

Sincerity

Character... It starts with me!

MONTHLY EDUCATOR BULLETIN

Vs. Hypocrisy

I WILL:

- I will be all that I can be
- I will take responsibility for my own actions
- I will respect others' opinions
- I will always mean what I say
- I will not take advantage of other people

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Eagerly doing what is right with transparent motives

An often repeated folk etymology proposes that sincere is derived from the Latin *sine* = *without*, and *cera* = *wax*. One of the popular explanations is that dishonest sculptors in Rome or Greece would cover flaws in their work with wax to deceive the viewer; therefore, a sculpture "without wax" would mean a pure work. Whether the story

is true or false it serves as a good explanation for Sincerity.

For someone to act with sincerity means that their walk matches their talk and that both come from the heart. There is a completeness or a wholeness about their attitude and actions. Everything fits together.

To be sincere in our actions means we have



taken the time to develop sincerity in our heart.

This month, practice sincerity by acting outwardly with the integrity you have cultivated inwardly.

Sinceridad vs. Hipocresía
Anhelos de hacer lo correcto con motivaciones transparentes



Go to the Root



The word sincerity comes from the Latin word *sincerus* meaning "sound, pure, whole," perhaps originally "of one growth" i.e. "not hybrid, unmixed". Can you see where being sincere is being an unmixed whole - being same on the outside as you are on the inside?

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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

“What comes from the heart, goes to the heart.”
Samuel Taylor Coleridge

“What's a man's first duty? The answer's brief: To be himself.”
Henrik Ibsen

“He does not believe that does not live according to his belief.”
Sigmund Freud

“As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.”
John F. Kennedy

“Hold faithfulness and sincerity as first principles.”
Confucius,

“Sincerity - if you can fake that, you've got it made.”
George Burns

“When pure sincerity forms within, it is outwardly realized in other people's hearts.”
Lao Tzu

“Be sincere, Be brief, Be seated.”
Franklin D. Roosevelt

“One of the most sincere forms of respect is actually listening to what another has to say.”
Bryant McGill

“Sincerity gives wings to power.”
Latin Proverb

“Whatever you are, be a good one.”
Abraham Lincoln

“One thing you can't hide - is when you're crippled inside.”
John Lennon

“Be content to seem what you are.”
Marcus Aurelius

“It's discouraging to think how many people are shocked by honesty and how few by deceit.”
Noël Coward

“He does not believe that does not live according to his belief.”
Sigmund Freud

“The louder he talked of his honor, the faster we counted our spoons.”
Ralph Waldo Emerson,

“What is uttered from the heart alone, Will win the hearts of others to your own.”
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

“A man can never hope to be more than he is if he is not first honest about what he isn't.”
Don Williams, Jr

“Never regret anything you have done with a sincere affection; nothing is lost that is born of the heart.”
Basil Rathbone.

“Say what you mean and act how you feel, / because those who matter don't mind, / and those who mind don't matter.”
Dr. Seuss

“Smiling away your troubles requires a clear conscience that harbors no insincerity.”
Paramahansa Yogananda

Curriculum Connection



Math

98% of all statistics are made up.
~Author Unknown



When you make a graphical representation of data such as in a graph or bar chart, you need to be careful to make sure the graphics do not misrepresent the reality of the numbers. The same can be true of statistics. Clever, but dishonest, statisticians can present data in such a way to make it seem better or worse than it actually is. Use the sites below to demonstrate the importance of keeping statistics sincere.

<http://www.physics.smu.edu/pseudo/LieStat/>
<http://www.stat.columbia.edu/~gelman/bag-of-tricks/chap10.pdf>
<http://faculty.washington.edu/chudler/stat3.html>

Princess Diana, Model of Sincerity

Diana, Princess of Wales had a compassionate heart for children and that was evident in the charity work in which she was involved.

After attending finishing school in Switzerland, she moved to London where she had several jobs, all involving children. Diana also received recognition for her support of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. Her interest in landmines was focused on the injuries they create, often to children, long after a conflict is over. During her final year Diana lent highly visible support to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, a campaign which won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997, only a few months after her death.

