

## Lesson 7: Power of Creativity

### PURPOSE

To help students appreciate the power of creativity and inspire them to become creative problem solvers.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

1. Understand creativity and humor as uniquely human powers that engage our ability to see the world in different and new ways.
2. Understand that humor and humility are important qualities that help us see the world in new ways.
3. Use creativity and imagination to help us change ourselves and the world in positive ways.

### VOCABULARY

- Creativity: using one's imagination and ideas to shape the world

### MATERIALS & RESOURCES

- [Video](#): Prove them Wrong
- Article: Creative people aren't afraid to fail
- Excerpt: "Tear-Water Tea" by Arnold Lobel
- Three kinds of humor exercise

### PROCEDURE

**Step 1:** Review the previous lesson. Recall the distinction between freedom for excellence and freedom of indifference. Recall some of the lessons by Viktor Frankl and how he lived freedom for excellence. Motivate the students to pursue freedom for excellence in their daily lives by developing excellent habits.

Complete or review Interim Quiz 1. Discuss any insights or questions that might have emerged from the quiz for students.

Step 2: Write the definition of creativity on the board:

Creativity: using one's imagination and ideas to shape the world

Show the [Video: Prove them Wrong](#), which was written and narrated by a high school student. In the video, the student talks about obstacles and abilities and shares his own experience of having a limp and only one hand, and how he became a high school basketball athlete. Discuss the idea presented in the video of moving from obstacles to abilities. What does the narrator say about proving people wrong when they misjudge others? Invite individual student sharing.

**Step 3:** Distribute the article, [Creative People aren't Afraid to Fail](#). The article showcases the mistakes and failures of inventors, writers, and musicians. Experiences of failure can often prompt us to stop trying or convince us that we're not good enough to succeed. But, people who have the humility to persevere despite their failures, and to learn from them in order to achieve new successes, are truly creative.

Divide students into groups and have them read the article together. After students have finished reading the article, discuss the article as a class. Explain that human creativity can help us find solutions to different challenges in our own lives as well as in the world around us. The power of creativity enables humans to express deep dimensions of reality which are hard to express otherwise. An area where creativity is expressed is humor. Funny people tend to think creatively about how to discover humor in life's ordinary circumstances.

**Step 4:** Explain that there are many theories about humor; what it is and where it comes from. Today we'll look at three general types of humor:

*Relief theory* argues that laughter and humor are ways of blowing off psychological steam and stress. This kind of humor breaks the tension of a sad or tense situation.

*Superiority theory* was originally formulated by thinkers Plato and Aristotle. In this theory, humor is a means of declaring one's superiority over others. (If you're looking to cultivate a sense of humor to improve your leadership skills, this is not the kind you want to acquire!)

*Incongruity theory* argues that humor arises when two contrasting ideas are put together. Many joke punchlines are often the result of an unexpected ending. This kind of humor subverts a more conventional way of looking at the world.

In the following excerpt from a children's book, *Owl at Home*, author Arnold Lobel uses humor in a simple but effective way to surprise his audience. Lobel combines both relief and incongruity theory, describing familiar household objects to evoke sad feelings (relief). He then surprises the reader by gathering his tears to make tear water tea (tears are the body's way of relief and tea is a typical drink of comfort, but the combination of the two is also an example of incongruity theory).

If time permits, divide students into groups and have each group perform a skit of tear water tea. Students can re-write the text to suit their style or use objects in the classroom around them.

**Step 5:** Summarize. Review the ideas of creativity, humor and failure. Ask if linking these ideas surprised the class, and if it gave them new confidence to explore new ideas as they learn and grow in excellence. Emphasize the need for persistence, as they pursue excellence.

## Creative People Aren't Afraid to Fail



The essential part of creativity is not being afraid to fail.”

*Edwin Land, scientist*



Humor is the great thing, the saving thing after all. The minute it crops up, all our hardnesses yield, all our irritations, and resentments flit away, and a sunny spirit takes their place.”

*Mark Twain*

Creative people aren't afraid to fail. Why? Because creative people learn to accept failure as an inevitable part of the process. The great jazz musician, Herbie Hancock fondly recalled one such instance. During a 1960s concert, Hancock played what he judged as a very pronounced wrong chord. He flinched, fearing that he had ruined the whole night. A gifted improviser, Miles Davis responded with a series of notes that made Hancock's chord sound intentional. And the band played on.

One trait of truly creative people is resilience. When they fail, they adapt and try again. What happens when a chef discovers that all of their French bread has gone stale? *The end of the world!* The menu is ruined! No, they create bread pudding.

Thomas Edison was told by a teacher that he was 'too stupid to learn anything'. And for a while, Edison might have wondered if his teacher was right. Thomas Edison made one THOUSAND *unsuccessful attempts at inventing the light bulb*. Can you imagine how he must have felt? Amazingly, Edison kept trying and for all of those unsuccessful attempts, he went on to hold more than 1,000 patents, including the phonograph and electric lamp.

Ever heard of Jerry Seinfeld? He's one of the most successful comedians of all time. But his first time on stage he saw the audience and froze. Then, he delivered his set and was booed off the stage. He had two choices: pack it up and accept that comedy wasn't really "his thing" or return to the same stage the next night and try again. He edited and tightened his material and chose to try again.

J.K. Rowling was financially broke, on welfare, struggling with depression, recently divorced and a single mother writing a novel while studying. Have you ever heard the saying, "persistence pays off"? From woe to wizard, her bestselling books about Harry Potter have been read around the world.

Humorist and cartoonist James Thurber once said, “It is better to know some of the questions than all of the answers.” Creativity can help us in all areas of our life, from problem solving the steps in a homework assignment, to brightening our spirit, and even shedding light on difficult issues. But we have to be willing to stay humble, stay curious and maybe even look a little bit foolish in the eyes of the world.

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Parts of the text are based on the article: 15 Highly Successful People Who Failed Before Succeeding.  
<https://www.lifehack.org/articles/productivity/15-highly-successful-people-who-failed-their-way-success.html>

## SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

## TEAR-WATER TEA

Excerpt from *Owl at Home*, by Arnold Lobel

Owl took the kettle out of the cupboard. "Tonight I will make tear-water tea," he said. He put the kettle on his lap. "Now," said Owl, "I will begin." Owl sat very still. He began to think of things that were sad. "Chairs with broken legs," said Owl. His eyes began to water. "Songs that cannot be sung," said Owl, "because the words have been forgotten." Owl began to cry. A large tear rolled down and dropped into the kettle. "Spoons that have fallen behind the stove and are never seen again," said Owl. More tears dropped down into the kettle. "Books that cannot be read," said Owl, "because some of the pages have been torn out." "Clocks that have stopped," said Owl, "with no one near to wind them up." Owl was crying. Many large tears dropped into the kettle. "Mornings nobody was because everybody was sleeping," sobbed Owl. "Mashed potatoes left on a plate," he cried, "because no one wanted to eat them. And pencils that are too short to use." Owl thought about many other sad things. He cried and cried. Soon the kettle was filled up with tears. "There," said Owl. "That does it!" Owl stopped crying. He put the kettle on the stove to boil for tea. Owl felt happy as he filled his cup. "It tasted a little bit salty," he said, "but tear-water tea is always pretty good."