



# 9th Grade

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## Stories to Supplement Lessons

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## Sample questions

Below are general questions that can be used with the stories.

- What did this story teach us?
- What did this story mean to you?
- What pillar could be tied to this story?
- After hearing this story, is there anything you may do differently from now on?
- Can you relate to the story? In what way?
- Will this story cause you to change your current way of thinking?

Some other thought provoking questions that may apply to the stories are listed below.

- What can happen when we can't control our anger? To other people? To ourselves? How can it affect our life? Our relationships?
- Have you ever been rewarded for a kindness? What did you do?
- Have you ever thanked someone for something kind they did for you?
- Would you help out someone in need? Why? Why not?
- What do you think it means to be a "good person"?
- Was there a time when you made a choice to "do the right thing" instead of something you knew was wrong?
- Describe someone you know who is about getting. Describe someone you know who is about giving. How are they different?
- What can we do to shape our own character/destiny?

## Why Aren't More People Happy?

Ask struggling adolescents why they get high on drugs or alcohol or seek sex without intimacy or commitment and they're likely to tell you they just want to be happy. Ask young professionals why they're so driven to make money and they'll talk about all the things they'd get if they were rich, things that will make them happy. Ask adults why they had affairs or left their families and you'll hear it again: "I just want to be happy." So why aren't more people happy?

One problem is unrealistic expectations. Some people think of happiness as an unbroken series of pleasurable emotions, they hope to feel good all the time. Others expect a much more intense or lasting feeling of joy when they achieve a desired goal. As a result, when getting what they want doesn't produce the feelings they expected they fall into the kind of despondency conveyed in the famous Peggy Lee song: "Is That All There Is?"

There's great danger in confusing a sustainable state of happiness with fleeting sensations of pleasure and fun. Those who make pleasure-seeking the focus of their lives soon find themselves needing new and different sources of pleasure. It's like a drug addict who needs continually higher doses to get high.

Happiness is a less intense but more durable feeling of well-being. It's not a continuous state. No one is happy all the time. Though we may experience extraordinary moments of joy or despair, happiness is a kind of emotional resting place of quiet satisfaction with one's life. The art of living a happy life is a balance between getting what you want and learning to want what you get.

You Don't Have to Be Sick to Get Better by Michael Josephson  
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## **A Walk- On Coach Leads the Way**

Richmond High School near Oakland, California, is in the midst of poverty and violence. Many of its students don't take education very seriously and hope is in short supply. But in 1999 the school had one

thing going for it: its winning-est basketball team ever. They were 13-0 when Coach Ken Carter made national news by benching his entire squad, locking them out of the gym, and forfeiting the next two games to emphasize his demand that his players take their studies seriously.

But that's not all. In a city plagued by gangs, he makes players sign and live up to an agreement requiring them to stay off the streets and maintain a 2.3 grade point average-higher than the state's minimum 2.0 GPA for sports participation.

What's more, Carter's students not only must attend classes, but must sit in the front row.

The great thing is it all works. According to a July 2001 article in the Los Angeles Time, all 15 academic slackers on the 1999 team are going to college. This story is all the more remarkable since Carter isn't a full-time coach or even a member of the Richmond faculty. He's a walk on coach who runs a sports supply store and a barbershop for a living.

But when he's with his team, Coach Carter knows he is, first and foremost, a teacher. Explaining his stance for academics, he said, "On the streets and public basketball courts in Richmond and any other city in America, you see the broken dreams of former high school legends who got left behind by life. And I'm not going to let that happen to these boys."

Carter's definition of winning it seems to be getting a college education for his athletes. With this definition, maybe winning is everything.

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## **Graduation: The Door to More and Better**

A common observation made to young graduates is that they will look back on their school days as the best of their lives. And, to be sure, many wonderful memories will always connect them to this exciting, dynamic and often traumatic period of growth.

But to tell young people, on the threshold of adulthood, that the best years are behind them is an unkind lie that pollutes the sentiments associated with leaving friends and familiar surroundings with fear and apprehension about the future. The truth is much more encouraging: the best is yet to come. Graduation is the door to a life of more and better.

I urge graduates to think fondly of school memories, but also to rush enthusiastically into the future. Graduation marks the end of one chapter, but it's also a beginning, filled with unpredictable pleasures.

