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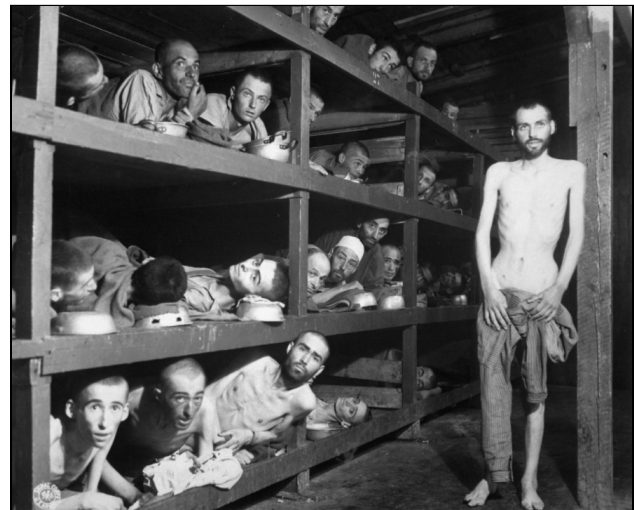
Elie Wiesel's "The Perils of Indifference" Speech

By Elie Wiesel
1999

Eliezer "Elie" Wiesel (1928-2016) was a Romanian-born, Jewish American writer, Nobel Laureate, political activist, and Holocaust survivor. On April 12, 1999, First Lady Hillary Clinton invited Wiesel to speak at the White House to reflect on the past century. While introducing Wiesel, Hillary Clinton discussed the parallels of Wiesel's experiences during the Holocaust and the events in Kosovo, which was experiencing ethnic cleansing at the time. In this speech, Wiesel discusses the consequences of indifference in the face of human suffering and his hopes for the future. As you read, identify the events that shaped Wiesel's perspective on indifference and suffering.

[1] Mr. President, Mrs. Clinton, members of Congress, Ambassador Holbrooke, Excellencies, friends:

Fifty-four years ago to the day, a young Jewish boy from a small town in the Carpathian Mountains woke up, not far from Goethe's beloved Weimar,¹ in a place of eternal infamy² called Buchenwald.³ He was finally free, but there was no joy in his heart. He thought there never would be again. Liberated a day earlier by American soldiers, he remembers their rage at what they saw. And even if he lives to be a very old man, he will always be grateful to them for that rage, and also for their compassion. Though he did not understand their language, their eyes told him what he needed to know — that they, too, would remember, and bear witness.



["Buchenwald concentration camp"](#) by Private H. Miller is in the public domain.

And now, I stand before you, Mr. President — Commander-in-Chief of the army that freed me, and tens of thousands of others — and I am filled with a profound and abiding gratitude to the American people. "Gratitude" is a word that I cherish. Gratitude is what defines the humanity of the human being. And I am grateful to you, Hillary, or Mrs. Clinton, for what you said, and for what you are doing for children in the world, for the homeless, for the victims of injustice, the victims of destiny and society. And I thank all of you for being here.

1. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe was a German writer and politician who lived in Weimar, Germany.
2. **Infamy (noun):** the state of being well known for some bad quality or act
3. a German Nazi concentration camp

We are on the threshold of a new century, a new millennium. What will the legacy of this vanishing century be? How will it be remembered in the new millennium? Surely it will be judged, and judged severely, in both moral and metaphysical⁴ terms. These failures have cast a dark shadow over humanity: two World Wars, countless civil wars, the senseless chain of assassinations (Gandhi, the Kennedys, Martin Luther King, Sadat, Rabin), bloodbaths in Cambodia and Algeria, India and Pakistan, Ireland and Rwanda, Eritrea and Ethiopia, Sarajevo and Kosovo; the inhumanity in the Gulag and the tragedy of Hiroshima. And, on a different level, of course, Auschwitz⁵ and Treblinka. So much violence; so much indifference.

- [5] What is indifference? Etymologically,⁶ the word means “no difference.” A strange and unnatural state in which the lines blur between light and darkness, dusk and dawn, crime and punishment, cruelty and compassion, good and evil. What are its courses and inescapable consequences? Is it a philosophy? Is there a philosophy of indifference conceivable? Can one possibly view indifference as a virtue? Is it necessary at times to practice it simply to keep one’s sanity, live normally, enjoy a fine meal and a glass of wine, as the world around us experiences harrowing⁷ upheavals?

Of course, indifference can be tempting more than that, seductive. It is so much easier to look away from victims. It is so much easier to avoid such rude interruptions to our work, our dreams, our hopes. It is, after all, awkward, troublesome, to be involved in another person’s pain and despair. Yet, for the person who is indifferent, his or her neighbor are of no consequence. And, therefore, their lives are meaningless. Their hidden or even visible anguish⁸ is of no interest. Indifference reduces the Other to an abstraction.

Over there, behind the black gates of Auschwitz, the most tragic of all prisoners were the “Muselmänner,”⁹ as they were called. Wrapped in their torn blankets, they would sit or lie on the ground, staring vacantly into space, unaware of who or where they were — strangers to their surroundings. They no longer felt pain, hunger, thirst. They feared nothing. They felt nothing. They were dead and did not know it.

Rooted in our tradition, some of us felt that to be abandoned by humanity then was not the ultimate. We felt that to be abandoned by God was worse than to be punished by Him. Better an unjust God than an indifferent one. For us to be ignored by God was a harsher punishment than to be a victim of His anger. Man can live far from God — not outside God. God is wherever we are. Even in suffering? Even in suffering.

In a way, to be indifferent to that suffering is what makes the human being inhuman. Indifference, after all, is more dangerous than anger and hatred. Anger can at times be creative. One writes a great poem, a great symphony. One does something special for the sake of humanity because one is angry at the injustice that one witnesses. But indifference is never creative. Even hatred at times may elicit¹⁰ a response. You fight it. You denounce it. You disarm it.

4. “Metaphysical” refers to abstract thought or subjects.
5. a network of German Nazi concentration camps
6. the study of the history of words, their origins, and how their form and meaning have changed over time
7. **Harrowing (adjective):** extremely distressing or difficult
8. **Anguish (noun):** severe emotional or physical pain
9. a German term used by concentration camp prisoners to refer to inmates who were on the verge of death
10. **Elicit (verb):** to draw or bring out

- [10] Indifference elicits no response. Indifference is not a response. Indifference is not a beginning; it is an end. And, therefore, indifference is always the friend of the enemy, for it benefits the aggressor — never his victim, whose pain is magnified when he or she feels forgotten. The political prisoner in his cell, the hungry children, the homeless refugees — not to respond to their plight, not to relieve their solitude by offering them a spark of hope is to exile them from human memory. And in denying their humanity, we betray our own.

Indifference, then, is not only a sin, it is a punishment.

And this is one of the most important lessons of this outgoing century's wide-ranging experiments in good and evil.

In the place that I come from, society was composed of three simple categories: the killers, the victims, and the bystanders. During the darkest of times, inside the ghettos¹¹ and death camps — and I'm glad that Mrs. Clinton mentioned that we are now commemorating¹² that event, that period, that we are now in the Days of Remembrance — but then, we felt abandoned, forgotten. All of us did.

And our only miserable consolation was that we believed that Auschwitz and Treblinka¹³ were closely guarded secrets; that the leaders of the free world did not know what was going on behind those black gates and barbed wire; that they had no knowledge of the war against the Jews that Hitler's armies and their accomplices waged as part of the war against the Allies. If they knew, we thought, surely those leaders would have moved heaven and earth to intervene. They would have spoken out with great outrage and conviction. They would have bombed the railways leading to Birkenau,¹⁴ just the railways, just once.

- [15] And now we knew, we learned, we discovered that the Pentagon knew, the State Department knew. And the illustrious¹⁵ occupant of the White House then, who was a great leader — and I say it with some anguish and pain, because, today is exactly 54 years marking his death — Franklin Delano Roosevelt died on April the 12th, 1945. So he is very much present to me and to us. No doubt, he was a great leader. He mobilized the American people and the world, going into battle, bringing hundreds and thousands of valiant and brave soldiers in America to fight fascism,¹⁶ to fight dictatorship, to fight Hitler. And so many of the young people fell in battle. And, nevertheless, his image in Jewish history — I must say it — his image in Jewish history is flawed.

11. "Ghettos" were areas of a city where Jews were previously required to live.

