is offering the forgiveness. Have each of the students sign their name on the package. You can do this before you start or you can have them sign when they are the forgiver. Pass the box around the room giving each child the opportunity to practice asking for and granting forgiveness using the box as a physical



representation of the gift of forgiveness. These exchanges can be generic by simply saying "I'm sorry. Will you forgive me?" with a reply being "I forgive you." After everyone has had a chance to practice you can have another round where they can volunteer to ask or grant a true, heartfelt apology to a classmate of their choosing. Optionally, you could have the students write down things they are sorry for or things that have offended them and place them in the box before wrapping. When the exercise is over, discuss how different they might feel. Even if the apologies were generic, it might make it easier for them to ask for or grant forgiveness in the future.





The 4 A's of Apologizing

Here's a guide for helping to remember how to apologize. It is more than just a simple "I'm sorry".

1. **Admit** what you did wrong. *You need to be specific about what you did. "I borrowed your sweater without asking first."*
2. **Apologize** for how your choice affected the other person. *"I'm sorry that it wasn't in your closet when you needed it. Will you forgive me?"*
3. **Ask** for what you can do to make it up to the person. *"I know I can't undo what I did. I can hand wash your sweaters for you or something else if you'd rather."*
4. **Alter** your choice in the future. *"I promise to ask next time."*

Ask the class to come up with some examples. When you have come up with several, ask them if forgiveness is automatic. (No) Bring in the character trait of trust. Sometimes an apology is not accepted because there is no trust that the words mean anything. Explain that in this case, it will take proving the words with future behavior in order to earn forgiveness.

Clean it Up!

Draw an outline of a heart on the board. Walk through a typical day for a student in the same grade as your class. Cite examples of events happening that the student holds a grudge about. With the mention of each one, color in the heart a little with a dark color. When the heart is fully colored, talk about what it means to have a heavy heart. Ask for suggestions of what this student could do to lighten their heart. You will be seeking resolutions to the examples that you gave initially. With each resolution, erase part of the colored in heart until all of the issues have been forgiven but still leave a little area colored in. Ask who else needs to be forgiven? You still need to forgive yourself. It is important not to carry around mistakes. If you are forgiven, focus on being better rather than on past mistakes. Erase the last of the colored area. Now the heart is light again. Ask what it feels like when your heart is light or to be lighthearted. What is there room for in your heart when it is empty of grudges? (more love, happiness).



Lots of Love

For this activity, you will be making a paper heart chain. Prepare the paper ahead of time so that the students are not expecting more than one heart. Using a letter size sheet of paper, fold in half top to bottom, then in half top to bottom again. Open it up and turn it landscape. You now have 4 vertical sections. Accordion fold on the scored lines. Draw a heart on the paper making sure that the heart goes from edge to edge. Now you are ready to begin with the class. Begin by discussing how forgiveness comes from your heart. Now begin cutting out the heart. You will cut along these lines, being careful to leave just a tad of the edge connected on each side so that the hearts are connected. Talk about the things you have to get rid of in your heart in order to have room for love and forgiveness as you cut away the paper. When all the extra paper is cut away, ask the class how much forgiveness you have in your heart. Explain that it is like love. You will never run out of love or forgiveness. When you give some away there's always more left. Open up the chain and show that you now have even more love and forgiveness!



Walk in their Shoes

Bring in a large pair of shoes, one that would be larger than the students would wear. (Thrift stores are a good place to find these.) Have several students try to wear the shoes, either over their shoes or socks (no bare feet). Have them describe how difficult it was to walk in the shoes. Ask if they have ever heard the saying "Walk a mile in my shoes/moccasins." Now ask what it means to walk in their shoes, to see things from another's point of view. Some times it helps to forgive someone if you can look at things from their point of view. Maybe there wasn't intent to do harm. Perhaps if you look at things differently, it is easier to see something similar in your own life. Relating to each other in this way helps make it easier to forgive.