From 1989, she was the

president of the Great Ormond Street Hospital for children, in addition to dozens of other charities. Also in 1989, while she was visiting Harlem Hospital in New York City, she was photographed hugging a 7-year old AIDS patient. She wanted to show that it was safe to touch an AIDS patient, something that was still feared at that time.

The Princess of Wales was a devoted, imaginative and demonstrative mother. She was involved in much of the daily activities of her sons as often as her schedule permitted. She also negotiated her public duties around their timetables.

When her royal duties required her to travel to other countries, she always took time to schedule visits to charitable organizations that ministered to

children or infants. She was most interested in interacting with the children directly rather than executive tours. She often returned to these charities after the cameras left to more fully interact with children.

Diana sincere devotion to her own children and the children of the world came from her heart and her actions reflected that.



For more information visit:
http://articles.latimes.com/1989-02-04/news/mn-1517_1_aids-patient

<http://www.uktravel.com/royal.asp?rID=5>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diana,_Princess_of_Wales

Team-Building Activity

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

What a Deal!

This activity requires a deck of playing cards, even a deck that is missing cards works for this game. Deal out several cards to each student. Go around the room and one by one the students need to play a card by laying it down in front of them and telling something about themselves in one sentence based on the suit of the card as described below.

- Heart – Open up your heart and tell us something you are passionate about
- Diamond – Put on your shades and tell us something brilliant about yourself
- Spade – Dig into your past and tell us a funny story about yourself
- Club – Name a club or team that you belong to or like to follow.

You can choose to have them do all of their cards at once or go around for as many cards as dealt. You can also deal more cards than intended rounds and let them choose which cards to use. For younger students, you may want to base it only on the color and offer just 2 options to discuss. When the game is over, ask if anybody learned something new about a classmate? Did anyone have a similar answer to one of yours? How boring would it have been if we all had the same answers?





Be All That You Can Be

Discuss the Army slogan of “Be All That You Can Be” with the students. Then write out the letters to the word ARMY vertically on the board or you can reproduce it on paper for each student or group of students. Using these letters ask the students to come up with words or phrases that start with these letters that describe someone who is Sincere. Some suggestions: A – authentic, actual, R – real, respectful M – moral, mean what they say, Y – Yours truly. (This almost certainly requires the use of a Thesaurus.)

Another way to do this is to use the A for Always and the R for Rarely and come up with behaviors of sincere and insincere people that would fall into these two categories. When you are done with that, go back to the word ARMY and the letters that are left spell MY so have them choose a behavior from either list – one they recognize in themselves (as MINE.) If it is on the A list they will want to continue it or if it is on the R list they will want to work on eliminating it. It is not necessary for them to share which one they choose.

Remember to close the exercise with a reflection back to the definition of the word and explain that being sincere is being the same on the inside as we are on the outside.

What’s in Your Wallet?



You will recognize this phrase from the Citibank Vikings commercials. Begin the exercise by telling this story: A long time ago (before cell phones), a rich and famous man took a trip in his car. He had traveled far and was thinking about other things and didn’t pay attention to his gas tank. He ran out of gas. Since it was very late, he decided to walk back to a hotel he had recently passed. When he went in to get a room, he realized he had forgotten his wallet. He tried to convince the hotel clerk that he was rich and that one of his assistants would bring his wallet to him in the morning. The clerk didn’t believe him and sent him on his way. The rich man walked back to his car and spent the night there. In the morning, he went back to the hotel and used the phone to call someone from his office to bring his wallet. The point? It doesn’t matter how much money you have if you can’t get to it. Same goes for skills and talents. The human brain is capable of so much more than what the average human uses it for. If you don’t spend time to recognize and develop skills and talents, you will not have them to use when you need them. For this exercise, give the students each a piece of paper with the outline of a wallet drawn on it. They are to write down a skill or a talent that they have and would like to increase or one that they would like to develop. They will also need to write down a few things they would need to do in order to develop that talent. Sometimes we hold dreams or wishes inside and not act on them. This exercise will help to turn some of those into goals on the outside.

