

Lesson 6: Freedom for Excellence

PURPOSE

To motivate students to live freedom for excellence in their lives.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

1. Understand freedom for excellence.
2. Identify and distinguish between freedom for excellence and freedom of indifference.
3. Recognize examples of choosing freedom for excellence in their life.

MATERIALS & RESOURCES

- Oh, Wise Expert! Game + Answer Key
- The Great Power Principle + Answer Key
- What Would a Great Person Say? Worksheet + Answer Key
- The Great Power Principle in Practice + Answer Key

VOCABULARY

- Freedom for excellence: using one's freedom to make excellent choices
- Freedom of indifference: choosing carelessly by failing to consider whether one's actions are excellent or non-excellent.

PROCEDURE

Step 1: Review the previous lesson. Recall that the power to think can be used in both an excellent and non-excellent way. Emphasize some of the excellent and non-excellent ideas students recognized in the class and recall the 5 habits of excellent thinking and 5 habits of non-excellent thinking.

Set up three chairs at the front of the classroom. Introduce the game, [Oh, Wise Expert!](#) Explain that you are looking for wise experts to answer questions that have perplexed humankind for millennia! If the expert is wise and can correctly answer the question, they will remain on the wise expert seat. If the second expert does not know the answer to the question, they will return to their seat in the classroom and the third expert will answer the question and another expert will fill the third seat at the front.

Invite the first three students to sit in the chairs provided. Instruct the class to say, “Oh Wise Expert!” before the teacher reads the first question from the [Oh, Wise Expert! Question and Answer Key](#) provided in the materials. Once the review game is finished, have all wise experts return to their seats.

Step 2: Recall that in the earlier lessons, the class learned that humans possess two unique powers: the powers to think and choose. The power to choose is one of the most important human powers that distinguishes humans from all other living beings.

Read the text, [The Great Power Principle](#) aloud and discuss the questions associated with the text as a class. Lead the class discussion using the [Answer Key](#) provided as a guide.

Highlight that humans possess great powers which enable them to become excellent human beings. But as Peter Parker (Spiderman), Winston Churchill (former British Prime Minister) and Theodore Roosevelt (former United States President) say: “With great power comes great responsibility.” Having the powers to think and to choose enables human beings to use their powers for good or for bad things. Human freedom is always connected to our powers to think and to choose.

For example, someone can use their *power to think* in a non-excellent way, by asking personal questions to their peers in order to spread gossip about someone. Or, someone can use their *power to choose* in an excellent way, by welcoming a new student to sit beside them at lunch.

Step 3: To reinforce these ideas, have students work on the [What Would a Great Person Say?](#) Worksheet. The students should distinguish between things consistent with The Great Power Principle and those contrary to it and write them in the sheet.

After the students have finished, review the worksheet as a class with the [Answer Key](#) provided.

Write the vocabulary definitions on the board:

Freedom for excellence: using one’s freedom to make excellent choices

Freedom of indifference: choosing carelessly by failing to consider whether one’s actions are excellent or non-excellent

Explain that there are two main ways in which freedom can be understood. Freedom of indifference is the idea that we are free simply if we can do what we want and nothing or no one can prevent us from doing that. This type of freedom fails to consider whether our actions are good or bad, excellent or non-excellent, and whether they will do harm to others and ourselves. For example, someone who chooses to eat unhealthy food, stays up late playing video games, skips practice and doesn't do their homework will, with time, become unhealthy, tired, moody, and perform worse in school and sports. Even though this person made a lot of those choices in order to avoid responsibility, "I'm not listening to the coach," this will actually make that person less free to do things they like to do. Someone who doesn't practice the piano will not perform well and will not enjoy playing the piano anymore.

To be excellent at anything requires us to take responsibility for our choices. The second type of freedom is freedom for excellence. This type of freedom says that we become more free if we make good or even excellent choices. These choices can be hard in-the-moment (choosing to do homework instead of video games, even when we don't have to in practice) but choosing to use our freedom for excellence helps us grow and develop. Freedom for excellence also implies that we should consider whether our choices respect human dignity in ourselves and others and try to always make choices that respect human dignity.