Block out

Each student will start with a blank sheet of paper. Have them fill the page using brightly colored crayons. They will just make different color blocks all over the page. As they color, ask what nice things each color can represent. When the page is full, have them cover the bright colors with black crayon. As they color with the black, talk about how holding a grudge blocks out the nice things represented by the colors underneath. When the bright colors are completely covered, have them scratch with a paper clip, pen cap or fingernail the word Forgive or Forgiveness. The scratching should be light enough to only scratch through the black crayon. When we forgive, we get rid of what is blocking the good things in our heart.

FORGIVE

The Cookie Thief

A woman was waiting at an airport one night
 With several long hours before her flight
 She hunted for a book in the airport shop
 Bought a bag of cookies and found a place to drop
 She was engrossed in her book but happened to see
 That the man beside her as bold as could be
 Grabbed a cookie or two from the bag between
 Which she tried to ignore to avoid a scene
 She munched cookies and watched the clock
 As this gutsy cookie thief diminished her stock
 She was getting more irritated as the minutes ticked by
 Thinking "If I wasn't so nice I'd blacken his eye"
 With each cookie she took he took one too
 And when only one was left she wondered what he'd do
 With a smile on his face and a nervous laugh
 He took the last cookie and broke it in half
 He offered her half as he ate the other
 She snatched it from him and thought "Oh brother
 This guy has some nerve and he's also rude
 Why he didn't even show any gratitude"
 She had never known when she had been so galled
 And sighed with relief when her flight was called
 She gathered her belongings and headed for the gate
 Refusing to look back at the thieving ingrate
 She boarded the plane and sank in her seat
 Then sought her book which was almost complete
 As she reached in her baggage she gasped with surprise
 There was her bag of cookies in front of her eyes
 "If mine are here" she moaned with despair
 "Then the others were his and he tried to share"
 "Too late to apologize she realized with grief"
 That she was the rude one, the ingrate, the thief

by Valerie Cox



Read the poem to the class. Ask if they anticipated the way it ended. Ask if they have ever blamed somebody for something and then later found out that it was your fault. Ask if they have ever done something wrong for which they couldn't ask forgiveness. How did they feel in each case? What can you do in each case to help feel better? Now pass out sugar cookies, either round or in the shape of a heart. Have supplies for decorating the cookies, icing, sprinkles, etc. (Decorating marshmallow cr me on graham crackers also works.) Let them each decorate a cookie. They will be giving the cookie away so be sure to have them wash their hands before they start and instruct them on proper procedures such as not touching their nose, etc. When they are finished, they need to pick someone to whom to give their cookie. Make sure that each person ends up with a cookie. Now eat the cookies together. Explain that when we forgive each other, the whole group is happier.

Happy

Miscellaneous Thoughts on Forgiveness

- Dr. Phil's "Life Law #9 is: **"There is Power in Forgiveness:** Take your power back from those who have hurt you. When you harbor hatred, anger and resentment, your body's chemical balance is dramatically disrupted. Your 'fight or flight' responses say aroused twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. That means that hatred, anger, and resentment are absolutely incompatible with your peace, joy, and relaxation."
- When Christian missionaries went to the Eskimos to preach there was no word for Forgiveness in the Inuit language so they created a word for it: ISSU-MAGIJOU-JUNG-NAINER-MIK. The translation is "not being able to think about it any more".
- Global Forgiveness Day is August 27, 2013
- The States of Delaware, Indiana, Maryland, Michigan, West Virginia and Wisconsin and the Commonwealths of Kentucky and Pennsylvania have all made proclamations recognizing October 31 as Forgiveness Day in their state.
- The Worldwide Forgiveness Alliance has set a goal to establish an International Forgiveness Day in every village and hamlet across the world by the year 2025.
- The International Forgiveness Institute's definition further explains forgiveness as going beyond the call of duty by "overcoming of wrongdoing with good" to offer "a freely chosen gift (rather than a grim obligation)." The definition correctly promises, "As we give the gift of forgiveness we ourselves are healed."
- In the southern part of the United States during the last century, the Hatfield-McCoy feud raged for decades between neighboring families and cost many lives. Neither family would forgive the other—even though few Hatfields or McCoys could recall the original cause of the feud by the time it finally wound down.
- Some people are better at forgiving than others. One of the forgiveness field's earliest studies, by geneticist Lyndon Eaves, found that twins are alike in their propensity to forgive, suggesting that forgiving attitudes have a strong genetic component.
- Psychologist Loren Toussaint of Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, has found that women (who typically outlive men) are more forgiving than men. So are those with higher education. Married people, Toussaint found in a 2002 survey, are more forgiving of themselves and others.
- The United States Institute of Peace documents more than 20 nations that have used truth and reconciliation commissions following civil war.
- With age comes wisdom. Mathias Allemand at the University of Zurich found that older individuals are more likely to forgive after an interpersonal conflict.
- When we are offended we can be bitter or we can be better. The difference is in the "I".