Write Your Own Jingle – There are a lot of TV Commercials with jingles and slogans that can be used to describe Sincerity. Let the students suggest slogans all month long. Find a place in the room where they can be posted. Here are a few examples: Got Sincerity? (Got milk?) Pardon me, Do You have any Sincerity? (Grey Poupon). Choosy mothers choose Sincerity (Jif).

Sincere Compliments

Start this activity by creating a list of all of the students in the class. Make a copy for each student. Make sure that there is room next to each name for the students to write compliments to each other. Before you pass out the sheets, spend some time talking about what a sincere compliment is. (always willing to help other students) Also explain what an insincere compliment is. (nice shoes) Brainstorm ideas so they get the idea of what they are to write. When they are done writing, collect the pages and police them to make sure that positive things were written. If the class is large, you may want to divide the list in 2 and half the class gets one list and the other half gets the other list. Cut apart the compliments and place all of the compliments for a single student in an envelope with their name on it. If time allows, you can have them glue the strips onto a single sheet to create a keepsake.

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O What A Tangled Web We Weave

Have a student volunteer to sit in a chair facing the class. Using the I wills, prompt the class to come up with examples that are the opposite of the I wills. For each example that they give, wind a strand of yarn around the student and the chair. Explain that when we are being deceptive and not sincere, it is like getting tangled in a web. When you are not acting sincere, you have to remember what you have said or done because it wasn't being your true self. Remove the web of yard from the student and discuss how when we act according to our true self, we feel free.

The Orange

This exercise can be done one of several ways. You can start with a discussion of what you expect from certain people based on the behavior that you have witnessed already. Use an orange to demonstrate this expectation. You can place a small slice in the orange and then squeeze the orange juice from the orange into a glass. When you see an orange you expect to get orange juice from it. If you want to get really tricky you can use a needle-like turkey baster to inject food dye into the orange. Injecting via the navel of the orange is the best way to disguise the injection site. When you squeeze this prepared orange, it won't look like orange juice. This will demonstrate insincerity - being different on the inside than how we act on the outside.



The Tree

Describe a tree that branches up into 2 main branches - one that resembles a “Y”. Discuss how this type of branching weakens a tree so that each of these halves is not as strong as the single trunk below. The split may not seem like a problem but trees like these are vulnerable when there is a storm. Sometimes one or both branches can be broken off. Our lives are like this type of tree if we are not unified within ourselves. Our actions may follow two different branches or paths. People who know inside that they should do one thing, but do another, are split. People who cannot decide if they will choose the right or the wrong are split. When the storm comes, such as a family crisis or a natural disaster, trees that are split are in danger of not being able to withstand the storm. Explain that the way we stay unified is to practice by making good decisions to do the right thing.

After telling this story, divide the students into small groups. Give each group several sheets of paper on which has been drawn a tree that resembles the “Y”. Instruct them to turn the paper sideways so that they can write on the trunk and on the branches. Have them come up with examples of scenarios that require a decision such as “stuck on a problem on a test”. Then in the branches they are to write a good decision (keep working and come back to that question) and a bad decision (cheat from a neighbor’s test) for that scenario. When each group has filled several trees, have the groups share their examples. You may want to post a few of these around the classroom.



Two True Stories of Acting with Sincerity

STORY NUMBER ONE

Many years ago, Al Capone virtually owned Chicago. Capone wasn't famous for anything heroic. He was notorious for promoting all types of crime in the city. Capone had a lawyer nicknamed "Easy Eddie." He was his lawyer for a good reason. Eddie was very good! In fact, Eddie's skill at legal maneuvering kept Big Al out of jail for a long time. To show his appreciation, Capone paid him very well. Not only was the money big, but also, Eddie got special dividends. For instance, he and his family occupied a fenced-in mansion with live-in help and all of the conveniences of the day. The estate was so large that it filled an entire Chicago City block.