12. **Commemorate (verb):** to recall and show respect for someone or something in a ceremony

13. an extermination camp built by Nazi Germany

14. Birkenau, also known as Auschwitz II, was a combination of an extermination camp and a concentration camp.

15. **Illustrious (adjective):** well known, respected, and admired for past achievements

16. a political system headed by a dictator in which the government controls business and labor, and opposition is not permitted

The depressing tale of the St. Louis is a case in point. Sixty years ago, its human cargo — nearly 1,000 Jews — was turned back to Nazi Germany. And that happened after the Kristallnacht¹⁷, after the first state sponsored pogrom,¹⁸ with hundreds of Jewish shops destroyed, synagogues burned, thousands of people put in concentration camps. And that ship, which was already in the shores of the United States, was sent back. I don't understand. Roosevelt was a good man, with a heart. He understood those who needed help. Why didn't he allow these refugees to disembark? A thousand people — in America, the great country, the greatest democracy, the most generous of all new nations in modern history. What happened? I don't understand. Why the indifference, on the highest level, to the suffering of the victims?

But then, there were human beings who were sensitive to our tragedy. Those non-Jews, those Christians, that we call the "Righteous Gentiles,"¹⁹ whose selfless acts of heroism saved the honor of their faith. Why were they so few? Why was there a greater effort to save SS²⁰ murderers after the war than to save their victims during the war? Why did some of America's largest corporations continue to do business with Hitler's Germany until 1942? It has been suggested, and it was documented, that the Wehrmacht²¹ could not have conducted its invasion of France without oil obtained from American sources. How is one to explain their indifference?

And yet, my friends, good things have also happened in this traumatic century: the defeat of Nazism, the collapse of communism, the rebirth of Israel on its ancestral soil, the demise of apartheid,²² Israel's peace treaty with Egypt, the peace accord in Ireland. And let us remember the meeting, filled with drama and emotion, between Rabin and Arafat²³ that you, Mr. President, convened in this very place. I was here and I will never forget it.

And then, of course, the joint decision of the United States and NATO²⁴ to intervene in Kosovo²⁵ and save those victims, those refugees, those who were uprooted by a man, whom I believe that because of his crimes, should be charged with crimes against humanity.

[20] But this time, the world was not silent. This time, we do respond. This time, we intervene.

Does it mean that we have learned from the past? Does it mean that society has changed? Has the human being become less indifferent and more human? Have we really learned from our experiences? Are we less insensitive to the plight of victims of ethnic cleansing and other forms of injustices in places near and far? Is today's justified intervention in Kosovo, led by you, Mr. President, a lasting warning that never again will the deportation, the terrorization of children and their parents, be allowed anywhere in the world? Will it discourage other dictators in other lands to do the same?

17. Kristallnacht, also known as the Night of Broken Glass, took place on November 9-10, 1938. Conducted by Nazi paramilitary members and German citizens, Kristallnacht resulted in the destruction of numerous Jewish-owned businesses, buildings, and synagogues, as well as many deaths.

18. A "pogrom" is an organized massacre of a particular ethnic group.

19. non-Jewish people who risked their lives to save Jewish people from the Nazi Party

20. The SS, also known as the Schutzstaffel was a semi-militarized organization that was controlled by Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party.

21. the armed forces of Nazi Germany from 1935 to 1946

22. "Apartheid" was the system of racial segregation and discrimination in South Africa.

23. referring to the first face-to-face agreement between the government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization

24. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is an intergovernmental military alliance, in which member states agree to a mutual defense in response to an attack by an external party.

25. referring to the Kosovo War (during which ethnic groups were targeted for their ethnicity) that was ended by the military intervention of NATO

What about the children? Oh, we see them on television, we read about them in the papers, and we do so with a broken heart. Their fate is always the most tragic, inevitably. When adults wage war, children perish. We see their faces, their eyes. Do we hear their pleas? Do we feel their pain, their agony? Every minute one of them dies of disease, violence, famine.

Some of them — so many of them — could be saved.

And so, once again, I think of the young Jewish boy from the Carpathian Mountains. He has accompanied the old man I have become throughout these years of quest and struggle. And together we walk towards the new millennium, carried by profound fear and extraordinary hope.

"The Perils of Indifference" by Elie Wiesel. Copyright © The Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which statement best identifies the central idea of the text? [RI.2]
 - A. The twentieth century witnessed numerous tragedies, outweighing the few instances of peace and eclipsing any hope for future change.
 - B. During World War II, the U.S. was the driving force behind freeing victims of the Holocaust and promoting peace.
 - C. The Holocaust could have been prevented if the world had the means to identify the warning signs of ethnic cleansing.
 - D. The Holocaust exemplifies the consequences of how apathy towards human suffering can cause tragedy.

2. PART B: Which passage from the text best supports the answer to Part A? [RI.1]
 - A. "Liberated a day earlier by American soldiers, he remembers their rage at what they saw... he will always be grateful to them for that rage, and also for their compassion." (Paragraph 2)
 - B. "These failures have cast a dark shadow over humanity: two World Wars, countless civil wars, the senseless chain of assassinations... So much violence; so much indifference." (Paragraph 4)
 - C. "During the darkest of times, inside the ghettos and death camps... we felt abandoned, forgotten." (Paragraph 13)
 - D. "Have we really learned from our experiences? Are we less insensitive to the plight of victims of ethnic cleansing and other forms of injustices in places near and far?" (Paragraph 21)

3. PART A: What is the meaning of "plight" in paragraph 10? [RI.4]
 - A. anguish
 - B. problem
 - C. loneliness
 - D. situation

4. PART B: Which quote from paragraph 10 best supports the answer to Part A? [RI.1]
 - A. "Indifference is not a beginning; it is an end."
 - B. "the friend of the enemy, for it benefits the aggressor"
 - C. "whose pain is magnified when he or she feels forgotten"
 - D. "by offering them a spark of hope"

5. PART A: Why does Elie Wiesel believe indifference is the most dangerous emotion? [RI.3]
 - A. because it creates prejudice and hatred
 - B. because it allows suffering to continue
 - C. because it is the root of all violence
 - D. because it cannot be completely destroyed

6. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A? [RI.1]
- A. "A strange and unnatural state in which the lines blur between light and darkness" (Paragraph 5)
 - B. "It is so much easier to look away from victims... Their hidden or even visible anguish is of no interest." (Paragraph 6)
 - C. "For us to be ignored by God was a harsher punishment than to be a victim of His anger." (Paragraph 8)
 - D. "Even hatred at times may elicit a response. You fight it. You denounce it. You disarm it." (Paragraph 9)

7. How do paragraphs 15-16 contribute to the development of the text's central idea? [RI.5]

Discussion Questions

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. In your opinion, why didn't the United States intervene once it became aware of the Nazi concentration camps? Can you think of other conflicts that the United States has acted indifferently towards?
2. In the context of the text, what can we learn from tragedy? What does Elie Wiesel believe we can take away from the numerous tragedies that have occurred throughout the century? How can this knowledge impact the future? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.
3. In the context of the text, what is good and how do we know? How does Elie Wiesel determine what is right and how people should act in the speech? Do you think his beliefs apply specifically to war, or can they be applied more generally? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.
4. In the context of the text, what are the effects of following the crowd? How were the actions of the Nazi Party, as well as the indifference that the United States showed Jews, examples of following the crowd? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.

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Nice Kids Finish First: Study Finds Social Skills Can Predict Future Success

By Audie Cornish
2015

The following interview is a production of All Things Considered, a long-standing radio news show aired daily on National Public Radio (NPR). The interview discusses a recent study's findings that children who demonstrate more 'pro-social' skills – those who share more and who are better listeners – are more likely to have jobs and stay out of trouble as young adults. As you read this interview, take notes on the study's findings and what they reveal about early childhood development and the connection to adulthood.

[1] **AUDIE CORNISH, HOST:** Put yourself, for a moment, with a bunch of kindergartners. Then try and predict which one of them might finish college and get a good job two decades down the road. Is it the kid who knows her ABCs or the kid who has a good memory? Well, new research has tracked children from kindergarten into young adulthood, and it's found that the most important predictors of long-term success are not intellectual skills but social and emotional ones. NPR's social science correspondent, Shankar Vedantam, joins us now to explain. Welcome back.



"Group of five happy children jumping outdoors" by Lightruth is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0.

SHANKAR VEDANTAM: Hi, Audie.

CORNISH: So let's talk about social and emotional skills and frankly, how you figure out what those look like in a kindergartener.

VEDANTAM: Yeah. You know, social and emotional skills are not the first thing that spring to mind when you're talking about kindergartners, but even at an early age, Audie, when you walk into a kindergarten classroom, you can pick up how children are interacting with one another and how they're interacting with their teacher. So in this study – it was published earlier today in the American Journal of Public Health – researchers tracked several hundred children in Durham, N.C., Seattle, Nashville and rural Pennsylvania. And kindergarten teachers rated the children on a set of skills that are sometimes called pro-social skills. Damon Jones at Penn State University is one of the researchers. I asked him to describe what kind of skills the teachers were measuring.