For the Family

We are studying the character quality of **Forgiveness**: clearing the record of those who have wronged me and not holding a grudge.

To practice Forgiveness I will:

- be quick to forgive
- not cover up my own wrongs but will be quick to ask for forgiveness
- not seek revenge
- respond kindly to those who hurt me
- not take up offenses for others



Family Activity:

Just Flush it Away!



Begin this exercise by discussing forgiveness and apologies. Find an example from your own life that you can share of when you held a grudge and finally let it go or a time when you felt you needed to ask for forgiveness yourself. Even more powerful is asking another family member for forgiveness for a recent (or not so recent) offense. Explain that we have all done things that we are not proud of and that there are grudges that we hold, both small and sometimes large. Distribute a length of toilet paper to each family member. Each one is to write down past grievances that they have with other family members. A magic marker is the easiest to write with - just make sure there is scrap paper underneath the toilet paper to catch anything that may go through. It's best if you can choose a word or short phrase that sums up the event rather than a paragraph detailing the hurt. Each person can have some private space in which to write. Younger, non-writing family members may draw a picture of the person they are forgiving. Remind everyone that they are writing something they are choosing to forgive and forget. When everyone is done, have them crumple up the toilet paper in their hand and everyone has a turn at flushing it down the toilet. You can choose to do it all in one flush (if it will fit) or each person can take a turn individually. Be respectful if someone wishes to keep what they have written private. When all is done, ask everyone how they feel. Does it feel better to have flushed away a grudge? Do you think that the next time something similar happens you can forgive more quickly?

Other ways to teach character in the home:

- Display the character quality and definition in a prominent place such as on the refrigerator or let each child decorate it for their bedroom door.
- At the dinner table ask if anyone noticed anyone (not just family members) demonstrating the character quality (or not demonstrating it).
- Point out news stories where character was or was not involved.
- Review the "I wills" and see if there are specific actions you can add to this list.
- During car trips, challenge the kids by describing scenarios and having them identify if it describes being the quality or being the opposite.
- Praise with character by recognizing the character quality involved rather than the achievement.
- For more ideas visit www.charactercincinnati.org/education.php

the

Croskey's Corner

When educators gather to discuss having babies, like rest of the world, the conversation turns to prospective names. But, if you have been in education for a while, like me, you may have run into what I call the “name disqualification game.” Teacher A says, “I was considering naming my baby William (to throw abuse toward my name). But I had a student named Billy one time. He was a little...rascal. I battled all year with him. I wouldn't name my kid “Billy” or “Liam” or “Will” if you promised to pay for all 4 years of my kid's college!” In other words, past associations with the name “William” have disqualified it from the list of potential names. Too many bad memories.

Memory of student relationships. I call it history. Teachers develop a history with each one of their students. Just like the history of a country, those stories can include war, peace, exploring new frontiers, and accounts of building, of loss, and of rebuilding. A relationship between a teacher and a student starts with much promise and with high hopes. But the teaching-learning process runs into obstacles even with the most able student or the most skilled teacher. Sometimes the obstacles are learning difficulties, but often the issues are about low motivation to learn or demands outside of school that are more urgent and prevent the student from being ready to learn each day. Classroom management techniques or tricks to help get students more motivated can help. But in order for teachers to make tomorrow a better day than today was, behavior-wise, they need to start over each morning. Tomorrow cannot be another day. It has to be a new day.