Eddie lived the high life of the Chicago mob and gave little consideration to the atrocity that went on around him. Eddie did have one soft spot, however. He had a son that he loved dearly. Eddie saw to it that his young son had clothes, cars, and a good education. Nothing was withheld. Price was no object. And, despite his involvement with organized crime, Eddie even tried to teach him right from wrong. Eddie wanted his son to be a better man than he was. Yet, with all his wealth and influence, there were two things he couldn't give his son; he couldn't pass on a good name or a good example. One day, Easy Eddie reached a difficult decision. Easy Eddie wanted to rectify wrongs he had done. He decided he would go to the authorities and tell the truth about Al "Scarface" Capone, clean up his tarnished name, and offer his son some semblance of integrity. To do this, he would have to testify against The Mob, and he knew that the cost would be great.

So, he testified. Within the year, Easy Eddie's life ended in a blaze of gunfire on a lonely Chicago Street. But in his eyes, he had given his son the greatest gift he had to offer, at the greatest price he would ever pay.

STORY NUMBER TWO

World War II produced many heroes. One such man was Lieutenant Commander Butch O'Hare. He was a fighter pilot assigned to the aircraft carrier Lexington in the South Pacific. One day his entire squadron was sent on a mission. After he was airborne, he looked at his fuel gauge and realized that someone had forgotten to top off his fuel tank.

He would not have enough fuel to complete his mission and get back to his ship. His flight leader told him to return to the carrier. Reluctantly, he dropped out of formation and headed back to the fleet. As he was returning to the mother ship he saw something that turned his blood cold: a squadron of Japanese aircraft were speeding their way toward the American fleet. The American fighters were gone on a sortie, and the fleet was all but defenseless. He couldn't reach his squadron and bring them back in time to save the fleet. Nor could he warn the fleet of the approaching danger.

There was only one thing to do. He must somehow divert them from the fleet. Laying aside all thoughts of personal safety, he dove into the formation of Japanese planes. Wing-mounted 50 caliber's blazed as he charged in, attacking one surprised enemy plane and then another. Butch wove in and out of the now broken formation and fired at as many planes as possible until all his ammunition was finally spent. Undaunted, he continued the assault. He dove at the planes, trying to clip a wing or tail in hopes of damaging as many enemy planes as possible and rendering them unfit to fly. Finally, the exasperated Japanese squadron took off in another direction.

Deeply relieved, Butch O'Hare and his tattered fighter limped back to the carrier. Upon arrival, he reported in and related the event surrounding his return. The film from the gun-camera mounted on his plane told the tale. It showed the extent of Butch's daring attempt to protect his fleet.

He had, in fact, destroyed five enemy aircraft. This took place on February 20, 1942, and for that action Butch became the Navy's first Ace of W.W.II, and the first Naval Aviator to win the Congressional Medal of Honor. A year later Butch was killed in aerial combat at the age of 29.

His home town would not allow the memory of this WW II hero to fade, and today, O'Hare Airport in Chicago is named in tribute to the courage of this great man. So, the next time you find yourself at O'Hare International, give some thought to visiting Butch's memorial displaying his statue and his Medal of Honor. It's located between Terminals 1 and 2.

SO WHAT DO THESE TWO STORIES HAVE TO DO WITH EACH OTHER?

Butch O'Hare was "Easy Eddie's" son.

From: <http://www.sugardoodle.net/Integrity/Two%20true%20stories%20of%20integrity%20and%20shtml>

For the Family

We are studying the character quality of **Sincerity**: Eagerly doing what is right with transparent motives

To practice Sincerity I will:

- I will be all that I can be
- I will take responsibility for my own actions
- I will respect others' opinions
- I will always mean what I say
- I will not take advantage of other people



Family Activity:

A Smashing Good Time



Place a nice empty tea cup and saucer or any piece of china that looks valuable on the table where all can see. (These can be picked up rather inexpensively at a resale or thrift shop.) Start this activity with a discussion of what it means to take advantage of someone else. Encourage all of the family members to come up with examples. Place the china in a sturdy paper bag and smash the china with hammer. When you open the bag, show the broken china to everyone (being careful that no one gets cut). For each of the previous examples given, look at it through the eyes of the person being taken advantage of. Talk about the damage that can do to a relationship and the hurt it can cause. Just like you wouldn't want to break a beautiful piece of china, you don't want to hurt others by being insincere in our relationships.