[5] **DAMON JONES:** Does the child share materials? Do they resolve peer problems? Do they cooperate? Do they listen? And then they were pulled together to make one scale that represents what we think of as kind of pro-social skills at this age.

CORNISH: So in what ways did researchers find that these skills made a difference down the road?

VEDANTAM: Well, that's exactly the question they set out to ask, Audie. The children in the study were tracked for the next 13 to 19 years into young adulthood. Damon Jones told me that he and Mark Greenberg and Max Crowley wanted to see if the ratings of the kindergarten teachers could predict important long-term outcomes, such as whether these children finished college or got a good job.

JONES: Along a continuum, the children are more likely to have success in these areas if they demonstrate these type of skills at an early age.

CORNISH: So nice kids finish first.

- [10] **VEDANTAM:** That's right, Audie. And you know, at one level, it's what you would expect. Getting along with others, working cooperatively – these are skills that are useful throughout life, certainly in any workplace. A couple of interesting things here, though – it's amazing that something that you're measuring in kindergarten can predict anything at all 15 to 20 years down the road.

But the second thing that's important is that not all social skills might matter to the same extent. Teachers also rated these kindergarten students on their aggressiveness, but researchers find that these ratings do not predict whether kids will get in trouble with the police 15 to 20 years later. Again, it's the pro-social skills – the ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes – this is what shapes the likelihood that you'll stay out of trouble later on.

CORNISH: So what are the implications of the study in terms of, say, education policy?

VEDANTAM: You know, Audie, in some ways, it's a wakeup call. There are many studies now that have found that long-term outcomes are shaped by these social and emotional skills. There's been a lot of interest recently in early childhood education programs, and some analyses of these early intensive programs suggest the real value is less about boosting cognitive skills like reading and math and more about boosting these interpersonal social and emotional skills. Researchers are finding that these non-cognitive skills – things like self-control or perseverance or conscientiousness – these are building blocks that you need throughout life. Without them, you can't be a good student; you can't hold down a good job.

CORNISH: Well, what if you aren't getting them or you're not inclined to that naturally?

- [15] **VEDANTAM:** In some ways, Audie, I think it's actually a very hopeful thing because I think there's been a lot of work that suggests that these skills are quite malleable, so there's lots of things that you can do. Encourage children to play socially, develop interpersonal skills. Role model these kinds of pro-social behaviors. The optimistic thing about this research, Audie, is that it looks like many of these skills actually can be taught and learned and developed, and this research seems to suggest it has really positive long-term outcomes.

CORNISH: Shankar, thanks so much for explaining it.

VEDANTAM: Thank you, Audie.

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. Summarize the central ideas of the article in no more than 2 sentences [RI.2]

2. How does the beginning of the interview contribute to the overall development of ideas? [RI.5]
 - A. It attempts to make the reader nostalgic by reminding them of their own experiences as kindergarteners.
 - B. It piques the readers' curiosity by describing an interesting real life question.
 - C. It previews the methodology behind the research study as well as its preliminary findings.
 - D. It emphasizes the limitations to the study and its application to education policy.
3. PART A: What does the word "malleable" mean as it is used in paragraph 15? [RI.4]
 - A. Easily influenced
 - B. Stubborn
 - C. Hopeful
 - D. Soft
4. PART B: Which phrase from the text best supports the answer to Part A? [RI.1]
 - A. "very hopeful thing"
 - B. "a lot of work"
 - C. "lots of things that you can do"
 - D. "encourage children"
5. Which of the following best expresses the interviewee's attitude toward children developing pro-social skills? [RI.6]
 - A. Doubtful
 - B. Optimistic
 - C. Indifferent
 - D. Bright

Discussion Questions

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. Do the results of this study surprise you? Why or why not?
2. Consider the findings of this study. Why is it important for adults to role model the pro-social skills to young children? Explain your answer.
3. In the context of this text, why do people succeed? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience and your own opinions to answer this question.
4. In the context of this text, what is the goal of education? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience and your own opinions to answer this question.

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Self-Concept

By Saul McLeod
2008

Self-concept refers to how people “think about, evaluate, or perceive” themselves. Psychologist Carl Rogers splits the idea of self-concept into three different components, namely self-image, self-esteem, and ideal self. In this text, Saul McLeod explains each of these ideas in more detail. As you read, take notes on how self-image, self-esteem, and ideal self are different from one another.

- [1] The term self-concept is a general term used to refer to how someone thinks about, evaluates or perceives themselves. To be aware of oneself is to have a concept of oneself. [...]

Carl Rogers (1959) believes that the self-concept has three different components:

- The view you have of yourself (Self-image)
- How much value you place on yourself (Self-esteem or self-worth)
- What you wish you were really like (Ideal self)



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Self-Image

What you see in yourself

This does not necessarily have to reflect reality. Indeed a person with anorexia¹ who is thin may have a self-image in which the person believes they are fat. A person's self-image is affected by many factors, such as parental influences, friends, the media etc.

Kuhn (1960) investigated the self-image by using *The Twenty Statements Test*.

- [5] He asked people to answer the question “Who Am I?” in 20 different ways. He found that the responses could be divided into two major groups. These were *social roles* (external or objective aspects of oneself such as son, teacher, friend) and *personality traits* (internal or affective² aspects of oneself such as gregarious,³ impatient, humorous).

The list of answers to the question “Who Am I?” probably include examples of each of the following four types of responses:

1. a type of eating disorder
2. relating to moods, feelings, and attitudes
3. **Gregarious (adjective):** enjoying the company of other people

1. **Physical Description:** I'm tall, have blue eyes... etc.
2. **Social Roles:** We are all social beings whose behavior is shaped to some extent by the roles we play. Such roles as student, housewife, or member of the football team not only help others to recognize us but also help us to know what is expected of us in various situations.
3. **Personal Traits:** These are a third dimension of our self-descriptions. "I'm impulsive... I'm generous... I tend to worry a lot..." etc.
4. **Existential Statements** (abstract ones): These can range from "I'm a child of the universe" to "I'm a human being" to "I'm a spiritual being..." etc.

Typically young people describe themselves more in terms of personal traits, whereas older people feel defined to a greater extent by their social roles.

Self-Esteem & Self-Worth

The extent to which you value yourself

Self-esteem refers to the extent to which we like, accept, or approve of ourselves, or how much we value ourselves. Self-esteem always involves a degree of evaluation and we may have either a positive or a negative view of ourselves.

HIGH SELF-ESTEEM i.e. we have a positive view of ourselves. This tends to lead to:

- Confidence in our own abilities
- Self acceptance
- Not worrying about what others think
- Optimism

[10] **LOW SELF-ESTEEM** i.e. we have a negative view of ourselves. This tends to lead to:

- Lack of confidence
- Desire to be/look like someone else
- Always worrying what others might think
- Pessimism

There are several ways of measuring self-esteem. For example, Harrill Self-Esteem Inventory is a questionnaire comprising 15 statements about a range of interest. Another example is the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), which is a neutral cartoon given to the participant who then has to devise a story about what's going on.

Morse and Gergen (1970) showed that in uncertain or anxiety-arousing situations our self-esteem may change rapidly. Participants were waiting for a job interview in a waiting room. They were sat with another candidate (a confederate⁴ of the experimenter) in one of two conditions:

4. a person who helps someone else do something

1. *Mr. Clean* - dressed in smart suit, carrying a briefcase opened to reveal a slide rule and books.
2. *Mr. Dirty* - dressed in an old T-shirt and jeans, slouched over a cheap sex novel.

Self-esteem of participants with Mr. Dirty increased, whilst those with Mr. Clean decreased! No mention was made of how this affected subjects' performance in interview. Level of self-esteem affects performance at numerous tasks though (Coopersmith, 1967), so one could expect Mr. Dirty's subjects to perform better than Mr. Clean's.

Even though self-esteem might fluctuate, there are times when we continue to believe good things about ourselves even when evidence to the contrary exists. This is known as the perseverance effect.

- [15] Miller and Ross (1975) showed that people who believed they had socially desirable characteristics continued in this belief even when the experimenters tried to get them to believe the opposite. Does the same thing happen with bad things if we have low self-esteem? Maybe not, perhaps with very low self-esteem all we believe about ourselves might be bad.

Argyle (2008) believes there are 4 major factors that influence self-esteem.

1. **THE REACTION OF OTHERS.** If people admire us, flatter us, seek out our company, listen attentively and agree with us we tend to develop a positive self-image. If they avoid us, neglect us, or tell us things about ourselves that we don't want to hear, we develop a negative self-image.
2. **COMPARISON WITH OTHERS.** If the people we compare ourselves with (our reference group) appear to be more successful, happier, richer, or better looking than ourselves we tend to develop a negative self-image, BUT if they are less successful than us, our image will be positive.
3. **SOCIAL ROLES.** Some social roles carry prestige — e.g. doctor, airline pilot, TV presenter, premiership footballer — and this promotes self-esteem. Other roles carry stigma⁵ — e.g. prisoner, mental hospital patient, refuse collector, or unemployed person.
4. **IDENTIFICATION.** Roles aren't just "out there." They also become part of our personality, i.e. we identify with the positions we occupy, the roles we play, and the groups we belong to.