I had a student once who had been emotionally abused by her dad. When she talked about the abuse, she felt that she needed to forgive and forget. She said, “Well, I guess I can forgive..but I will never forget.” The two parts are distinct, and maybe one has to happen before the other can. Those who have experienced grief after a loss say that no one ever stops hurting because of their loss of a loved one. Rather, they get used to the hurt, and it therefore becomes more tolerable. Not exactly a numbness. More of a callous forming. I think those two ideas, forgetting a hurt and a healed loss, are linked. The forgetting does not mean loss of memory. It means remembering with less hurt or pain. The healing of a loss does not mean good as new. It means a wound closes, forms a scar, and the person begins to be able to function in spite of the wound, to work around the scar and the diminished ability to move.

I guess maybe a conflict between a teacher and a student is like a mild death in their relationship. The loss on the student's side may be one of trust, or disappointment that he or she has not met expectations. On the teacher's side, the loss may be of the kind one gets when one fails at an important job or of being let down by one the teacher believed in. But as with any grief, there is an out. The only way through is through and the pain, while it will never go away (be forgotten), may be diminished. If one has faith in this process one can trust that a new day will be possible because the pain will lessen. The teacher, who has more experience than the student in these manners, can model a willingness to make each day a new, reborn chance to build a learning relationship.

You know the mantra for not giving up on kids: “I am disappointed in, or hate, what you did, not who you are.” Sounds good but very hard to live. I had a colleague, once, who could really start each day fresh. I think she did it successfully because she was so well grounded as a person. She forgave kids. Sure, she did not truly forget. But she let go of her disappointment, or maybe even hate – and loved that kid. People can use love to generate forgiveness. She did. A kid could call her a name or he could bring a weapon to school; a girl could bully other girls. It ended up not destroying the teacher-student relationship because my colleague never gave up on a kid. She forgave and she started over. That is inspirational, no? Forgiveness: it starts with us.

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school psychologist
from the Loveland City
Schools

“If you want to test your memory, try to recall what you were worrying about one year ago today.”--E. Joseph Cossman, **American entrepreneur** and inventor

Robin's Reading List



Pre - Gr. 3:

The Berenstain Bears and The Forgiving Tree by Stan and Jan Berenstain

Cousin Fred accidentally damages Brother's brand-new bike. When Brother Bear gets angry, can Sister Bear help him see that forgiving his friend is the right thing to do?

Hats Off to Lyle by Ronald Kidd

Veggietales! What normal Viking needs a hat cover? You'll be surprised! Sail along in this heroic tale of good versus stinky while learning the importance of forgiveness.

New Beginnings (Always Trouble Somewhere Series, Book 4) by Wanda E. Brunstetter

Spring has sprung! And ten-year-old Rachel Yoder is filled with the hope of good things to come. But then she learns that her best friend is moving away. What will she do without her? When a new girl named Audra shows up at the Amish schoolhouse, Rachel soon finds herself with a stinky sandwich, a mud-spattered dress, a sore nose, and a rotten attitude. As things go from bad to worse, Rachel gets grumpier and grumpier. If she doesn't soon find a way to forgive others, she'll be in

danger
o f
losing

more than one friend. Is there any way Rachel can make a new beginning?

The Forgiveness Garden by Lauren Thompson

A long time ago and far away--although it could be here, and it could be now--a boy threw a stone and injured a girl. For as long as anyone could remember, their families had been enemies, and their towns as well, so it was no surprise that something bad had happened.

Hate had happened. Revenge had happened. And that inspired more hate and more calls for revenge. But this time, a young girl decided to try something different.

Inspired by the original Garden of Forgiveness in Beirut, Lebanon, and the movement that has grown up around it, Lauren Thompson has created a timeless parable for all ages that shows readers a better way to resolve conflicts and emphasizes the importance of moving forward together.

This is Just to Say: Poems of Apology and Forgiveness by Joyce Sidman

When Mrs. Merz asks her sixth grade class to write poems of apology, they end up liking their poems so much that they decide to put them together into a book. Not only that, but they get the people to whom they apologized to write poems back.

