

A large pyramid, likely the Great Pyramid of Giza, dominates the center of the image. It is constructed from golden-brown stone blocks and is set against a clear, bright blue sky. The foreground shows the sandy desert floor with some smaller, lower pyramids or structures. The overall scene is a classic representation of ancient Egyptian architecture.

Integrating Character Education into the World History Classroom

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SUCCESS IS

THE COMBINATION OF POSITIVE CHARACTER TRAITS SO THAT YOU CAN ACHIEVE YOUR LIFE'S GOALS AND DREAMS IN A MANNER THAT WILL RESULT IN TRUE HAPPINESS IN ORDER FOR YOUR FAMILY, YOUR SCHOOL, YOUR COMMUNITY, YOUR NATION AND YOUR WORLD TO BENEFIT FROM YOUR HAVING EXISTED IN IT.

SELF ESTEEM

BELIEVING THAT YOUR LIFE HAS VALUE BECAUSE OF THE EFFORT YOU HAVE PUT INTO MAKING IT COMPLETE.

HUMOR

TAKING TIME TODAY TO ENJOY THE WONDERS OF LIFE AND ITS INTERACTIONS IN A WAY THE BENEFITS ALL.

SELF DISCIPLINE

TEACHING YOURSELF TO FOCUS ON LONG-TERM GOALS BY SACRIFICING THE PLEASURE OF THE MOMENT.

EXCELLENCE

DEVELOPING THE HABIT THAT NOTHING THAN YOUR ABSOLUTE BEST WILL BE ACCEPTABLE.

ATTITUDE

LIVING EACH DAY OPEN TO LEARNING SOMETHING NEW FROM THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU.

RESILIENCY

BECOMING STRONGER AS A PERSON BY OVERCOMING A LIFE FAILURE OR HARDSHIP.

SELF MOTIVATION

HAVING INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR OWN FUTURE GAINS.

THANKFULNESS

APPRECIATING THE UNEARNED OPPORTUNITIES OF LIFE IN AMERICA

HUMILITY

ACKNOWLEDGING HOW MUCH OTHER PEOPLE HAVE POSITIVELY INFLUENCED YOUR DEVELOPMENT.

HARD WORK

DEDICATING YOURSELF TO PUT IN THE EFFORT NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE YOUR LIFE'S DREAMS.

GOOD CHOICES

MAKING DECISIONS TODAY THAT WILL LEAD TO SELF BENEFIT IN THE LONG TERM.

RESPECT

TREATING OTHERS WITH SAME KIND OF HUMAN DIGNITY THAT YOU LIKE TO BE TREATED WITH.

HONESTY

BEING SINCERE WITH OTHERS AND ONESELF.

EMPATHY

CARING FOR AND UNDERSTANDING SOMEONE ELSE'S FEELINGS AND PERSPECTIVES.

GOAL SETTING

PRIORITIZING THE PRESENT AND FUTURE SO THAT YOUR DREAMS CAN BE FULFILLED.

Success/Failure Essay Prompts

Unit 1: The Medieval World

The study of the medieval period in World History can give us an understanding as to how groups rise to power in certain regions. At the same time, some understanding can be gained as to how these groups lose power after they have gained it. In a complete essay, analyze three groups and they rose to power and then lost power during the medieval period.

Unit 4: Age of Exploration

During the study of a particular historical era, a student will often find many different countries or people competing to accomplish the same things, which will allow that student to judge the varying degrees of successes and failures of those attempting to achieve similar goals. The Age of Exploration allows students to make judgments about the successes and failures of many Western European countries. In a complete essay, identify THREE major countries involved in world exploration and the successes and failures of each of the identified countries.

Unit 6: Age of Reason

In 17th and 18th century, many monarchs of Europe attempted to consolidate all political power under their thrones, this would have allowed them absolute political power within their kingdoms. In a complete essay, analyze the varying degrees of success and/or failure of various monarchs to achieve absolute power within their kingdoms.

Unit 7: The Islamic Gunpowder Empires

Many historians claim that all empires eventually fall, no matter how strong they were at the height of their power. The study of the Islamic gunpowder empires allows students the opportunity to test this historical hypothesis. In a complete essay, discuss the three Islamic gunpowder empires in terms of the reasons for their rise to power and the reasons for their decline in power.

Unit 9: The Rise of the European Nation-State

During the Congress of Vienna, the major monarchs of Europe attempted to create a post-Napoleon world that would guarantee long term peace and prosperity for Europe. The leader emerging from these meetings was the Austrian prince Klemens Metternich. The congress adopted Metternich's ideas for the postwar world as the model of this peaceful and prosperous world. In a complete essay, analyze if Metternich's work should be considered a success or a failure based on your definition of success and failure.

Unit 13: The Second Age of European Expansion

The various western nations of Europe and the United States had various successes during the Second Age of European Expansion. Also, another nonwestern nation, Japan, entered the rivalry for lands beyond their national borders. In a complete essay, choose three nations we discussed in this unit and evaluate whether they should be considered a success or a failure based on their actions and your definition of success.

Unit 14: The Second Thirty Years Wars

In the study of the two major wars at the beginning of the twentieth century, you find the combatants are mostly the same, which is why many historians have begun to refer to the wars years 1914-1945 as the Second Thirty Years War. Germany, France, England, Russia/Soviet Union, the United States and Italy fought in both wars on mainly the same sides with Japan and China joining the conflict in the 1930s. Most discussions concerning war(s) focus mainly on the winners and losers, which, in many instances, can be fairly easy to determine. However, when the ideas of success and failure enter into the discussion, the judgment of each nation becomes more difficult. In a complete essay, analyze three nations that participated in the war(s) of the period and whether they should be judged as successes or failures.