But just as important as all these factors is the influence of our parents (See Coopersmith's research.)

Ideal Self

What you'd like to be

If there is a mismatch between how you see yourself (e.g. your self-image) and what you'd like to be (e.g. your ideal self) then this is likely to affect how much you value yourself. Therefore, there is an intimate relationship between self-image, ego-ideal and self-esteem. Humanistic psychologists study this using the Q-Sort Method.

5. **Stigma (noun):** a mark of disgrace or dishonor

A person's ideal self may not be consistent with what actually happens in life and experiences of the person. Hence, a difference may exist between a person's ideal self and actual experience. This is called incongruence.

- [20] Where a person's ideal self and actual experience are consistent or very similar, a state of congruence exists. Rarely, if ever, does a total state of congruence exist; all people experience a certain amount of incongruence. The development of congruence is dependent on unconditional positive regard.⁶ Rogers believed that for a person to achieve self-actualization they must be in a state of congruence.

Michael Argyle (2008) says there are four major factors which influence its development:

- The ways in which others (particularly significant others) react to us
- How we think we compare to others
- Our social roles
- The extent to which we identify with other people

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6. Unconditional positive regard (UPR) is a term credited to humanistic psychologist Carl Rogers and is used in client-centered therapy. Practicing unconditional positive regard means accepting and respecting others as they are without judgment or evaluation.

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which sentence best describes the central idea of the passage?
 - A. The notions of self-image, self-esteem, and the ideal self all contribute to a person's understanding of themselves.
 - B. By understanding the concepts of self-image, self-esteem, and ideal self, people can lead happier, more successful lives.
 - C. Any difference between self-image and the ideal self can produce incongruence, so people should try their best to get rid of this entirely.
 - D. Self-concept is essential for humans to understand their status in a complex society.
2. PART B: Which of the following paragraphs best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. Paragraphs 1-2
 - B. Paragraphs 9-10
 - C. Paragraph 16
 - D. Paragraphs 18-19
3. How do paragraphs 12-13 contribute to the development of ideas in the passage?
 - A. The Mr. Clean and Mr. Dirty experiment proved that how well people perform in situations such as interviews is highly dependent on their self-esteem.
 - B. The Mr. Clean and Mr. Dirty experiment demonstrated that the perseverance effect only applies to a small fraction of the human population.
 - C. The Mr. Clean and Mr. Dirty experiment showed how self-esteem can be influenced by external factors such as uncertainty or how they compare to others.
 - D. The Mr. Clean and Mr. Dirty experiment led researchers to conclude that people can protect their self-esteem by practicing unconditional positivity.
4. What connection does the author draw between self-esteem and ideal self?

Discussion Questions

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. Answer the question "Who Am I?" in at least 10 different ways. How many of your responses fall into each of the four categories outlined in paragraph 6? Which of your responses do you consider most important to your self-image?
2. Which concepts from the text are most convincing to you? Which do you find less convincing? Overall, do you agree with Carl Rogers' analysis of how we view and understand ourselves? Why or why not? Use evidence from this text, your own experience, and other art, literature, or history in your answer.
3. Based on your own experiences, is it possible for someone to have good self-esteem without making comparisons with other people? In other words, is it necessary to feel better than other people in order for someone to have good self-esteem? Why or why not?

Name: _____ Class: _____

The Bet

By Anton Chekhov
1889

Anton Pavlovich Chekhov (1860 - 1904) was a Russian playwright and short story writer who is considered to be among the greatest writers of short fiction in history. This story begins when a lawyer and a banker make a bet. As you read, take notes to track the changes you see in the lawyer and the banker over the course of the bet.

[1] It was a dark autumn night. The old banker was walking up and down his study and remembering how, fifteen years before, he had given a party one autumn evening. There had been many clever men there, and there had been interesting conversations. Among other things they had talked of capital punishment.¹ The majority of the guests, among whom were many journalists and intellectual men, disapproved of the death penalty. They considered that form of punishment out of date, immoral, and unsuitable for Christian States.² In the opinion of some of them the death penalty ought to be replaced everywhere by imprisonment for life. "I don't agree with you," said their host the banker. "I have not tried either the death penalty or imprisonment for life, but if one may judge *a priori*,³ the death penalty is more moral and more humane than imprisonment for life. Capital punishment kills a man at once, but lifelong imprisonment kills him slowly. Which executioner is the more humane,⁴ he who kills you in a few minutes or he who drags the life out of you in the course of many years?"



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"Both are equally immoral," observed one of the guests, "for they both have the same object — to take away life. The State is not God. It has not the right to take away what it cannot restore when it wants to."

Among the guests was a young lawyer, a young man of five-and-twenty. When he was asked his opinion, he said:

"The death sentence and the life sentence are equally immoral,⁵ but if I had to choose between the death penalty and imprisonment for life, I would certainly choose the second. To live anyhow is better than not at all."

1. Capital punishment, also known as the death penalty, is a practice whereby a person is put to death by the state as punishment for a crime.
2. A Christian State recognizes Christianity as its official religion.
3. The Latin phrase "*a priori*" refers to knowledge that does not come from actual experience but rather from deduction or theoretical reasoning.
4. **Humane** (*adjective*): having sympathy and compassion for other people
5. **Immoral** (*adjective*): going against what is right, proper, or good

- [5] A lively discussion arose. The banker, who was younger and more nervous in those days, was suddenly carried away by excitement; he struck the table with his fist and shouted at the young man:

"It's not true! I'll bet you two million you wouldn't stay in solitary confinement for five years."

"If you mean that in earnest," said the young man, "I'll take the bet, but I would stay not five but fifteen years."

"Fifteen? Done!" cried the banker. "Gentlemen, I stake two million!"

"Agreed! You stake your millions and I stake my freedom!" said the young man.

- [10] And this wild, senseless bet was carried out! The banker, spoilt and frivolous,⁶ with millions beyond his reckoning, was delighted at the bet. At supper he made fun of the young man, and said:

"Think better of it, young man, while there is still time. To me two million is a trifle, but you are losing three or four of the best years of your life. I say three or four, because you won't stay longer. Don't forget either, you unhappy man, that voluntary confinement is a great deal harder to bear than compulsory.⁷ The thought that you have the right to step out in liberty at any moment will poison your whole existence in prison. I am sorry for you."

And now the banker, walking to and fro, remembered all this, and asked himself: "What was the object of that bet? What is the good of that man's losing fifteen years of his life and my throwing away two million? Can it prove that the death penalty is better or worse than imprisonment for life? No, no. It was all nonsensical and meaningless. On my part it was the caprice⁸ of a pampered man, and on his part simple greed for money..."

Then he remembered what followed that evening. It was decided that the young man should spend the years of his captivity under the strictest supervision in one of the lodges in the banker's garden. It was agreed that for fifteen years he should not be free to cross the threshold of the lodge, to see human beings, to hear the human voice, or to receive letters and newspapers. He was allowed to have a musical instrument and books, and was allowed to write letters, to drink wine, and to smoke. By the terms of the agreement, the only relations he could have with the outer world were by a little window made purposely for that object. He might have anything he wanted — books, music, wine, and so on — in any quantity he desired by writing an order, but could only receive them through the window. The agreement provided for every detail and every trifle⁹ that would make his imprisonment strictly solitary, and bound the young man to stay there *exactly* fifteen years, beginning from twelve o'clock of November 14, 1870, and ending at twelve o'clock of November 14, 1885. The slightest attempt on his part to break the conditions, if only two minutes before the end, released the banker from the obligation to pay him the two million.

6. **Frivolous (adjective):** not serious in attitude or behavior; not able to think ahead

7. **Compulsory (adjective):** required; mandatory

8. **Caprice (noun):** a sudden, unpredictable action

9. **Trifle (noun):** something of little value, substance, or importance

For the first year of his confinement, as far as one could judge from his brief notes, the prisoner suffered severely from loneliness and depression. The sounds of the piano could be heard continually day and night from his lodge. He refused wine and tobacco. Wine, he wrote, excites the desires, and desires are the worst foes of the prisoner; and besides, nothing could be more dreary than drinking good wine and seeing no one. And tobacco spoilt the air of his room. In the first year the books he sent for were principally of a light character: novels with a complicated love plot, sensational and fantastic stories, and so on.

