

## Using Words of Wisdom to Prompt Reflective Writing

- When one helps another, both gain in strength. – Ecuadorian proverb
- What is wrong today won't be right tomorrow. - Dutch proverb
- Don't cry because it's over. Smile because it happened. – Dr. Seuss
- The best advice is a good example. – adapted from Ossie Davis
- If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant. – Anne Bradstreet
- You can't unscramble eggs. – John Pierpont Morgan
- When spider webs unite they can tie up a lion. – Ethiopian proverb
- An ant on the move does more than a dozing ox. – Mexican proverb
- Don't judge a book by its cover. – English proverb
- It takes less time to do a thing right than to explain why you did it wrong. – Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
- Success is 10 percent inspiration and 90 percent perspiration. – Thomas Edison
- Two wrongs don't make a right. – English proverb
- Never look down on people unless you're helping them up – Jesse Jackson
- It's not enough to know how to ride — one must also know how to fall. – Mexican proverb
- Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. – Dr. Seuss
- Everybody thinks of changing humanity and nobody thinks of changing oneself. – Leo Tolstoy
- When eating a fruit, think of the person who planted the tree. – Vietnamese proverb
- Most people see what is, and never see what can be. - Albert Einstein
- Don't judge a book by its cover. – English proverb
- No one has ever become poor by giving. – Anne Frank

### **Actions and Words**

Jacob Gruener (5<sup>th</sup> grade)

#### **“Actions speak louder than words.” – American proverb**

The saying “actions speak louder than words” means a lot to me because actions really do speak louder. It is better to do something than to just say you will. For instance, if someone said that they were going to do community service, just saying it wouldn't be as helpful as actually doing it. I've seen a lot of posters around my school that say that character is about how you ACT. In fact, the word act is actually embedded in the word character. That quote shows a lot of character.

An example of this is when I helped my increase my friend's chance to win a ping-pong table in a raffle. He only had one ticket that the teacher passed out, and, since my mom donated to our fundraiser, I'd gotten one hundred and twenty tickets. I heard him say that he would really like the ping-pong table and that he was going to put his one ticket into that bucket. When I heard this, I decided to help him by putting in a couple of my tickets with his name on them. I never told him, but it felt good to help a friend. I was very excited when I heard over the announcements that he had won the ping-pong table.

Another good example of this quote in action is when my mom told me that she would help me find a job so I could earn some money. Her promise didn't help me as much until she actually found me a job. She gave me the responsibility of planning our family meals, clipping coupons for the ingredients we need, and helping her shop for these items. She helped me find a way to make money, not by her words, but by her actions. And now I have enough money to buy my whole family birthday presents.

I hope that the adage “actions speak louder than words” not only means much in my life but in yours, too. It is a great thing to keep in mind next time you're tempted to just say something instead of doing something. If you use the Six Pillars of Character, they will give you the courage to take action instead of just watching or talking about it on the sidelines. My actions helped my friend and my mom's actions helped me. If everybody were to do something for someone else, the world would be a better place!

### **It's All About Attitude**

Kaitlyn Gruener (8<sup>th</sup> grade)

## “Whether you think you can or not, you are right.” – Henry Ford

Last year, during 7<sup>th</sup> grade, in my construction careers class, we watched a documentary of the life of the great Henry Ford, founder of the Ford Motor Company. During the film, this quote jumped out at me. Even though it was an incidental part of the movie, it grabbed my attention because I realized how true this was. Upon receiving the quote list for this year, I spotted this quote. It reminded me of the video last year, and I knew that I needed to choose this particular maxim for this reflective essay.

