

Responsibility

Short Lessons

- Write or review class rules and discuss each student's responsibility to abide by these rules.
- Brainstorm ways to demonstrate responsibility for school work. Have each student identify one area of responsibility they will work on.
- Discuss chores assigned at home. What are the consequences of not doing these chores? How many students have pets? Who is responsible for taking care of the pets?
- Discuss what responsibilities students think that parents have toward their children. Do those responsibilities change as children get older?
- Identify the responsibilities students have compared with other persons they live with, such as siblings. Does the baby of the family have the same responsibilities? Why or why not?
- Ask students, "What are the responsibilities you'd like to have as an adult? Why?" Have students write these responsibilities on paper and collect the papers. Ask volunteers to share their ideas.
- Have students choose a person they know, such as a policeman, nurse, teacher, principal, or fast food worker, then write down what they think that person's responsibilities are.
- Have students list at least 5 things they would expect their students to be responsible for if they were the teacher. Write all the ideas on the board and tally which five things got the greatest number of "votes."
- Ask students to identify the advantages of being responsible when they come to school. How do they benefit?
- Discuss with students how they plan to assume responsibility for their lunch cards or lunch money during the school year. (Other examples include coats, books, book bags, and pencils.)
- Talk about who is responsible for doing their laundry and cleaning their rooms. How can they assume responsibility for these tasks? What effect could it have if they take on responsibility for these things?

- **The Clean Desk Fairy**

Help students become responsible for their belongings by having the "Clean Desk Fairy" visit your classroom. At the beginning of the year, explain that, from time to time, the class is visited by the Clean Desk Fairy at night. Tell students the fairy leaves treats for students who keep clean desks. Once or twice a month, check students' desks after school and leave a treat and a sprinkling of glitter on those that are in good order. (Watch out – students will check your desk too!)

- **Don't Stir up Trouble**

Read *Strega Nona* aloud. During discussion, ask volunteers to brainstorm how the story would have been different if Big Anthony listened to Strega Nona's directions not to touch the magic pot. Discuss the importance of following directions and taking responsibility for your actions. Give each child a piece of black construction paper, scissors, and chalk. Have each student cut a cauldron from the paper, and write one direction they always follow. Have students write their

names on the spoons using permanent marker and glue them to their cauldrons. Display the cauldrons on bulletin board entitled *Don't Stir up Trouble – Follow Directions!*

- **Whose Responsibility?**

This is a story about four people” “Everybody,” “Somebody,” “Anybody,” and “Nobody.” There was an important job to be done and Everybody was asked to do it. Everybody was sure Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that because it was Everybody’s job. Everybody thought Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn’t do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when actually Nobody asked Anybody.

- **Essay Question.**

In what ways are you responsible at home, in school and at work? What are your duties in these areas? Provide examples showing how you take responsibility and how you could become more responsible.

- This discussion might be combined with a “shadow a professional for a day” activity. This activity consists of matching each student with a parent, relative or other adult friend who has agreed for the student to observe him/her on the job for a day.

Tell students: Today we are going to talk about having a job and getting promoted rather than fired. Let’s make a list of some of the factors that are important to keeping a job. Solicit examples and record them on the chalkboard. Here are nine important attitudes and values we need to develop in order to be reliable workers. Write the following on the chalkboard.

1. Following directions.
2. Cooperating with co-workers.
3. Being dependable.
4. Taking initiative .
5. Being eager to learn.
6. Being loyal.
7. Being honest.
8. Being receptive to constructive criticism.
9. Being patient; not expecting instant gratification.

Say: *As you can see, to be a good worker you need to do a lot of the things we ask you to do in school. Why are these things important? Besides work and school, where else is it important to practice all this stuff? (At home, with friends... everywhere!)*

- **What are Our Responsibilities?**

Ask: What does it mean to be responsible for something? Solicit comments and discuss. Then say: Being responsible is like being in charge. It means it’s your job to take care of something. Ask: Do any of you have pets? Do you have to do anything to care for your pet? Allow for responses, then tell them: If you say you will wash, feed, or walk your pet, then that chore is your responsibility.

Say: One of the most important things you are responsible for is yourself. You are responsible for what you do. So if you make a mess, guess what? It’s your job – your *responsibility* – to clean it up. It may be tempting to blame someone else, but you are in charge of you and what you do.

We are responsible for other people and things. Have you ever had to watch a younger brother or sister? What about caring for the earth? Solicit comments and affirm that we all have to protect ourselves, others, and our environment.

To reinforce this discussion, have each youngster draw up and sign a “Positive Pledge” emphasizing personal responsibility. Post these on the wall or tell them to post their pledges at home as a reminder to be responsible.

- Read a popular children’s story in which one or more characters demonstrate responsible behavior. Throughout the story, point out instances of responsibility and irresponsibility and discuss these examples.

When the story is finished, have them draw a picture illustrating one of the character’s responsible actions. Below this drawing, tell the students to write a sentence or paragraph describing the responsible action and how they feel about it. Circulate as the students draw and write, offering encouragement, acknowledgment, and assistance as needed. Post the drawings along with a banner which reads, “Characters with Good Character.”

Conclude the activity with discussion questions like these:

- Does responsible action just happen or do we have to think about it and then do it?
 - Is an action responsible if it is sloppy or poorly done? Why or why not?
 - What must we do to let people know we are responsible people?
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- Begin by writing “RESPONSIBILITY” on the chalkboard. Read it with the students and talk about its meaning. Listen to their responses, and then point out that the word itself gives an important clue about its definition. Ask them: Do you see two smaller words here? Discuss the words “response” and “ability,” and help the students recognize that part of responsibility is having the *ability to respond* and take action. Using the input of the students, write an initial definition on the chalkboard. Then look up responsibility in the dictionary and compare definitions. Discuss any differences.