- [15] In the second year the piano was silent in the lodge, and the prisoner asked only for the classics. In the fifth year music was audible again, and the prisoner asked for wine. Those who watched him through the window said that all that year he spent doing nothing but eating and drinking and lying on his bed, frequently yawning and angrily talking to himself. He did not read books. Sometimes at night he would sit down to write; he would spend hours writing, and in the morning tear up all that he had written. More than once he could be heard crying.

In the second half of the sixth year the prisoner began zealously studying languages, philosophy, and history. He threw himself eagerly into these studies — so much so that the banker had enough to do to get him the books he ordered. In the course of four years some six hundred volumes were procured¹⁰ at his request. It was during this period that the banker received the following letter from his prisoner:

“My dear Jailer, I write you these lines in six languages. Show them to people who know the languages. Let them read them. If they find not one mistake I implore you to fire a shot in the garden. That shot will show me that my efforts have not been thrown away. The geniuses of all ages and of all lands speak different languages, but the same flame burns in them all. Oh, if you only knew what unearthly happiness my soul feels now from being able to understand them!” The prisoner’s desire was fulfilled. The banker ordered two shots to be fired in the garden.

Then after the tenth year, the prisoner sat immovably at the table and read nothing but the Gospel. It seemed strange to the banker that a man who in four years had mastered six hundred learned volumes should waste nearly a year over one thin book easy of comprehension. Theology¹¹ and histories of religion followed the Gospels.¹²

In the last two years of his confinement the prisoner read an immense quantity of books quite indiscriminately. At one time he was busy with the natural sciences, then he would ask for Byron or Shakespeare. There were notes in which he demanded at the same time books on chemistry, and a manual of medicine, and a novel, and some treatise on philosophy or theology. His reading suggested a man swimming in the sea among the wreckage of his ship, and trying to save his life by greedily clutching first at one spar and then at another.

- [20] The old banker remembered all this, and thought:

“To-morrow at twelve o’clock he will regain his freedom. By our agreement I ought to pay him two million. If I do pay him, it is all over with me: I shall be utterly ruined.”

10. **Procure (verb):** to get possession of; to obtain by a particular care and effort

11. Theology is the study of religious faith, practice, and experience.

12. Gospels are books written about the life of Jesus.

Fifteen years before, his millions had been beyond his reckoning; now he was afraid to ask himself which were greater, his debts or his assets. Desperate gambling on the Stock Exchange,¹³ wild speculation and the excitability which he could not get over even in advancing years, had by degrees led to the decline of his fortune and the proud, fearless, self-confident millionaire had become a banker of middling rank, trembling at every rise and fall in his investments. "Cursed bet!" muttered the old man, clutching his head in despair. "Why didn't the man die? He is only forty now. He will take my last penny from me, he will marry, will enjoy life, will gamble on the Exchange; while I shall look at him with envy like a beggar, and hear from him every day the same sentence: 'I am indebted to you for the happiness of my life, let me help you!' No, it is too much! The one means of being saved from bankruptcy and disgrace is the death of that man!"

It struck three o'clock, the banker listened; everyone was asleep in the house and nothing could be heard outside but the rustling of the chilled trees. Trying to make no noise, he took from a fireproof safe the key of the door which had not been opened for fifteen years, put on his overcoat, and went out of the house.

It was dark and cold in the garden. Rain was falling. A damp cutting wind was racing about the garden, howling and giving the trees no rest. The banker strained his eyes, but could see neither the earth nor the white statues, nor the lodge, nor the trees. Going to the spot where the lodge stood, he twice called the watchman. No answer followed. Evidently the watchman had sought shelter from the weather, and was now asleep somewhere either in the kitchen or in the greenhouse.

- [25] "If I had the pluck to carry out my intention," thought the old man, "suspicion would fall first upon the watchman."

He felt in the darkness for the steps and the door, and went into the entry of the lodge. Then he groped his way into a little passage and lighted a match. There was not a soul there. There was a bedstead with no bedding on it, and in the corner there was a dark cast-iron stove. The seals on the door leading to the prisoner's rooms were intact.

When the match went out the old man, trembling with emotion, peeped through the little window. A candle was burning dimly in the prisoner's room. He was sitting at the table. Nothing could be seen but his back, the hair on his head, and his hands. Open books were lying on the table, on the two easy-chairs, and on the carpet near the table.

Five minutes passed and the prisoner did not once stir. Fifteen years' imprisonment had taught him to sit still. The banker tapped at the window with his finger, and the prisoner made no movement whatever in response. Then the banker cautiously broke the seals off the door and put the key in the keyhole. The rusty lock gave a grating sound and the door creaked. The banker expected to hear at once footsteps and a cry of astonishment, but three minutes passed and it was as quiet as ever in the room. He made up his mind to go in.

13. Stock Exchange refers to a place where people buy and sell stocks, which are the ownership elements of a corporation.

At the table a man unlike ordinary people was sitting motionless. He was a skeleton with the skin drawn tight over his bones, with long curls like a woman's and a shaggy beard. His face was yellow with an earthy tint in it, his cheeks were hollow, his back long and narrow, and the hand on which his shaggy head was propped was so thin and delicate that it was dreadful to look at it. His hair was already streaked with silver, and seeing his emaciated,¹⁴ aged-looking face, no one would have believed that he was only forty. He was asleep... In front of his bowed head there lay on the table a sheet of paper on which there was something written in fine handwriting.

- [30] "Poor creature!" thought the banker, "he is asleep and most likely dreaming of the millions. And I have only to take this half-dead man, throw him on the bed, stifle him a little with the pillow, and the most conscientious expert would find no sign of a violent death. But let us first read what he has written here ..."

The banker took the page from the table and read as follows:

"To-morrow at twelve o'clock I regain my freedom and the right to associate with other men, but before I leave this room and see the sunshine, I think it necessary to say a few words to you. With a clear conscience I tell you, as before God, who beholds me, that I despise freedom and life and health, and all that in your books is called the good things of the world.

"For fifteen years I have been intently studying earthly life. It is true I have not seen the earth nor men, but in your books I have drunk fragrant wine, I have sung songs, I have hunted stags and wild boars in the forests, have loved women... Beauties as ethereal¹⁵ as clouds, created by the magic of your poets and geniuses, have visited me at night, and have whispered in my ears wonderful tales that have set my brain in a whirl. In your books I have climbed to the peaks of Elburz and Mont Blanc, and from there I have seen the sun rise and have watched it at evening flood the sky, the ocean, and the mountain-tops with gold and crimson. I have watched from there the lightning flashing over my head and cleaving the storm-clouds. I have seen green forests, fields, rivers, lakes, towns. I have heard the singing of the sirens, and the strains of the shepherds' pipes; I have touched the wings of comely¹⁶ devils who flew down to converse with me of God... In your books I have flung myself into the bottomless pit, performed miracles, slain, burned towns, preached new religions, conquered whole kingdoms...

"Your books have given me wisdom. All that the unresting thought of man has created in the ages is compressed into a small compass in my brain. I know that I am wiser than all of you.

- [35] "And I despise your books, I despise wisdom and the blessings of this world. It is all worthless, fleeting, illusory,¹⁷ and deceptive, like a mirage. You may be proud, wise, and fine, but death will wipe you off the face of the earth as though you were no more than mice burrowing under the floor, and your posterity, your history, your immortal geniuses will burn or freeze together with the earthly globe.

"You have lost your reason and taken the wrong path. You have taken lies for truth, and hideousness for beauty. You would marvel if, owing to strange events of some sort, frogs and lizards suddenly grew on apple and orange trees instead of fruit, or if roses began to smell like a sweating horse; so I marvel at you who exchange heaven for earth. I don't want to understand you.

14. **Emaciate** (*verb*): to cause someone to become very thin

15. **Ethereal** (*adjective*): of or relating to the heavens

16. **Comely** (*adjective*): pretty, attractive

17. **Illusory** (*adjective*): based on or producing an illusion; deceptive

"To prove to you in action how I despise all that you live by, I renounce the two million of which I once dreamed as of paradise and which now I despise. To deprive myself of the right to the money I shall go out from here five hours before the time fixed, and so break the compact..."

When the banker had read this he laid the page on the table, kissed the strange man on the head, and went out of the lodge, weeping. At no other time, even when he had lost heavily on the Stock Exchange, had he felt so great a contempt¹⁸ for himself. When he got home he lay on his bed, but his tears and emotion kept him for hours from sleeping.

Next morning the watchmen ran in with pale faces, and told him they had seen the man who lived in the lodge climb out of the window into the garden, go to the gate, and disappear. The banker went at once with the servants to the lodge and made sure of the flight of his prisoner. To avoid arousing unnecessary talk, he took from the table the writing in which the millions were renounced, and when he got home locked it up in the fireproof safe.

"The Bet" by Anton Chekhov is in the public domain.