This quote relates to my life in so many ways. I am the pitcher on my 14U A-ball fastpitch softball team. My pitching coach gives me weekly tests to see how I am improving. If I don't pass the task, I must retake it the next week until I have mastery over that aspect. One test, nicknamed the Distractions Test, was designed to see how well I could block out annoying and distracting noises while on the pitching mound. My coach would talk to me, sneeze, cough, jump up and down, and do other things to distract me from throwing strikes. It took me 52 weeks, a whole year, to pass this task, longer than it had taken anyone else. I would repeatedly fail the distractions week after week, until I finally realized something. I was always going into the lessons saying, “There's no way I'm going to pass this test.” My attitude toward the test was negative and pessimistic, and I believed I couldn't pass it. I never even once said, “I can do this,” or “I will pass this test.” I had been limiting myself to failure. After my enlightenment, I approached the test with a positive attitude and the belief that I could achieve this goal, and I finally passed the lesson. I know it sounds unbelievable, but I passed. Because of telling myself, “I can do it,” instead of, “I can't,” I was able to overcome an obstacle that troubled me for a long time.

Another example of this quote's relevance to my life is in academics. Being in Geometry, math at a level two years advanced for my age, is very difficult. It requires a lot of effort and a positive mentality. Taking tests on this material is stressful for me, and sometimes my stress turns into negative comments, such as, “I can't do this,” and “It's way too hard for me.” Even after studying hard for a test, if my attitude is pessimistic, it will cause me to be so nervous that I'll forget all the things I studied. On a test not too long ago, I was worrying so badly and putting myself down with comments like, “I'm going to fail.” Although my friends said that I would do fine, they were wrong. As soon as I set my mind to thinking that I was going to fail, I had doomed myself to do badly. I got an 83 on that test, and because of my high expectations, it was an unacceptable grade. I had set myself up to be knocked down. Even with the proper studying, my bad attitude had caused me to get a bad grade on a test that would count for a lot. On the next test, my attitude was great, and I believed in myself, that I had the ability to make a good grade. I had also studied again, but no more than on the test before. Sure enough, I got a 100. My teacher stopped me in the hall that morning before my class to tell me. She was proud of me. I was proud of myself, too. It just goes to show that your attitude really does matter.

My attitude also plays an important part in my music. I play the clarinet, and last year at Region Band tryouts, I did not even place in the District Band, the lowest, non-performing band. Going to Region tryouts this year, my mom told me to do my best, to which I replied, “What if my best isn't good enough?” I doubted myself, thinking that I wouldn't make it, even if I tried my best. It was the same self-doubt I had encountered during the distractions and math tests. I knew I needed to overcome it, and I wasn't about to let it get the best of me again. With positive thoughts, my confidence grew as I patiently waited for my turn. At the end of the day, when they were announcing results, I saw that I had placed 6<sup>th</sup> out of 115 clarinet players. I had made Symphonic Region Band, the best band I could achieve. Only the top players get to go to Region Orchestra, the highest honor for a junior high band student, and when I was chosen as an alternate, I knew I had made a breakthrough in overcoming my attitude and self-doubt issues.

An attitude does not just influence how you do on tests. It helps you make decisions in everyday life. One of my favorite books when I was little was *The Little Engine That Could* by Watty Piper. In that story, the little engine is trying to climb up a hill. She tries and tries and tries, but since she doesn't believe she'll make it, she struggles. However, once she starts saying, “I think I can, I think I can,” she makes it up and over the hill to deliver her goods. Because of her positive attitude toward her abilities and what she can do, she can suddenly do more things than ever!

Henry Ford's quote has inspired me to keep a positive attitude toward life. This concept has made a difference in my life. “Whether you think you can or not, you are right,” seems too simple, but in reality it's not. If you set your sights high, whatever you believe, you can achieve. It's all about attitude.

### More Food For Thought . . . . .

- To educate a person in the mind but not the morals is to educate a menace to society. – Theodore Roosevelt
- The liar's punishment is not in the least that he is not believed, but that he cannot believe anyone else. –G. B. Shaw
- The best way to teach morality is to make it a habit with children. – Aristotle
- Real generosity is doing something nice for someone who will never find out. – Frank A. Clark
- What you are speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say to the contrary. – Ralph Waldo Emerson

Visit <http://charactercounts.org/programs/FFL/weekly.html> for more maxims and weekly lesson plans.