

Virtue

Syllables

vir•tue

Pronunciation

vur-choo

Definition

A desirable quality linked to being morally upright.

(Many people believe that patience is a **virtue**.)

Simply put: A character trait (like honesty, courage, or compassion) that helps make you a “good” person.

Related Terms

Honor: Integrity. High moral principles.

Fundamental Question:

Does everyone agree about which virtues are the most important?

Objectives

Each student will:

1. Explore ways in which diverse groups or cultures place emphasis on different virtues; and
2. Contribute to the construction of a set of classroom virtues.

Before you begin

- Print out a copy of *Virtuous Vocabulary* for each student.

Suggested Sidebars:

Speaking of Virtue (Discussion Idea)

When is a virtue *not* a virtue? (When it is used to make a person or group feel superior to others; when it’s used to hurt others; etc.)

Option for higher-level class discussion: What is your response to this sentence: “Whereas views are simply intellectual positions, and values evoke neither a moral commitment nor the promise of leading a good life, virtues enable us to shape and lead worthy lives”? (*Building Character in Schools Resource Guide* by Bohlin, Farmer, and Ryan, and published by Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 2001)

Taking It to the Next Level

Decide on a virtue that is very important to you. Then, act upon it. For example, if your important virtue is compassion, you might act upon it by volunteering to spend some time visiting, brushing, or walking a few of the dogs at your local animal shelter.

Virtue

Procedure

1. Make three columns on the board. Label the first column Lakota and the second column Asatru (Asatruars). Leave the third column blank. Under Lakota write (in this order) courage, fortitude, generosity, honesty, humility, integrity, patience, peacefulness, spirituality. Under Asatru write courage, discipline, fidelity, industriousness, honor, hospitality, perseverance, self-reliance, truth.
2. Ask: “Do different cultures place different values on virtues? Look at the lists on the board. On what virtues do the Lakota people place great value? On what ideals or goals do the Asatru (Asatruars) place great value?”

Samples of other discussion questions (which may be reworded to fit the needs of your class) include:

- “Who are the Lakota people? Who are the Asatruars?” (Allow time for research.)
 - “What can we guess about these people from what we see on their lists?”
 - “How are these two groups similar (or dissimilar)?”
 - “Do all cultures agree about the meaning of each virtue? (For instance, how do you define humility? Does it mean meek, humble, or modest to you? To the Lakota people, humility is when we stop assuming we know everything already, so that we can really be open to learning with all of our senses. Humility is freedom from pride and self-importance.)”
3. Say: “As you can see, there’s a third column on the board. That is a place for the virtues our class finds most important. What are some of the virtues you think we should include, and why?” (Discuss and compose a list in the blank column on the board. The number of virtues is up to you.)
 4. Encourage the students to locate and explore other sets of virtues. Examples might include Benjamin Franklin’s Thirteen Virtues (temperance, silence, order, resolution, frugality, industry, sincerity, justice, moderation, cleanliness, tranquility, chastity, *humility*), the Seven Heavenly or Cardinal Virtues (faith [shinnen, in Japanese], hope [kibou], charity [jizen], fortitude [kennin], justice [seigi], temperance [sessei], prudence [shinchou]), or others.
 5. **Follow Up:** Distribute the *Virtuous Vocabulary* sheets and review the directions with your students. After they have completed the activity, make photocopies of the crossword puzzles and word searches (from a single copy for trading between children to a copy of every activity for each child in the class, depending upon your needs).

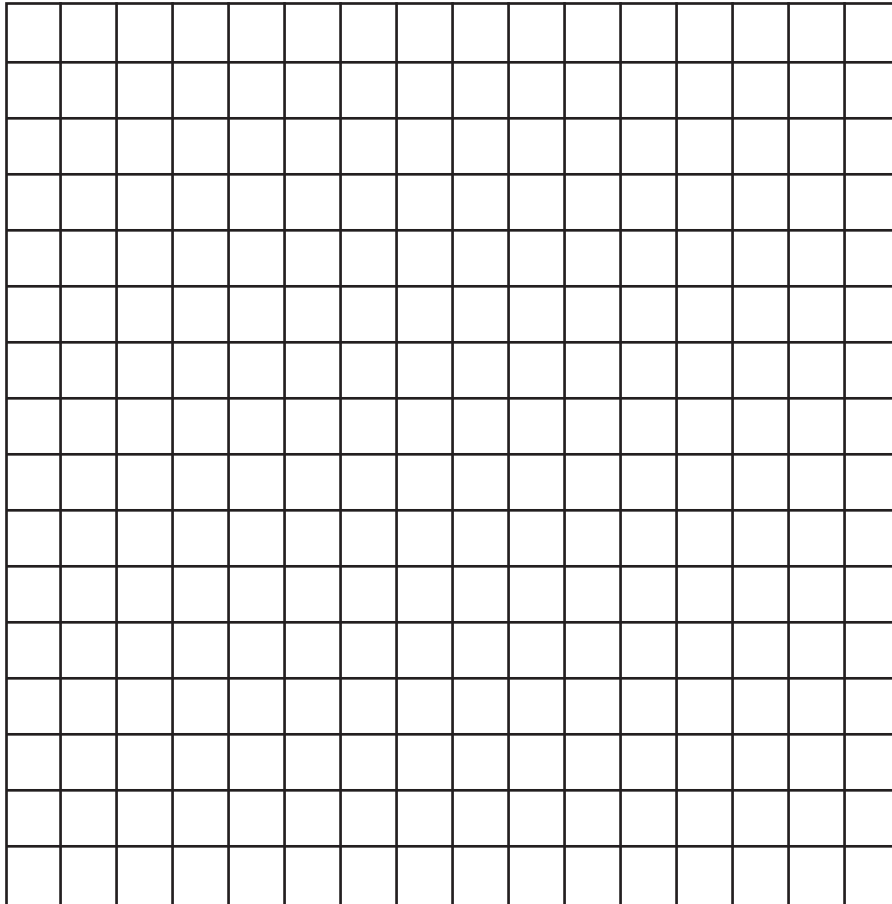
Name _____

Reminder: A virtue is a desirable quality connected to being morally upright.

Virtuous Vocabulary

List many different virtues (use the back of this paper).

Using the words on your list and the grid below, design a crossword puzzle or word search that can be copied and shared with your classmates.



Clues (if you're making a crossword puzzle)

Across:

Down:

example: 1. bravery _____

Today's Thought: *The greatest virtues are those which are most useful to other persons.*

— **Aristotle, philosopher**