

Adventures: Lessons in Character – Honor

Zach thinks about how his parents would feel if he told them he was on the honor roll, and he knows they would also be excited. Then when Plato tells stories about an honorable woodsman and a man called Honest Abe, Zach learns what it means to be honorable. Plato asks Zach to consider what his parents would want him to do. In this way, Zach is able to figure out for himself what it means to do the right thing. Zach then goes back to school and tells his teacher about the mistake. When he returns home, he tells his parents everything. Shortly thereafter, the teacher comes by the house. Zach's teacher expresses how proud he is of Zach and tells his parents that they should be happy to have such an honorable young boy.

- *When Zach imagines his parents learning about the honor roll, how does he feel?*
- *What does he want his parents to say or do after hearing about the honor roll?*
- *How do Zach's parents react to his telling them the truth?*
- *How does Zach's teacher feel about his mistake?*
- *How does he feel about Zach telling him about the mistake?*
- *How was telling about the correct grade an honorable thing to do?*
- *How did Zach feel when he "did the right thing?"*

Story 2 - The Honest Woodsman

Plato tells Zach a story about a man who lived long ago and cut wood for a living. The man and his family are poor, and they do not have many nice things like clothes and toys. The mother in the family wears old worn dresses, and the children use blocks of wood as toy soldiers. One day when the family ventures into town, the children see lovely toys that they want. Their mother sees a beautiful scarf, but they do not have enough money for any of these things. The woodsman busily continues to work as hard as he can to make more money, but one day he loses his axe in the river. When a fairy rises out of the river and gives the woodsman a silver axe, he is tempted to keep it so he'll have more money for his family. Instead, he tells the fairy it isn't his. The fairy then offers him a gold axe, but once again the woodsman tells her he cannot take it because it isn't his. Finally, the fairy gives the woodsman his axe plus the silver and gold axes as a reward for being an honorable man.

- *How does the woodsman feel knowing that he cannot buy his family the things they want?*
- *What does he do to try to help his family?*
- *How do the children feel about their father?*
- *Why doesn't the woodsman take the silver and the gold axe?*
- *Is he tempted to take the very valuable axes?*
- *Why does the fairy give him all of the axes in the end?*

Story 3 - Honest Abe

Plato tells Zach about the story of Abraham Lincoln who was once the president of the United States. In telling this story, Plato is trying to help Zach understand how to determine what “the right thing to do” is. The story starts with Lincoln as a young boy. One day the young Abe charges a customer too much for something she is buying. When he discovers that he owes her six cents, he walks two miles to give it back to her. Abe also breaks an antler at his school and then promptly admits his bad behavior to the teacher. Zach learns that these are just some of the reasons Lincoln got the nickname “Honest Abe,” and why Lincoln’s face is on our nation’s pennies as a symbol of honesty.

- *How does Abraham Lincoln feel when he accidentally overcharges a customer in the store where he works?*
- *What does he do about how he feels?*
- *Why do you think he admits to the teacher that he broke something?*
- *What does the teacher say about Abraham Lincoln?*

III. Closing Activity

At the close of the discussion about the video, revisit the meaning of *honor* by again asking students what *honor* means. Help them refer to the lessons in the video to understand and explain the concept in their own words. Ask them to give an example of something *honorable* they might have once done.



IV. Classroom Lesson: What Would Abe Do?

Objectives

Students will be able to...

- Explain what acting honorably means
- Identify situations where honesty is the right thing to do
- Learn that being honest, especially when it's difficult, allows a person be seen as honorable

Materials

- Handout – “The Honesty Test for Kids”
- Handout – “Defining Honor”
- Drawing paper for younger students

Procedure

Class Activity - Part 1

Write the quote “Honesty is the best policy” on the board. Then ask the class why they think this is such a common saying. Ask, *What does it really mean?* Do the same with the following quotes:

- Cheaters only end up hurting themselves.
- Truth is the only safe ground to stand on.
- No one can lie if they look directly into someone’s eyes.
- Honest hearts produce honest actions.

Give students an opportunity to share other favorite quotes or stories about honor and honesty, or perhaps use some of your own.

Class Activity - Part 2

Pass out “The Honesty Test for Kids” handout and then read the questions together. Give students time to answer them individually after reading them together, and then discuss each one. Encourage students to explain in their own words why certain answers are examples of honest behavior and why some are not. Ask the children to take the “test” home and discuss their answers with family members.

Class Activity - Part 3

Give the class the handout “Defining Honor.” Tell them to sign their names at the end of the letter. Be sure to insert your name in the introduction. Then ask students to give it to someone who they think might know something about honor. The instructions on the handout ask the person to write one or two sentences about what honor means to them. When students return to class with the completed letters, either allow them to share the results individually or collect and read them aloud. Then ask students to tell what they have learned about what it means to be honest and honorable. Call on those with raised hands (and coax others) to come to the board and write their ideas down (allow for creative spelling and/or pictures for non writers). Have fun trying to cover the board with as many ideas as possible, and point out that if some of the same ideas keep coming up, they must be a very important part of honor.

Lesson Extension

At the beginning of the week, let students know that on Friday you will be discussing ways they may have demonstrated honor during the week. Tell them to notice not only their own actions, but also those of others. On Friday, ask volunteers to tell about something they or someone they know did that that was an example of being honorable.



The Honesty Test for Kids

Instructions: For each of the situations below, check “yes” if you think the child was honest or “no” if you believe the child was not being honest.

1. Jim is a second grader. His teacher tells him to tell his mother that he has acted badly in class by bothering other students. He does not tell his mother because he doesn't want to get in trouble. Was Jim honest?
Yes _____ No _____
2. Tamara is a first grader. Her teacher asks her if she took a pencil that belonged to another student. Tamara admits that she did take the pencil. Was Tamara honest?
Yes _____ No _____
3. Harry is a kindergartener. He wants to use the swing that Susan is on, so he tells Susan that the teacher needs her. When Susan goes to the teacher, she finds that the teacher doesn't want to see her. Was Harry honest?
Yes _____ No _____
4. Mrs. Smith tells her students they will be able to go out for recess early if they behave. They do not behave, so she does not let them go out early for recess. Was Mrs. Smith being honest?
Yes _____ No _____
5. An older student named Bill says he will help Mrs. Smith's class learn a new game. Bill forgets, and when the students ask him what happened, he tells them that he was busy with his homework? Was Bill being honest?
Yes _____ No _____