First, in many ways, the world outside school is kinder and fairer. Free from the pecking order of the school's social system, you are more likely to be judged for who you are and what you can do, rather than who you hang out with, what clubs you're in or how you dress. Natural insecurities will gradually surrender to self-confidence, and you will like yourself more when you learn that you don't have to be phony, rich, beautiful or even popular to live a good life.

You will keep old friends as long as you have things in common, but you are sure to make new ones as well. Yes, you will face additional challenges and responsibilities, but as a result, you will continually gain far greater control over your life. And, as you become increasingly self-reliant, you will experience new, exciting levels of freedom and independence to do what you want to do and be who you want to be.

Most of all, if you look in the right places you will discover mature, meaningful love and trusting relationships that provide unbounded fulfillment. And, if you wait until you can truly appreciate the comfort of marriage and unequalled joys of raising a family, there will be endless moments of profound pride and satisfaction that make your school years seem like kid stuff.

The Best Is Yet to Come by Michael Josephson  
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## **The Road to Freedom and Independence**

Someone once said that the subtle line between childhood and adulthood is crossed when we move from saying “It got lost” to “I lost it.” Indeed, the willingness to accept responsibility for what we do and what we fail or refuse to do is a crucial sign of emotional and moral maturity as well as integrity. That’s why responsibility is one of the pillars of good character.

As the well-known song from the musical Peter Pan, “I Won’t Grow Up,” suggests, one aspect of responsibility involves burdensome obligations that some would like to avoid.

Among the most important landmarks of maturity are acceptance of the fact that we are accountable for how we respond to the demands and opportunities of life and recognition that the benefits of being responsible greatly outweigh the disadvantages. Those who never grow up may always look at carrying their own weight, standing on their own two feet, preparing and setting goals, and exercising the discipline and self-control to reach those goals as burdens to be avoided. However, an inescapable fact of life is that being responsible is the surest road to trust, and trust is the surest road to freedom and independence. To be thought of as someone who can be depended on is a tremendous asset in personal and business relationships.

What’s more, it’s tremendously empowering to learn that within the notion of responsibility is the vital insight that we all have the power to control our actions and attitudes and that we all can change our lives by changing our attitudes.

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## Baloney Sandwich Relationships

Jason, a construction worker who brought his lunch to work, opened up his bag and flew into a rage. “I can’t believe it! Baloney again. I hate baloney.” Trying to calm him down, a coworker said, “If you hate baloney so much, just ask your wife to make you something else.” Jason replied, “That won’t work. I make my own lunches.”

There are lots of people in this world who make their own baloney sandwiches and then act as victims of their own choices. It’s like the audacious murderer who killed his parents and then asked the court for mercy since he was an orphan.

The baloney sandwich is a metaphor for things we do to ourselves that we don’t take responsibility for. Take personal relationships, for example. Don’t you know people who continually get themselves involved in baloney sandwich relationships? Sometimes physical attraction is too strong a lure, sometimes loneliness is too much to bear, and sometimes they have a rescue mentality. But whatever the attraction, lots of intelligent men and women disable their good sense and high standards and ignore their experience by repeatedly getting involved with people who are bad for them.

If you have had more than one unsuccessful relationship with people who share the same defect, spot the pattern and break it. There’s an old saying: “When you’re in a hole, stop digging.” In other words, assess your situation and take charge of your life. Don’t dig in; climb out.

## Listen Up!

R-E-S-P-E-C-T: Aretha Franklin taught us how to spell it. If we were lucky, our parents taught us what it means, and that it's a fundamental pillar of good character. Though we're not duty-bound to respect everyone in the sense that we hold them in high esteem, we are morally obligated to treat everyone with respect.

Often that means really listening to what others have to say. That means consciously hearing and actually considering what is being said. That's hard when we're not really interested or don't think much of the person talking or we are just waiting for our own turn to speak. The fact is that most of us don't listen very well, certainly not all the time and especially with the people closest to us. Kids are especially adept at tuning out their parents, but parents are equally skilled at ignoring or dismissing as foolish or irrelevant what their kids have to say.

The disrespectfulness of not listening is most apparent when we are being ignored or patronized by others. As when someone we are talking to rolls his eyes in a show of impatience or contempt, or fake interest is betrayed by a vacant stare or wandering eyes.

We all want to know that what we say and think matters. But if we want others to care about what we say, we need to show we care about what they say. Like all the important virtues we teach respect by demonstrating it. So listen up! It will make people feel better and you may even learn something.