Step 4: Ask the students to think of an example of freedom for excellence or freedom of indifference. Have the students write down one example of each of the following:

1. Using freedom for excellence
2. Using freedom of indifference

Ask the students to share their written responses with the class. Lead a class discussion to help students recognize the best way to use their freedom in the situations they mentioned.

Step 5: Summarize. Review the two different kinds of freedom: freedom for excellence and freedom of indifference. Affirm that people should always use their freedom for excellence. This will ensure that their choices are excellent and that they will become more excellent as a human being. Recognizing and choosing the excellent choice in each situation is not always easy. For this reason, it is important to practice in small ways every day, thinking and choosing actions that respect the dignity of ourselves and others.

OH, WISE EXPERT! QUESTION AND ANSWER KEY**True/false**

1. **T** / F Is it true that “Power” is the ability of a living being to do something on its own?
2. **T** / F Is it true that human beings have powers that animals and plants do not have?
3. **T** / F Is it true that “Universal” means that every person has human dignity?
4. T / **F** Is it true that we can be friends with objects? **We can only be friends with subjects.**
5. **T** / F Is it true that one excellent habit of thinking is to consider if you might be wrong?

Short Answer

6. What is the human ability to understand and connect ideas, called? **The power to think.**
7. What are two uniquely human powers? **The power to think and choose.**
8. What is a system called, in which things are arranged above and below one another according to their importance or complexity? **Hierarchy.**
9. What are two of the five excellent habits of thinking?

Listening to different points of view

Considering if I might be wrong

Asking advice from people with more knowledge or experience

Thinking about the consequences of your ideas and actions

Making a judgement based on good reasons

Multiple Choice

10. How should we treat a person as a subject and not an object?
 - a) **Respect them**
 - b) Dispose of them when they are no longer useful
 - c) Ignore them when they are talking to us
 - d) **Ask them questions to understand their point of view**

11. Does the word **'Intrinsic'** mean that dignity is:
- a) **Within us, we have it just by being human?**
 - b) Depends on how happy we feel inside?
 - c) Related to how popular we are?
 - d) About how much money we have?
12. Which of the following violates human dignity?
- a) **When we treat a person as an object**
 - b) **When we spread lies about other people**
 - c) **When we use people to get something from them**
 - d) When we are kind to people
13. Which of the following are habits of non-excellent thinking?
- a) **Rushing to conclusions**
 - b) Seeking advice from people with more knowledge or experience
 - c) Considering other viewpoints
 - d) Gathering enough evidence
14. Which of the following should be treated as subjects and not objects?
- a) **Janitor**
 - b) **Sibling**
 - c) Cellphone
 - d) Sneakers
15. Human Dignity is:
- a) **The special value of every human person**
 - b) An honor that you can receive
 - c) Increases with the number of likes you get on social media
 - d) Something that can be given or taken away

FINAL QUESTION FOR THE WHOLE CLASS:

Oh, wise class of experts! Human dignity is the special value of EVERY human person.

What are three characteristics of human dignity?

Universal: every person has dignity

Intrinsic: dignity is within us, we have it just by being human

Inalienable: dignity cannot be given to us or taken away from us

THE GREAT POWER PRINCIPLE

Have you ever imagined that you had some great power? Often, thoughts like this can enter our minds: “What if I could remember everything as soon as I read it so I would never have to study again!” Or, “if I could have great basketball talent, everyone would admire me and I could forget about school and just play professional sports!”

For me, I wanted the power to become invisible. That way, I could go to the movies without paying, leave the classroom during tests to check the correct answers, listen while my friends were talking without me, go to the store and take anything I wanted, or simply disappear when it was time to do chores around the house.

I have always read a lot of comic books and Peter Parker, aka Spiderman, is my favorite. I admired his strength. I admired how many good actions he could perform with his powers and how he earned the admiration and respect of everyone. But then, one day, I read this quote, which maybe you’ve heard too: “With great power comes great responsibility.”

Later I found that this principle was not just in the movies or comic books. Winston Churchill, the British Prime Minister who defeated Hitler in WWII, said: “Where there is great power there is great responsibility.” And US President, Theodore Roosevelt, similarly once stated: “I believe in power; but I believe that responsibility should go with power.”