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

Spoiler Alert! I am going to give away the ending of a movie on the American Film Institute's "100 Years...100 Movies" List. Number 31, *The Maltese Falcon*, is a detective story about murder and loyalty (or DISloyalty) to one's friends. Some of the greatest actors of Hollywood's Golden Age – Humphrey Bogart, Mary Astor, Peter Lorre, Sydney Greenstreet – chew up the scenery as they chase a ceramic bird statue (the Falcon of the title) reputed to be worth millions in gold and jewels. Here's the Spoiler: after at least 3 murders and multiple betrayals, the group discovers that the statue is nothing but metal and enamel, basically worthless. When Bogart is asked what the black bird is, he says, "[T]he stuff that dreams are made of."

Croskey's Corner

When I first saw this film, I was strongly impacted by the futility of people willing to cheat and kill for what turned out to be a statue of no value. It reminded me of an estate sale I attended. My grandmother had died, and the contents of her house were being sold. At the auction, several relatives got into a "bidding war" over a red ceramic statue of a bird. In my opinion, it was kind of gaudy. Not to my taste as a young adult. However, the loser in the bidding began calling the highest bidder all kinds of names. These people were siblings! The argument deteriorated into accusations as to who loved my grandmother more and who was just trying to steal her money. I was sickened by the pursuit of our family's "black bird." Relatives were saying and doing insincere and hypocritical things in order to beat someone else out of a piece of junk. They say that Death brings out the best in us...or not.

At this time in my life, I knew everything. Or thought I did. I had seen an interview with the investigative journalist, Jessica Mitford. She was promoting her book, *The American Way of Death*. It was an exposé of the funeral business and argued that the deceased's family was at the mercy of unscrupulous people who were willing to charge exorbitant prices and to "guilt" the family into buying unneeded products and services. In my self-righteous fervor, I began to look at funerals with a hypercritical eye. My grandmother's funeral and aftermath convinced me that funerals were a waste of time and lacked Sincerity. I was going to campaign to eradicate barbaric practices, and to point out the hypocrisy of mourners. My target would be people like my relatives who were not able to express their love for family during someone's lifetime, but were willing to come to blows over objects owned by the deceased. They could not face the truth of their grieving over their loss. In my inexperience, I had come to believe that funerals were for the sake of the one who had died. I did not understand that funerals did as much, or more, for the surviving family and friends, offering them the comfort of ritual, closure, and family time to share memories and reflections. But, I eventually learned.

The Character Quality for this month, Sincerity, is defined as "Eagerness to do what is right, with transparent motives." One of the "I will -" statements is "To Always mean what I say." And the opposite of Sincerity is Hypocrisy. So, we are encouraged to have transparent motives and not to be hypocritical in our words. My funeral experience showed me both insincere motives and hypocritical talk. But, as I have come to appreciate the value of funerals for those who are living, I have also come to look for the ways to BE Sincere rather than pointing so much to the times when we are hypocritical.

It strikes me that there are two aspects which determine whether one follows the path to Sincerity or veers off to Hypocrisy. One relates to the DOING what is right; in other words, our actions. The other is MOTIVES, how transparent are we in showing why we are doing what we are doing. What we do is observable, but seeing through to our motives involves a fair amount of judgment on the part of our audience. (And, as far as that goes, a significant amount of introspection on our own parts.) But transparency is likely the secret to Sincerity.

And what is tricky for educators is that we are constantly observing our students' actions and judging both those acts and the presumed motives behind those acts. Students may be very poor at making their actions transparent. So, we guess. Sometimes, we guess wrong. And we determine they are "insincere." Say a student acts out in class, calling attention to himself and making life miserable for the teacher. The motives often attributed to him are laziness, or lack of caring about his education. Or worse, we educators decide he is a "punk." Arrested; charged; tried; and convicted.

How Sincere was this student? His actions were obvious, transparent. But his motives were not. Maybe that attention-seeking is a result of his parents divorcing. Maybe he is using school to get their attention to shift back to him. Maybe he thinks (or feels) that he can get his parents to pay attention to him if he is disruptive at school? Acceptable? No. But understandable. And, it takes a different kind of intervention to correct.