18. **Contempt (noun):** a feeling that someone or something is not worthy of respect or approval

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which statement best expresses a theme in the story?
 - A. Pursuing knowledge and bettering yourself is the best way to spend your time.
 - B. The desire to prove to others that you're right can lead to extreme actions.
 - C. Greed and impulsive decisions can lead to huge consequences.
 - D. There is nothing worse than depriving someone of human contact.

2. PART B: Which paragraph from the short story best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "He threw himself eagerly into these studies — so much so that the banker had enough to do to get him the books he ordered." (Paragraph 16)
 - B. "To-morrow at twelve o'clock he will regain his freedom. By our agreement I ought to pay him two million. If I do pay him, it is all over with me: I shall be utterly ruined." (Paragraph 21)
 - C. "At the table a man unlike ordinary people was sitting motionless. He was a skeleton with the skin drawn tight over his bones, with long curls like a woman's and a shaggy beard." (Paragraph 29)
 - D. "And I have only to take this half-dead man, throw him on the bed, stifle him a little with the pillow, and the most conscientious expert would find no sign of a violent death." (Paragraph 30)

3. PART A: Which statement best describes how the banker's actions develop the theme of the story?
 - A. The banker's hasty and thoughtless actions lead to trouble and despair for him.
 - B. The banker's disregard for human life shows the extent of his lack of compassion for others.
 - C. The banker's adventurous spirit prompts him to create dangerous or risky situations.
 - D. The banker's passionate defense of his views gets him into dangerous situations.

4. PART B: Which TWO details from the text best support the answer to Part A?
- A. "Capital punishment kills a man at once, but lifelong imprisonment kills him slowly. Which executioner is the more humane, he who kills you in a few minutes or he who drags the life out of you in the course of many years?" (Paragraph 1)
 - B. "Think better of it, young man, while there is still time. To me two million is a trifle, but you are losing three or four of the best years of your life. I say three or four, because you won't stay longer." (Paragraph 11)
 - C. "Desperate gambling on the Stock Exchange, wild speculation and the excitability which he could not get over even in advancing years, had by degrees led to the decline of his fortune and the proud, fearless, self-confident millionaire had become a banker of middling rank, trembling at every rise and fall in his investments." (Paragraph 22)
 - D. "he is asleep and most likely dreaming of the millions. And I have only to take this half-dead man, throw him on the bed, stifle him a little with the pillow, and the most conscientious expert would find no sign of a violent death." (Paragraph 30)
 - E. "At no other time, even when he had lost heavily on the Stock Exchange, had he felt so great a contempt for himself. When he got home he lay on his bed, but his tears and emotion kept him for hours from sleeping." (Paragraph 38)
 - F. "To avoid arousing unnecessary talk, he took from the table the writing in which the millions were renounced, and when he got home locked it up in the fireproof safe." (Paragraph 39)
5. How does the lawyer provoke the banker's decision to place the bet?
- A. The lawyer questions whether or not the banker has the money to make a worthwhile bet with him.
 - B. The lawyer suggests that the banker doesn't have the courage to place such a risky bet against him.
 - C. The lawyer offers to give the banker two million if he cannot stay in solitary confinement for the agreed upon years.
 - D. The lawyer proposes that he will remain in solitary confinement even longer than the banker suggests.
6. How does the lawyer's 15-year imprisonment affect the banker?
- A. The banker wishes that he had required the lawyer to stay imprisoned for longer.
 - B. The banker comes to realize that he was wrong about his stance on life imprisonment.
 - C. The banker mourns the life and experiences that he has deprived the lawyer of.
 - D. The banker regrets placing the bet and thinks it was a stupid idea in the first place.

7. How does the reader's knowledge of the events in paragraphs 22-30 reveal the banker and the lawyer's different points of view and develop suspense?

Discussion Questions

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. In the context of the short story, how are both the banker and the lawyer corrupted by greed? Can you think of a contemporary example of someone who has been corrupted by greed? Compare your example with what happens in the story. Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.
2. In your opinion, can money buy happiness? Why or why not? What is the connection between happiness and money?
3. What is your position on the argument between the lawyer and the banker? Which is more humane: capital punishment or life imprisonment? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.

Name: _____ Class: _____

The Legend of Oedipus

By CommonLit Staff
2016

Oedipus was a mythical king of the ancient Greek city of Thebes¹ and one of the most iconic tragic heroes of Greek mythology. The following story recounts the legend of Oedipus' life and death. As you read, take notes on Oedipus' actions and how they reveal the theme of the myth.

- [1] *"As for this marriage with your mother—have no fear. Many a man before you, in his dreams, has shared his mother's bed. Take such things for shadows, nothing at all— Live, Oedipus, as if there's no tomorrow!" (From Oedipus the King, by Sophocles²)*

Oedipus is a mythical Greek king of Thebes. The story of how he got to be the king was the subject of a set of plays by Sophocles in 430 BC: Oedipus the King, Oedipus at Colonus, and Antigone. There are many different endings to the legend of Oedipus due to its oral tradition, and most of what we know about Oedipus is based on these plays.



"Oedipus and the Sphinx" is licensed under Public domain.

The Life of Oedipus

Oedipus was the son of Laius and Jocasta, king and queen of Thebes. After having been married some time without children, his parents consulted the Oracle³ of Apollo at Delphi⁴ about their childlessness. The Oracle prophesied that if Laius should have a son, the son would kill his father and marry his mother, Jocasta. In an attempt to prevent this prophecy's fulfillment, when Jocasta indeed bore a son, Laius had his ankles pinned together so that he could not crawl, and gave the boy to a servant to abandon on the nearby mountain. However, rather than leave the child to die in the wilderness, as Laius intended, the sympathetic servant passed the baby onto a shepherd from Corinth.⁵

Oedipus, the infant, eventually ends up at the house of Polybus and Merope, king and queen of Corinth, who adopt him as they are without children of their own. Little Oedipus is named in Greek after the swelling from the injuries to his feet and ankles.

1. Thebes is a large city in Greece that has been the setting for many Greek myths.
2. Sophocles is one of three ancient Greek tragedians whose plays have survived.
3. A fortune teller
4. Delphi is an ancient site in Greece where people would go to see the oracle.
5. Another ancient city in Greece, between Athens and Sparta

- [5] Many years later, Oedipus is told by a drunk that Polybus is not his real father, but when he asks his parents if this is true, they deny it. Oedipus, unsure, seeks counsel from the same Delphic Oracle. The Oracle does not tell him the identity of his true parents, but instead tells him that he is destined to couple with his mother and kill his father (though not specifying in which order). In his attempt to avoid the fate predicted by the Oracle, he decides to flee from Corinth to Thebes.

As Oedipus travels he comes to the place where three roads meet, Davlia. Here he encounters a chariot,⁶ driven by his (unrecognized) birth-father, King Laius. They fight over who has the right to go first and Oedipus kills Laius in self defense, unwittingly fulfilling part of the prophecy. The only witness to the king's death was a slave who fled from a caravan⁷ of slaves also traveling on the road.

Continuing his journey to Thebes, Oedipus encounters a Sphinx⁸ that would stop all those who traveled to Thebes and ask them a riddle. If the travelers were unable to answer correctly, they were eaten by the sphinx; if they were successful, they would be able to continue their journey. The riddle was: "What walks on four feet in the morning, two in the afternoon and three at night?" Oedipus answers: "Man; as an infant, he crawls on all fours, as an adult, he walks on two legs and, in old age, he relies on a walking stick." Oedipus was the first to answer the riddle correctly. Having heard Oedipus' answer, the Sphinx is astounded and inexplicably kills itself, freeing Thebes. Grateful, the people of Thebes appoint Oedipus as their king and give him the recently widowed Queen Jocasta's hand in marriage. (The people of Thebes believed her husband had been killed while on a search for the answer to the Sphinx's riddle. They had no idea who the killer was.) The marriage of Oedipus and Jocasta fulfilled the rest of the prophecy. Oedipus and Jocasta have four children: two sons, Polynices and Eteocles, and two daughters, Antigone and Ismene.

Oedipus' Downfall

Meanwhile, a messenger reveals that Oedipus was, in fact, adopted. Jocasta, finally realizing Oedipus' true identity, entreats him to abandon his search for Laius' murderer. Oedipus misunderstands the motivation of her pleas, thinking that she was ashamed of him because he might have been the son of a slave. She then goes into the palace where she hangs herself. Oedipus seeks verification of the messenger's story from the very same herdsman who was supposed to have left Oedipus to die as a baby. From the herdsman, Oedipus learns that the infant raised as the adopted son of Polybus and Merope was the son of Laius and Jocasta. Thus, Oedipus finally realizes in great agony that so many years ago, at the place where three roads meet, he had killed his own father, King Laius, and as consequence, married his mother, Jocasta.