I call it The Great Power Principle. While I had always dreamed of having superpowers to be able to do things that I wanted (admittedly, they were often things that could cause harm to others, like going to someone’s store and taking what I wanted) these people saw superpowers as something different, something tied to *responsibility*.

Thinking about it, it suddenly dawned on me: maybe I already do have powers. There’s the power to grow or the power to move from one place to another. Then, there are the unique powers that every human being possesses: to think and to choose. Ok, so then I thought to myself, “if I have these powers... am I taking responsibility for my choices?” I can see why other people also thought that they should use their power to choose to help others and to make the world a better place.

That’s when I realized: what makes a person great is not super strength. Or even admiration from others. It’s not even an invisible cloak. One thing and the one thing only that makes someone great is how they use their powers to think and to choose for the good. That’s why Spiderman is my favorite. That’s why choosing to take responsibility is the beginning of greatness.

The Great Power Principle - Answer Key**QUESTIONS FOR A DISCUSSION:**

1. Which unique powers do human beings have that no other living or non-living beings possess?
2. How should we use our powers according to The Great Power Principle?
3. What are some ways you could be a hero, by applying the Great Power Principle in your life?

ANSWERS:

1. Human beings in fact have two great powers which no other living or non-living beings possess, and these are the powers to think and choose. These powers are uniquely human and are very important since they enable us to do great things and become excellent.
2. These powers should be used responsibly and in an excellent way. This is especially true with regards to the power to choose. We can make choices that hurt others and do harm to ourselves, or we can make excellent choices that make ourselves and others better. There are a million little ways that we can use our power to think and to choose in our life, from going to bed on time to listening when someone is talking to us or doing a small act of kindness for someone during the day.
3. There are so many great answers to this question!

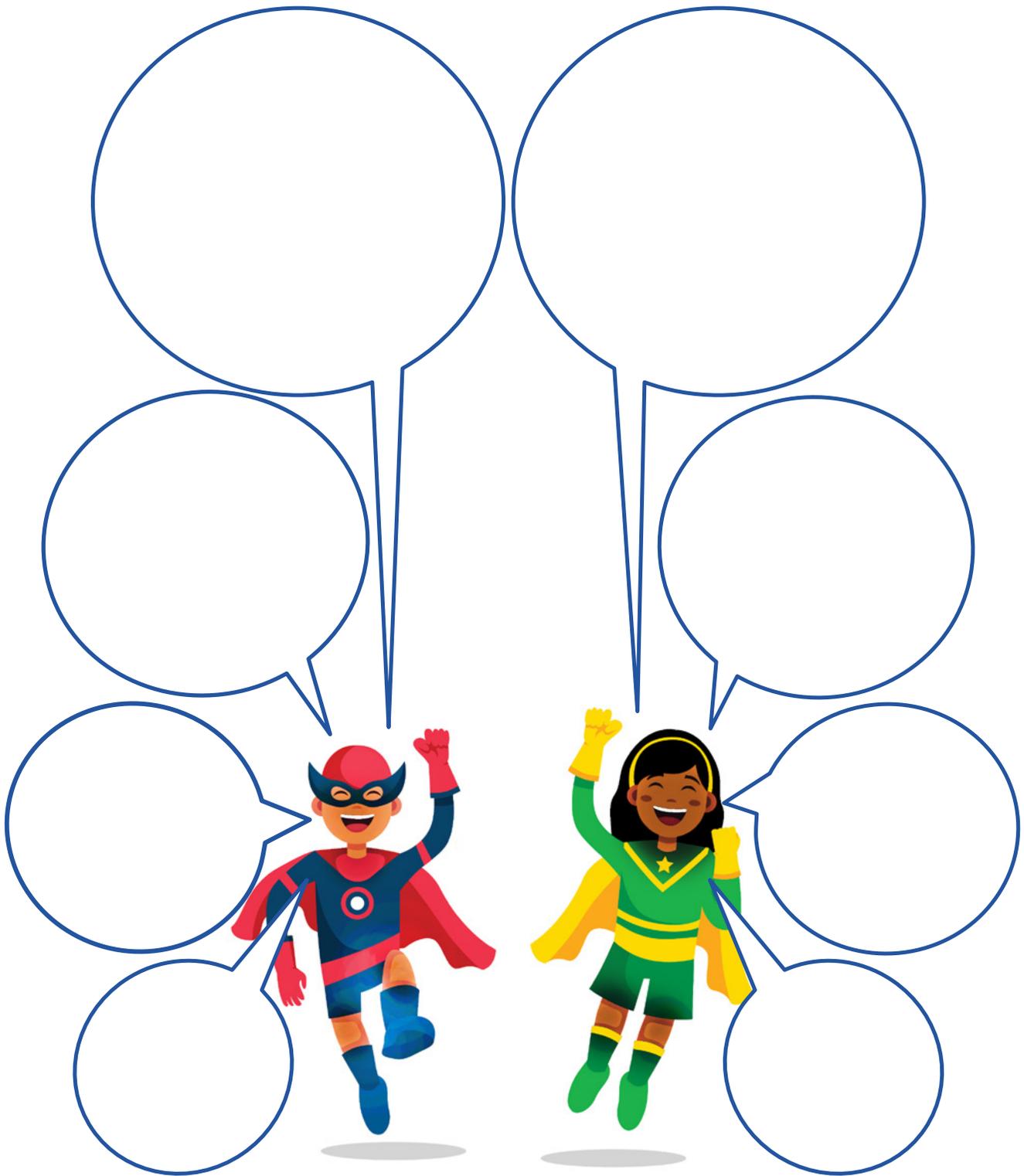
The Great Power Principle implies that we should use our powers responsibly, i.e. not causing harm to oneself and others, and always trying to use these powers for the benefit of everyone involved.