The same series of misunderstandings can happen with staff members. Teachers can blow up at students over incidents which would have been ignored or dealt with quietly the previous day. Motive? Maybe the teacher had just been diagnosed with a life-threatening disorder. He did not blame his students for the sickness, but he took it out on them. Acceptable? No. But, again, understandable.

Assuming we know the non-transparent motives of another is a dreadful mistake; that is, we presume to assume! Instead, we would do well to not presuppose we know another's motives. It takes listening, observing, and asking to learn those motives. If we presume or assume anything, maybe we could presume innocence of selfish motives, until we know otherwise. That may create an atmosphere where the student – or colleague – feels safe enough to allow such motives to be seen, transparently.

Bill Croskey is a retired school psychologist from the Loveland City Schools.

Robin's Reading List



Pre. - Grade 3:

The Boy Who Cried Wolf:

A Tale of Sincerity by

Mary Rowitz

A boy tending sheep on a lonely mountainside thinks it a fine joke to cry "wolf" and watch the people come running--and then one day a wolf is really there, but no one answers his call. This book focuses on the meaning of sincerity.

The Lost Sea Cat by

Phoenix Chiu

The Lost Sea Cat is a children's picture book with a strong positive message about the importance of family love. The story follows a young prince of the sea cat kingdom, who braves great distance and many hardships to find and rescue his younger sister. In the process he befriends a young girl who helps him on his quest for a heartwarming reunion. The warm and gentle bring the beautiful sea cats to life, in this wonderful storybook adventure especially recommended for young cat lovers.

*Robin Castetter is a
Retired Elementary Teacher
Loveland City Schools*

No Talking by Andrew Clements

The fifth grade boys and girls at Laketon elementary bicker all the time. The kids are so loud and disorderly that the principal has to constantly break out her red bullhorn to quiet them down. One day, Dave, a kid who just might have the loudest mouth of them all, comes up with an idea. Inspired by Ghandi, Dave tries to keep quiet for an entire day. However, when blabbermouth Lynsey won't stop jabbering at lunch, Dave breaks his silence and insults her. This sparks a contest - which team can say the fewest words during two entire day...the boys, or the girls?

Soccer Halfback by Matt Christopher

Eighth grader Jabber Morris wants nothing more than to play soccer. But his late father was a famous football player, and no one in Jabber's family can imagine him playing anything but football. They put pressure on him to "do the right thing" and change sports. In addition to this stress, his brother Pete suspects that Jabber stole

his wallet. How can Jabber prove his innocence to Pete and convince his family once and for all that he is a soccer player? This wholesome story will not disappoint young soccer fans who like a play-by-play description of the game. There are good lessons about staying true to who you are, and working to overcome your fears.

Grades 4 - 8:

Prairie Evers by Ellen Airgood

Ten-year-old Prairie Evers is not a fan of her new school. Having always been homeschooled by her granny, she has learned all she needs to know through the nature all around her. In fact, school makes Prairie feel just as cooped up as her beloved chickens at home. Things begin to look up when she makes her first friend ever---a girl named Ivy. But Prairie soon learns that friendship has its share of ups and downs. When she learns that Ivy's home life is less than ideal, Prairie sets out to help Ivy, determined to make things right.

Robin's Reading List



The Underneath by Kathi Appelt

This is the story of an old hound, who has been chained up outside of his hateful owner's shack deep in the woods. He befriends a mama cat and her kittens, and offers them haven under his porch. They will be safe there as long as they don't venture out from The Underneath, because the man, Gar Face, will use them for alligator bait if they do. Kittens are notoriously curious though, and when one of the kittens ventures out one day, a frightening and remarkable chain of events are set into motion.

Al Capone Does My Shirts by Gennifer Choldenko

This book is set during the Depression, is about a boy named Moos whose family moves to Alcatraz Island, where his father works. It is a coming of age book which chronicles Moose's struggles to fit into his

new environment, the pain of having an autistic sibling, and typical twelve-year-old angst. Readers will relate to Moose and his love of baseball and universal themes of peer pressure and fitting in. This award winning book captures the struggles of early teen years that are timeless.