In haiku, pantoums, two

-part poems, snippets, and rhymes, Mrs. Merz's class writes of crushes, overbearing parents, loving and losing pets, and more. Some poets are deeply sorry; some not at all. Some are forgiven; some are not. In each pair of poems a relationship, a connection, is revealed.

Character Building Day by Day by Anne D. Mather

This book includes 180 character vignettes—five for each of the 36 weeks in the school year—grouped by trait. Each features kids in real-life situations making decisions that reflect their character. Each is short enough to be read aloud; all can be used as starting points for discussion, to support an existing character education program, or as the basis for an independent program. This is an excellent tool for the classroom, or the character-conscious home. Forgiveness, pages 98 - 102.

Grades 4 - 8:

Wonder by R. J. Palacio

Ten-year-old Auggie is just a normal kid--on the inside. As for the outside, well, that is a different story. August was born with an extreme facial abnormality and was not even expected to survive. Homeschooled his whole life by his nurturing and loving family, August's life changes when he bravely enters fifth grade at a

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Robin's Reading List



private school in Manhattan. Will his new classmates see beyond Auggie's unique exterior and discover the terrific kid inside, or will they shun him, like so many kids have before? In spite of the odds, Auggie finds a way to forgive those who do shun him without seeking revenge.

The Birthday Room by Kevin Henkes

Two gifts on a boy's 12th birthday bring an entire family closer together. Young Benjamin likes to draw and paint, but when his parents give him a present of a room to use as a studio, he feels pressured into becoming an artist. He is enthralled by his second gift: a letter from his Uncle Ian in Oregon, inviting Ben to come for a visit. Ben's mother, however, is not so enthralled; she still blames her younger brother for a wood-shop accident that caused Ben to lose a finger at age two. Not until Ben tells her, "If I had to choose, I'd take the trip over the room," does she consent to the visit. As Ben spends time in Oregon with his mother, Uncle Ian, Ian's expectant wife, Nina,

and the Deeter children who live nearby, he makes some important discoveries about his family and himself, and eventually finds a special purpose for his "birthday room." The story explores family relationships with breathtaking tenderness, showing how feelings of guilt, bitterness and fear can be quelled by more deeply rooted love....leading to forgiveness.

The Tale of Despereaux by Kate DiCamillo

Forgiveness, light, love, and soup. These essential ingredients combine into a tale that is as soul stirring as it is delicious. Despereaux, a tiny mouse with huge ears, is the bane of his family's existence. He has fallen in love with the young princess who lives in the castle where he resides and, having read of knights and their ladies, vows to "honor her." But his unmouselike behavior gets him banished to the dungeon, where a swarm of rats kill whoever falls into their clutches. Another story strand revolves around Miggery, traded into service by her father, who got a tablecloth in return. Mig's desire to be a princess, a rat's yen for soup (a food banished from the kingdom after a rat fell in a bowl and killed the queen), and Despereaux's quest to save his princess after she is kidnapped climax in a classic

fairy tale, rich and satisfying. And as with the best stories, there are important messages tucked in here and there, so subtly that children who are carried away by the words won't realize they have been uplifted until much later.

The Year the Swallows Came Early by Kathryn Fitzmauri

Eleanor "Groovy" Robinson loves cooking and plans to go to culinary school just as soon as she's old enough. But even Groovy's thoughtfully-planned menus won't fix the things that start to go wrong the year she turns eleven - suddenly, her father is in jail, her best friend's long-absent mother reappears, and the swallows that make their annual migration to her hometown arrive surprisingly early. As Groovy begins to expect the unexpected, she learns about the importance of forgiveness, understands the complex stories of the people around her, and realizes that even an earthquake can't get in the way of a family that needs to come together.

I Am Not Joey Pigza (Book Four) by Jack Gantos

In this fourth book in the series, Joey's stability is challenged when his deadbeat dad, who just won the lottery and bought a diner, reunites with his mother, who becomes pregnant. As usual, Joey is thrust into a series of wild and

Robin's Reading List

humorous situations. True to form, Joey's dad eventually loses all the money and skips town - right after Joey decides to forgive his past sins. But with an upbeat attitude, hopeful Joey perseveres, learning about the power of forgiveness and gaining a new confidence in his abilities to handle any situation without "losing it" or seeking revenge.