Oedipus goes in search of Jocasta and finds she has killed herself. Taking two pins from her dress, Oedipus gouges his eyes out. He is exiled from Thebes and spends the remainder of his life wandering the desert.

- [10] Oedipus is a tragic hero in Greek mythology. He accidentally fulfilled a prophecy, and in doing so, he brought disaster to his city and family. Oedipus represents two enduring themes of Greek myth and drama: the flawed nature of humanity, and an individual's role in the course of destiny in a harsh universe.

6. A chariot is a type of carriage driven by a person and using horses to provide rapid speed

7. Here, "caravan" refers to a group of people, especially traders or pilgrims, traveling together.

8. A winged creature with a lion's body and a human's head

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Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which of the following best identifies a central theme of the story of Oedipus? [RL.2]
 - A. Human relationships
 - B. Violence and war
 - C. Fate and free will
 - D. The indifference of nature

2. PART B: Which phrase from the text best supports the answers to Part A? [RL.1]
 - A. "Many years later, Oedipus is told by a drunk that Polybus is not his real father but when he asks his parents, they deny it." (Paragraph 5)
 - B. "They fight over who has the right to go first and Oedipus kills Laius in self defense, unwittingly fulfilling part of the prophecy." (Paragraph 6)
 - C. "Oedipus was the first to answer the riddle correctly. Having heard Oedipus' answer, the Sphinx is astounded and inexplicably kills itself, freeing Thebes." (Paragraph 7)
 - D. "He is exiled from Thebes and spends the remainder of his life wandering the desert." (Paragraph 9)

3. How is the opening quotation (in paragraph 1) important to the development of the passage's theme? Cite evidence from the text in your response. [RL.5]

4. PART A: What does the word "entreat" most closely mean as it is used in paragraph 8? [RL.4]
 - A. To beg
 - B. To forgive
 - C. To suggest
 - D. To condemn

5. PART B: Which phrase from the paragraph provides the best support for the answer [RL.1] to Part A?
- A. "was, in fact, adopted"
 - B. "finally realizing Oedipus' true identity"
 - C. "misunderstands the motivation"
 - D. "her pleas"

Discussion Questions

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. In your opinion, is it possible to evade fate? Does destiny exist, and if so, can it be changed? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.

2. Could the fulfillment of Oedipus' prophecy have been avoided?

3. Should Oedipus be blamed for his actions? Was he right to punish himself?

4. In the context of this text how is "tragedy" defined? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.

Name: _____ Class: _____

Tuskegee Airmen

By Jessica McBirney
2017

The Tuskegee Airmen were a group of African-American fighter pilots and bomber pilots, including their support crew, who flew for the U.S. Army Air Forces in World War II. Despite facing racial discrimination, their missions were some of the most successful in the American military. As you read, identify the challenges faced by the Tuskegee Airmen and then analyze the impact that this group had on race relations in America.

- [1] When most people think of the Civil Rights Movement and the end of legalized segregation in the U.S., they think of the 1960s. However, the movement did not start then, and it was not confined to the streets and diners in the South. One of the earliest successes for racial equality actually occurred in the 1940s in the U.S. military, thanks to the hard work of a group known as the Tuskegee Airmen.

Tuskegee Airmen: an Early Civil Rights Success



"Eight Tuskegee Airmen in front of a P-40 fighter aircraft" by Signaleer is in the public domain.

The Tuskegee Airmen were a group of African American fighter pilots and bomber pilots, including their support crew, who trained at the Tuskegee Air Fields in Alabama during World War II. They became the 332nd Fighter Group and the 477th Bombardment Group¹ in the U.S. Army Air Forces at the height of the war, and their missions were some of the most successful in the American military.

During World War I, several decades earlier, African Americans were denied the ability to become fighter pilots and help the war effort. This sparked a growing controversy in the African American community. In April of 1939, after a 20-year battle, Congress finally allocated funds to set up a special division to train African American pilots to fly fighter planes.

Most people were highly skeptical of the new unit. Racism was still very present in and out of the military, and many Army officials did not believe African Americans had the skills or the intelligence to learn everything a pilot needs to know.

1. A bombardment group, or bomb group, was a group of bomber aircraft the United States Army Air Forces (USAAF) during World War II.

Training for Battle

- [5] Over 400 African Americans enlisted to be in the new division. The entrance requirements were very strict, including high experience requirements and a series of IQ and other intelligence tests. Because of discriminatory² policies in the Army, all the officers in charge of the new recruits were white.

The practical training took place at the Tuskegee Air Fields in Alabama, and the trainees also took courses at Tuskegee University nearby. They quickly proved their personal drive to learn and their skills as pilots. Their proficiency³ struck blows at previous race-based policies in the military; they soon needed to undergo highly advanced training that African Americans had previously been barred from receiving.

The Tuskegee Air program gained national attention when First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt paid them a visit in 1941. She rode as a passenger of pilot C. Alfred "Chief" Anderson, who had become an unofficial leader and tutor in the group because of his skills. After the trip, she remarked, "Well, you can fly all right."

Combat-ready

By 1943, in the middle of the U.S.'s involvement in World War II, the Tuskegee Airmen were ready for combat. In one of their earliest missions, a group was assigned to attack a strategically located island in the Mediterranean Sea, near Italy. They successfully got over 1,000 Italian troops to surrender and were instrumental⁴ in the capture of the island.

In later assignments, they became most famous for their ability to escort larger bomber planes. The airmen became known as Red Tails, or Red Tailed Angels, because of the distinctive red markings on the tails of their small fighter planes. Soon the sight of a swarm of Red Tailed escort planes kept enemy fighters from trying to attack the bomber planes they protected.

- [10] The 332nd Fighter Group became one of the most successful squadrons of fighter planes in the Army. For example, in March of 1945, they destroyed three German fighter jets and damaged five more without losing any of their own planes to the enemy.

Continuing Racism

The 477th Bombardment Group faced more challenges, as one of their early commanders was an overt racial segregationist.⁵ The pilots wanted to be treated as well as their white counterparts, which included having access to an officer's club on their training base in Michigan. Their commander would not allow them to enter.

-
2. **Discriminatory (adjective):** making or showing an unfair preference for one category over another, in terms of race, age, sex etc.
 3. **Proficiency (noun):** a high degree of competence or skill; expertise
 4. **Instrumental (adjective):** serving or acting as an instrument or means; useful; helpful
 5. Segregationists believed that people of different races should be kept apart. In this instance, the commander believed black and white pilots should not fly in the same unit.

After two transfers to two different states and continuing discrimination, a large group of the pilots forced their way into an officer's club in Indiana, and over 100 of them were arrested for disobeying orders. The charges were soon dropped because they were so unfair, but the events demonstrated the severe racism African American military personnel continued to face even though they were so successful.

Legacy and the End of Segregation

At the end of World War II the Tuskegee Airmen were well-known for being some of the best pilots in the military. The escort groups had among the lowest loss records in the Army Air Forces. Their success was due to their extensive pre-war experience and their personal strength and drive during training and combat.

In the years after the war, the U.S. Air Force became a separate entity from the Army, but many of its white squadrons⁶ were at least somewhat under-qualified for the tasks they needed to perform. However, they could not hire any experienced black airmen because of segregation policies. This eventually led President Truman to sign Executive Order 9981 in 1948, which called for equal treatment policies and effectively ended segregation in the military. This was one of the earliest steps to ending segregation across the country; it would not have been possible without the hard work and expertise of the Tuskegee Airmen.

"Tuskegee Airmen" by Jessica McBirney. Copyright © 2017 by CommonLit, Inc. This text is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.

6. A squadron in the air force, army aviation, or naval aviation is mainly a unit made up of a number of military aircraft and their aircrews.

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. Which of the following best describes the central idea of the article? [RI.2]
 - A. The Tuskegee Airmen started the Civil Rights Movement by proving that black pilots are more skilled than white pilots.
 - B. The Tuskegee Airmen proved that black and white pilots had the same potential, which helped break racial barriers.
 - C. Despite breaking racial barriers, the Tuskegee Airmen faced racial discrimination and were never recognized for their military success.
 - D. Black pilots in the military had to work twice as hard as white pilots, and due to a lack of funds they were underprepared.

2. Which statement best describes the relationship between the Tuskegee Airmen and the Civil Rights Movement? [RI.3]
 - A. The desegregation of the military is commonly viewed as the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement.
 - B. The success of the Tuskegee Airmen quickly led to the desegregation of other institutions in America.
 - C. The success of the Tuskegee Airmen is one of the earliest victories in the fight for racial equality in America.
 - D. The Tuskegee Airmen organized many protests in Michigan and Alabama to force the government to desegregate the military.