WHAT WOULD A GREAT PERSON SAY?

Step 1: Read the statements in the table below. Which would a great person say, and which would they never say? Use The Great Power Principle as your guide in thinking through the answers.

"If my teacher wasn't out to get me, I'd have better grades."	"I don't have to practice, I choose to practice because I want to get better."	"I know I could cheat and no one would find out, but I choose not to do it since I know cheating is wrong."
"I would really like to watch videos, but I have an exam tomorrow so I won't do it since I need to rest."	"You can't tell me what to do. I don't care!"	"My parents are so annoying. They never let me do anything fun."
"I think it's funny so I don't really care how it makes them feel."	"It's not like studying is my favorite thing, but I know it's good for my brain and for my future so I do it."	"I'm upset, but I just need to cool off, as I don't want to say or do something that will hurt others and that I'll regret later."
"I hang out with some people because I know I can get something from them. But I wouldn't really choose to spend time with them otherwise."	"I don't know if that's true and it will hurt the reputation of my friend."	"School is boring and stupid. I would never go to school if grown-ups didn't force me."

Step 2: Cross out the sentences that a great person would never say, from the table above. Choose five that a great person would say and write them in the speech bubbles on the next page.



What Would a Great Person Say? - Answer Key

The sentences that are crossed out are those that a great person would never say, and the rest are those that a great person would or could say. These should be placed in the speech bubbles on the “What Would a Great Person Say?” worksheet.

“If my teacher wasn’t out to get me, I’d have better grades.”	“I don’t have to practice, I choose to practice because I want to get better.”	“I know I could cheat and no one would find out, but I choose not to do it since I know cheating is wrong.”
“I would really like to watch videos, but I have an exam tomorrow so I won’t do it since I need to rest.”	“You can’t tell me what to do. I don’t care!”	“My parents are so annoying. They never let me do anything fun.”
“I think it’s funny so I don’t really care how it makes them feel.”	“It’s not like studying is my favorite thing, but I know it’s good for my brain and for my future so I do it.”	“I’m upset, but I just need to cool off, as I don’t want to say or do something that will hurt others and that I’ll regret later.”
“I hang out with some people because I know I can get something from them. But I wouldn’t really choose to spend time with them otherwise.”	“I don’t know if that’s true and it will hurt the reputation of my friend.”	“School is boring and stupid. I would never go to school if grown-ups didn’t force me.”