Grades 9 - 12:

Whale Song by Cheryl Kaye Tardif

Whale Song is the story of Sarah Richardson, a young woman who moves to Vancouver Island when she's 11. There she finds a whole new world--one filled with mystical native legends, killer whales and wolves, and the tragic death of her mother that leaves this grief-stricken teen-aged girl with partial amnesia.

It's a story about rediscovering one's past, recovering lost memories and letting go of old hurts and betrayals, and it's a novel for anyone, any age, that will change how you view life...and death. But most of all it's a novel about family, love, forgiveness and hope.

This is Not Forgiveness by Celia Rees

Everyone says Caro is bad, but Jamie can't help himself. She is totally different from the

other girls. But he soon realizes there is more to Caro--much more. Consider: How she disappears for days at a time, or the scars on her wrists, or her talk of revolution and taking action. Jamie's also worried about his older brother Rob. Back from Afghanistan and struggling with PTSD, Rob is living in a world of his own. Which is why it's so strange that Rob and Caro know one another--and why their secrets feel so very dangerous.

Forgiveness: Mother & Child Reunion by Jean Brashear

Ria Channing fled from her family six years ago, running away after committing a sin no parent could forgive--driving drunk in the crash that killed her younger brother.

The golden child is gone. The demon child, walking away unharmed.

Now Ria is back, hungry and exhausted, fighting for survival...with a son of her own. The loving home she left, though, no longer exists. Her parents, once so adoring, have divorced. And Ria regrets returning to the family she destroyed.

But when her mother's protective friend Sandor Wolfe confronts Ria about her rebellious past, he's intrigued by her vulnerability. Soon loyalty and love collide. Sandor may have to choose, and there

may be a price.

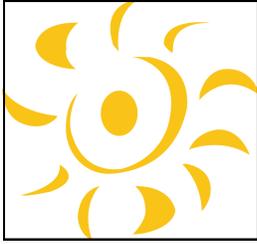
Trouble by Gary D. Schmidt

"Henry Smith's father told him that if you build your house far enough away from Trouble, then Trouble will never find you."

But Trouble comes careening down the road one night in the form of a pickup truck that strikes Henry's older brother, Franklin. In the truck is Chay Chouan, a young Cambodian from Franklin's preparatory school, and the accident sparks racial tensions in the school--and in the well-established town where Henry's family has lived for generations. Caught between anger and grief, Henry sets out to do the only thing he can think of: climb Mt. Katahdin, the highest mountain in Maine, which he and Franklin were going to climb together. Along with Black Dog, whom Henry has rescued from drowning, and a friend, Henry leaves without his parents' knowledge. The journey, both exhilarating and



dangerous, turns into an odyssey of discovery about himself, his older sister, Louisa, his ancestry, and why one can never escape from Trouble.



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Character...It Starts With Me!

Character in the Classroom *Continuously*

There are many ways that you can teach the Character Quality of Month. Here are just a few suggestions:

- Ask students to make posters to hang in the classroom or around the school.
- Challenge students to find quotes, news stories, current (or classic) songs or movies that portray the character quality of the month. Be sure to share these with the class and “archive” these to use in future years.
- Add the character trait of the month to the spelling word list. (Even if it is posted in the classroom to copy!)
- Offer for students to make a video or write a rap that demonstrates the Character Quality of the Month.
- If you teach younger students, see if you can “borrow” some older students to lead your students in an activity or switch the roles and have the younger students “teach” a rhyme to the older students.
- If you teach older students, you can be the initiator in the previous activities.
- Invite local business leaders or small business owners to talk about the importance of a character trait. If you teach older students, aim to get a representative from a business that typically hires teens so that they can relate the importance of good character when applying for and *keeping* a job.
- Men and women in uniform usually make impressive guest speakers. Police departments, fire departments and military recruiting offices are usually willing to come into a classroom. Do not be afraid to give them specific requests or guidelines for speaking so that it is pertinent to the lessons of the month.
- Always have a generic character activity planned and ready to go that you can use as filler when you have time to kill or that a substitute teacher can use in your absence.