3. PART A: Which of the following best describes the meaning of “struck blows” in paragraph 6? [RI.4]
 - A. challenged
 - B. protested
 - C. smacked
 - D. exposed

4. PART B: Which quotation from the text best supports the answer to Part A? [RI.1]
 - A. “all the officers in charge of the new recruits were white” (Paragraph 5)
 - B. “The entrance requirements were very strict” (Paragraph 5)
 - C. “They quickly proved their personal drive” (Paragraph 6)
 - D. “program gained national attention” (Paragraph 7)

5. How does the section entitled “Continuing Racism” (Paragraphs 11-12) contribute to the overall meaning of the article? [RI.5]

Discussion Questions

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. The Tuskegee Airmen chose to fight in World War II for the United States, even though they were treated like second-class citizens in their own country. What do you think motivated these pilots? How, eventually, did they overcome this adversity?
2. African Americans also played a prominent role in the American Civil War. Over 200,000 African Americans, equaling 10% of the entire military force, served in the Union military. 37,000 died fighting for the Union. Most were escaped slaves who served in segregated units under white officers. What similarities or differences do you see between the African-American soldiers in the Civil War and World War II? In your opinion, what motivated them?
3. According to this article, the military was essentially desegregated by the end of World War II. Yet, still today, some combat roles in the military are not open to women. Do you think this is an example of discrimination? Why or why not?

Name: _____ Class: _____

Why Do People Follow The Crowd?

By ABC News
January 12, 2006

Dr. Gregory Berns, a professor of behavioral science, conducted several experiments for the purpose of answering an age-old question: Why do people follow the crowd? ABC's Primetime recreated two of these experiments using several unsuspecting people. As you read, take notes on what evidence the authors use to support their claims.

- [1] It was a classic episode on the old *Candid Camera* show – people getting on an elevator and turning backward just because everyone else did, and we all laughed. We laughed again during the movie *Mean Girls*, when an act of teenage revenge – cutting nasty Queen Bee Regina's T-shirt during gym class (an act meant to insult her) – became a school fashion trend instead.

It turns out the joke is on us. These two examples illustrate something that we humans don't like to admit about ourselves: We follow the pack. Like birds in a flock or sheep in a pasture, we follow – sometimes at our own peril.¹

But why are people so conformist?² That is the question that Dr. Gregory Berns, an associate professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Atlanta's Emory University, tried to answer in a recent groundbreaking experiment and paper.

Primetime set up its own demonstration recreating Berns' work.



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Failing a Test

- [5] We gathered a group of people together for a test of "visual perception." The actual test was simple – to mentally rotate some 3-D shapes and compare them to see whether they were the same or different.

First, the volunteers wrote down their answers to 10 questions privately. But then they had to give the next series of answers out loud for everyone to hear.

1. **Peril (noun):** great danger
2. **Conformist (adjective):** behaving or thinking like everyone else rather than doing things that are original

But this test came with a twist. One of the participants, Jocelyn, was in on the experiment, with the answers in her hand. Everyone else had been told to follow her lead, except for one participant, Tony. He's the only person in the room not in the know. He was being set up to see whether he would follow the pack.

When the group gave the right answer, Tony agreed. And when everyone gave the wrong answer – Tony still agreed.

Unwittingly,³ Tony had demonstrated Berns' point precisely. The group's influence on Tony profoundly altered the results: He went from 90 percent on his written test to 10 percent when he heard the others' answers.

[10] "You know, five people are seeing it and I'm not. ... I just went along with the answers," Tony said.

Tony wasn't alone. *Primetime* put seven other unsuspecting test subjects on the hot seat. Barbara, for example, got 70 percent on the written test, but her score fell to 30 percent when she listened to others' answers.

"I think I tend to do that, doubt myself when everyone else has their own opinion," Barbara said.

David and Graham, unlike the others, gave the right answers, even when the group didn't.

"I wanted to go with what I felt was the correct answer, and trust myself, and that's what I did," Graham said.

Social Graces

[15] *Primetime* tried out another scenario, this time in a more social, relaxed setting. We invited a group of strangers to Jean George's Asian restaurant in lower Manhattan for a fabulous dinner – and a surprise.

Party planner Colin Cowie and his friend, Donna D'Cruz, were in on the experiment. Their role was to exhibit outlandish behavior most people wouldn't dream of while out at dinner with a group of strangers.

Cowie and D'Cruz licked their fingers, a dinner table no-no. Cowie picked his teeth. The guests initially seemed not to take the bait – until dessert rolled around.

D'Cruz told everyone they should pick up pieces of mango face first, using their mouth. Eventually, people who were total strangers at the beginning of the evening were passing fruit back and forth, mouth to mouth.

Only Harold and Maria, a Canadian couple, passed on the gustatory familiarity. Finally, Harold was the only one who dared to ask, what is the point of the dinner?

[20] Cowie explained the experiment to the group. "I think because we broke the rules, and we made things possible at the table, several of you followed suit with it."

3. **Unwittingly** (*adverb*): without realizing; without being aware

One woman at the table said: "I think the majority of people will look to see what others are doing and follow their example."

Conforming Can Have Dangerous Consequences

Both of these tests are examples of our human need to conform. In fact, Berns' experiment is a variation of one done many years ago by another scientist trying to decipher⁴ an extremely vicious instance of conformity – why so many Germans followed Adolf Hitler down the path to death and destruction. Berns says there are two ways to explain conformist behavior.

"One is that they know what their eyes are telling them, and yet they choose to ignore it, and go along with the group to belong to the group," he said.

The second explanation is that hearing other opinions – even if they are wrong – can actually change what we see, distorting⁵ our own perceptions.

- [25] Berns wanted to see what was happening in the brain during his experiment. Using an fMRI,⁶ Berns found that, during the moment of decision, his subjects' brains lit up not in the area where thinking takes place, but in the back of the brain, where vision is interpreted.

Essentially, their brains were scrambling messages – people actually believed what others told them they were seeing, not what they saw with their own eyes.

"What that suggests is that, what people tell you – if enough people are telling you – can actually get mixed in with what your own eyes are telling you," Berns said.

And for those who went against the group, there was another intriguing result: Their brains lit up in a place called the amygdala, which Berns calls "the fear center of the brain."

"And what we are seeing here, we think, is the fear of standing alone," Berns said.

- [30] So why do people follow the pack no matter how ridiculous it seems? Perhaps it's not so much about good and evil, right and wrong, smart or stupid. It might be, as Berns' experiment suggests, that our brains get confused between what it sees and what others tell us.

Just knowing that might help us guard against it.

"Why Do People Follow the Crowd?" from www.abcnews.com, © ABC News. Reprinted with permission, all rights reserved.

4. **Decipher (verb):** to work out what something says or means, even though it is very difficult to read or understand
5. **Distort (verb):** to pull or twist out of shape; to give a misleading or false account or impression of
6. Functional magnetic resonance imaging or functional MRI (fMRI) is a procedure that measures brain activity.

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. Which of the following best describes a central idea of the text? [RI.2]
 - A. Experiments reveal that people's behavior is greatly influenced by their desire to conform.
 - B. The Nazi's used behavioral experiments to trick German citizens into following the laws that most recognized as immoral.
 - C. An overwhelming desire to fit in encourages people to display bizarre behavior at restaurants.
 - D. People are unable to resist the desire to follow the crowd because it is part of human psychology.

2. PART A: What is meant by the word "gustatory" as it is used in paragraph 19? [RI.4]
 - A. acting strangely
 - B. related to eating
 - C. being reserved and polite
 - D. following what others do

3. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A? [RI.1]
 - A. "outlandish behavior most people wouldn't dream of" (Paragraph 16)
 - B. "people who were total strangers at the beginning of the evening were passing fruit back and forth, mouth to mouth." (Paragraph 18)
 - C. "Cowie explained the experiment to the group" (Paragraph 20)
 - D. "'the majority of people will look to see what others are doing and follow their example.'" (Paragraph 21)

4. What is the relationship between the Primetime experiments and the Germans who followed Adolf Hitler? [RI.3]
 - A. The experiments reveal the human desire to conform and explain why the Germans were willing to follow Hitler.
 - B. They both demonstrate that even under extreme pressure, some people will resist and do what they think is right.
 - C. The experiments reveal that both that the Germans who followed Adolf Hitler and the people in the experiments cannot be held responsible for following the crowd.
 - D. The experiments illustrate that the Germans were wrong to follow Adolf Hitler, just like the people in the experiment were wrong to follow the crowd.

5. How do paragraphs 1-2 contribute to the development of ideas in the text? [RI.5]

Discussion Questions

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. The author suggests that we don't like to admit to ourselves that we will readily follow the crowd. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Explain your answer.
2. The author suggests that the desire to belong is a very powerful—if not the most powerful—human emotion. Do you agree or disagree with this assertion? Explain your answer.
3. Why do people follow the crowd? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other art, literature, or history in your answer.