Matched by Ally Condie

In the Society, the Officials decide everything for you. They decided the job you will have, where you will live, who you will marry, and when you will die. It all works out to be a perfectly lovely life, and seventeen-year-old Cassia has always trusted the choices that have been made for her. When it is her turn to be matched with her future husband, she sees her best friend Xander's face flash on her screen, and she knows her marriage will be happy and comfortable. But for the briefest instant, another face that she knows flashes on the screen, too. How could the Officials make such a mistake? What could it mean? Now Cassia is torn between Xander, the boy she knows will always love

her, and Ky, the boy she can't stop thinking and wondering about. She will have to choose either the perfect life, or the love of her life---and it will take all of the strength and courage she has to consider a path that nobody in the Society has ever taken before.

Grades 9 - 12:

Just a Little Sincerity by Tracie Puckett

Plans for the Oakland Fall Ball are officially underway, and it's up to seventeen-year-old Julie Little to pull off a night her classmates will never forget. But with the recent tragedies that have torn through her life, Julie can't stay focused on the task at hand. With the added stress of the dance, family, and fragile friendships, she continues to struggle with the pain that comes with love and loss. And with the fate of her love life hanging in the balance, a close friend finally lays it all on the line; Julie will never be happy... until she finally lets Luke go...

Professing Sincerity: Modern Lyric Poetry, Commercial Culture, and

Robin's Reading List

the Crisis in Reading by Susan B. Rosenbaum
Sincerity—the claim that the voice, figure, and experience of a first-person speaker is that of the author—has dominated both the reading and the writing of Anglo-American poetry since the romantic era. Most critical studies have upheld an opposition between sincerity and the literary marketplace, contributing to the widespread understanding of the lyric poem as a moral refuge from the taint of commercial culture. Guided by the question of why we expect poetry to be sincere, Susan Rosenbaum reveals in *Professing Sincerity: Modern Lyric Poetry, Commercial Culture, and the Crisis in Reading* that, in fact, sincerity in the modern lyric was in many ways a product of commercial culture. As she demonstrates, poets who made a living from their writing both sold the moral promise that their lyrics were sincere and commented on this conflict in their work.

Perfect Escape by

Jennifer Brown
Seventeen-year-old Kendra has always lived in the shadow of her older brother, Grayson, who has severe OCD. His disorder forces him to lead a very carefully scripted life, and the only way Kendra knows to stand out in her family is to be perfect. And she is perfect at being perfect, until a cheating scandal at school threatens her academic present and future. On a lark, with her brother asleep in the car next to her, Kendra decides to leave all her problems behind and just drive. Maybe distance will help her figure things out. The siblings are suddenly on a road trip, complete with bad hotels, gas-station food, flat tires and crazy roadside attractions. An old friend upon whom Kendra has pinned all of her hopes lets her down, finally forcing Kendra to look inward to find the strength to solve her problems on her own. Somewhere along the way, though, Kendra will need to stop running and finally come to terms with herself.

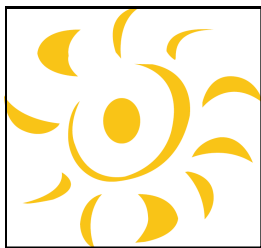
Staying Fat for Sarah

Byrnes by Chris Crutcher

Misery loves company and fellow social outcasts Eric and Sarah have a friendship deeply rooted in such. Eric's obesity and Sarah's disfiguring scars have made them targets of vicious and cruel bullies for years. Eric is at a loss as Sarah, notorious for her toughness and her biting tongue, sits in a psychiatric hospital, completely unable or unwilling to speak. Desperate to help the most important friend in his life, Eric searches for answers that will pull her up from the depths of despair. Chronic and extreme child abuse is at the heart of this story, and horrific instances are detailed. Serious issues such as abortion, suicide, religion, and moral beliefs are



debated and discussed in a high school class. Language is graphic and frequent. The depths to which one will go to remain loyal to a friend would make excellent discussion material.



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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.