

Portraits of
Character
Book Two

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Introduction

Teachers today face many challenges. Included among these challenges are objectives that transcend the mastery of traditional subject matter. Teachers and parents alike have embraced the character development movement; the effort to foster in students positive virtues such as caring, cooperation, respect, responsibility, honesty, and integrity. It is these desirable personal traits that will guide students through life.

This book is provided to aid you in your efforts to nurture the development of your students' character. In this book, you will find two dozen stories of people who exemplify positive character attributes. Some are recognizable

individuals, celebrated for their positive contributions to others, to society, and to the world. Many stories focus on everyday heroes; ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances. People who rise to the occasion. People who often sacrifice personal safety for the sake of others or dedicate their lives to a worthy cause. Both celebrities and everyday heroes serve as positive role models for students. It is our hope that in reading and learning about these individuals who exemplify desirable traits, students will learn the value of character formation and be inspired to become virtuous individuals.

Portraits of character are important tools for character development—but not enough. Students are more apt to develop character if they actively think about, discuss, and write about it. Thus, we have provided a Teacher Guide with each story to help you with this task. In the Teacher Guide, there are questions for your students and writing ideas. Through identifying, discussing, and writing about the many traits exemplified in these stories, students

learn a process of thinking critically about their actions and how those actions affect their lives and the lives of others.

As a teacher, you have a tremendous impact on many students' lives.

You are an important

catalyst in the process of character formation. It is our hope that you use these stories and activities to positively influence the many lives that you touch; that you, too, rise to the occasion; that you rise to meet the formidable challenge of helping the youth of today develop the courage and wisdom to live with character. And if you succeed in touching but a few lives, you succeed in making a better world for us today and for the generations to come.

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Teacher Guide

Love Is the Key *Mother Teresa*

Synopsis

Mother Teresa cares for the needy.

Thinking Questions

1. Why might Mother Teresa take time to care for a dying old man?
2. What kinds of risks does Mother Teresa take? Why do you think she takes these risks?
3. How would you define the “magic” of Mother Teresa?
4. What do you think Mother Teresa’s motto means? (Her motto is “Put your love for others into living action.”) Is it a good motto? Why or why not?
5. Why are Mother Teresa’s actions considered heroic?

Writing Ideas

1. Mother Teresa lives by her motto. If you were to choose or create a motto to live by, what would it be? Explain why that motto would be a good one for you.
2. What kind of risks would you take to help someone? Make a list of these risks. Then write a paragraph or two explaining why you would take those risks.

Desirable Traits

- Compassion
- Love
- Self-Sacrifice

Interesting Words and Phrases

- accepted her honors
- humbly
- convent
- cradled
- focused
- glance of comfort
- into living action
- poorest of the poor
- sacks of bones
- sunken eyes
- motto
- nun
- sites
- soothed

One dying man was suffering from both sores and hunger. The muscles of his arms and legs had wasted away. Worms were eating at him and he smelled.

With sunken eyes, the man stared lifelessly around. But no one stared back. Those who could, walked around him. Nobody seemed to care.

Then a tiny woman stopped. She was dressed in white, except for her blue-striped headpiece. Deep wrinkles lined her face.

The woman's warm eyes sent the man a glance of comfort. Then she bent over him and began to work.

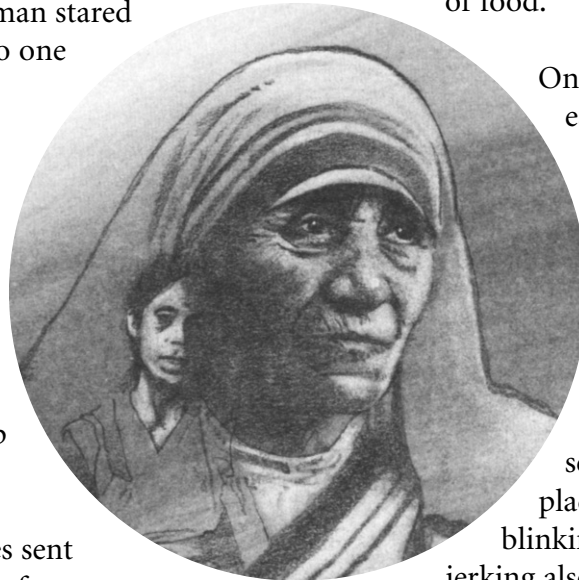
First, she bathed the man. Carefully she washed his face with cool water. Next she washed his ribs, which poked through his skin. She also cleaned his oozing sores. Finally she soothed him and fed him some bread.

The man knew that this woman was risking her life by being there. The air was filled with deadly germs.

In a weak voice he asked, "Why do you do this?"

"I do this because I love you," Mother Teresa answered with a tender smile.

Later she went to a nearby hospital. She found many children there dying from lack of food.



One young boy was in especially bad shape. He lay on his back, shaking. His eyelids jerked open and shut.

Mother Teresa leaned over him and stroked his stomach and chest. Within a minute, what seemed like a miracle took place. His eyes stopped blinking. His shaking and jerking also stopped.

"I do this because I love you," Mother Teresa answered with a tender smile.

The boy was amazed. For the first time in a long time, he could see. Slowly his eyes began to search for his helper. Finally, he focused on the kindly face that smiled down on him. He just stared and stared.

His eyes spoke for him. "I thought that no one cared."

Then the boy settled back with a pleased, peaceful smile. He was relieved. There was some love and concern in the world after all.

Such is the simple magic of Mother Teresa. For years she has let needy people know that someone cares. Some of these people are ill.

Others are starving or dying. Mother Teresa treats such people not only in India but all over the world.

Where did this amazing woman come from? She was born in Albania in 1910. By the time she was 18, she had moved to Calcutta.

For a long time she stayed there as a nun, teaching and then serving as a principal in a Catholic girls' school. In 1946 she felt called by God to leave her school and ease the pain of the "poorest of the poor."

Her success is amazing. With her help, more than 700 sites for the poor have been set up. These sites offer shelter, food, and medicine. And for years, she has continued to care for the sick herself. She has cradled thousands of needy people in her hands. For her spirit and good work, Mother Teresa has won many honors. She even received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979.

Mother Teresa accepted her honors humbly. And she asked for nothing in return. All of her awards and gifts were put to work for the needy.

When she was 80 Mother Teresa wanted to retire. She felt her age and failing heart were holding her back. She asked to resign her position as the head of the Missionaries of Charity.

Her supporters voted to keep her as the head of the missions. So Mother Teresa withdrew her request to resign. She continued to open new missions.

Mother Teresa always demanded a lot of herself. But she didn't seem to ask that much of others. She said, "It is not how much we do, but how much love we put into doing it."

Even simpler is her motto, "Put your love for others into living action." Mother Teresa's miracles fully proved the power of that motto.

Mother Teresa died in 1997, but the results of her good work will live for many future generations.