Compare/Contrast and Explore Common Human History Essay Prompts

Unit 2: Renaissance and Reformation

One of the most interesting aspects of the study of history is the cause-and-effect relationship between events. One event occurs and then it has an immediate impact on the events that follow it. The connection between humanism and the Renaissance/Reformation era is such an example. In a complete essay, explain three examples of how the humanism effected the development of the Renaissance of Western Europe and the Reformation of Western Christianity.

Unit 3: Africa and the Americas (Pre-European Contact)

As a student studies two separate continents simultaneously, he/she can find many similarities amongst the various civilizations on the two continents. However, while many similarities exist, the same study can result in finding many differences. Along these lines, the civilizations on the American continents and the African continent have many similarities and differences. In a complete essay, compare and contrast the civilizations on these continents.

Unit 5: Feudal China and Japan

During the Africa and Americas unit you had to compare and contrast two groups of civilizations that were far from each other. This unit deals with two civilizations that are very close to one another and have many shared characteristics and many differences. In a complete essay, compare and contrast feudal China with feudal Japan.

Unit 8: Age of Revolution

The Age of Revolution era of history in the Western World brought about a tremendous change in the societies, governments and economies of the nations that comprise the Western World. In fact, the Old World that had been in place since the Roman era was no longer a valid way of life in the West. In a complete essay, examine the reasons behind the revolutionary changes in life in the west and the impact this change had on the world.

Unit 10: African Diversity

When many people think of Africa they often think of a place that is so similar that it is impossible to distinguish the various regions. However, upon closer study, the African continent is as diverse as any other continent in its geography, history, religion, outside influence, trade, etc. In a complete essay, analyze the diversity of life on the African continent and why many people make the mistake of characterizing the African continent as a homogeneous place.

Unit 11: The Americas and Australia

Unlike Asia and Africa, which the Europeans dominated in the nineteenth century, the Americas and Australia were continents that managed to escape European domination and develop societies that could eventually challenge European power. In a complete essay, examine three (3) nations from the Americas and/or Australian continents and trace their development as powers independent of European domination.

Unit 12: Early Modern Asia

The early modern Asia period is the study of three nations of Asia that developed their own distinct histories. At the same time, however, the histories of China, Japan and Korea in the early modern Asia period have many similarities. In a complete essay, examine the similarities and differences found among the three major Asian powers of the period.

SUCCESS is the combination of positive character traits so that you can achieve your life's goals and dreams in a manner that will result in true happiness in order for your family, your school, your community, your nation and your world to benefit from your having existed in it.

This definition is a general guideline for living a successful life. However, it does not specifically address how to live such a life. Essentially, this definition developed through my "Pyramid of Traits for Successful Living" considers a person successful if they live a life doing what they know is the right thing. It would be impossible to live a life where you always do the right thing so it would be unfair to consider someone a failure in life for one poor decision. Therefore, the main goal of a successful life is to leave the world a better place than you found it in when you arrived. Colby and Damon (1992) set forth five criteria necessary to be a moral exemplar in life. These five criteria can give us some insight on what it takes to finish life in a way that those around us consider a successful life.

The first criterion set forth by Colby and Damon to judge a life as worthy of being made an example is that the person has "a sustained commitment to moral ideas and principles that include a generalized respect for humanity" (29). In other words, the person based their entire life on the inner pyramid and acted in a way that kept those virtues intact. Any person who discriminates against another person without just cause (i.e. judging people by the color of their skin and not the content of their character) cannot be considered a moral person and, therefore, not having lived a completely successful life. Only people who generally respect others and understand their role in the human experience can meet this first criterion of success.

The second criterion requires that a person display "a disposition to act in accord with one's moral ideas or principles, implying also a consistency between one's actions and intentions and between the means and ends of one's actions" (29). This requirement means that the end does not justify the means. In order to achieve one's goals, it is not okay to violate another person's rights. Something that hurts others and benefits only you is always wrong. In order to achieve this, the inner pyramid and outer pyramid must act in harmony with one another.

The authors set the third criterion as "a willingness to risk one's self-interests for the sake of one's moral values" (29). When your personal goals interfere with the rights of others, the inner pyramid always wins the battle to guide your actions to the moral decision.

The final two criteria might seem contradictory, yet the presence of the two might be similar to Machiavelli's loved versus feared dilemma for political leaders. Colby and Damon define the fourth criteria as "a tendency to be inspiring to others and thereby move them to moral actions" (29) and the fifth as having "a sense of realistic humility about one's own importance relative to the world at large, implying a lack of concern for one's ego" (29). Just as Machiavelli wrote that the best leaders rule in a way this is both loved and feared by their people, the authors write that the most successful among us get the attention of others through their good lives yet remain humble and thankful about their lives and place in the world in general. While this might seem difficult – because it is – the best among us have an ability to inspire us to be better people, but

never bring attention to themselves because being a successful person is just who they are and what they do.

If you think this standard is set high, then you are right. Living a principled life is not easy, nor will anyone ever do it perfectly. We are human and will mess this up every now and then. This is to be expected and recognized. However, the higher standard you reach for, the higher standard you will achieve. No one should ever consider their lives the most important life ever lived, nor will anyone ever live a life not impacted by those around them. The more you recognize this and respect it, the more you will find those around you helping you achieve the top of the pyramid. Along the way, you might find that it surprising how much you inspire others to try to live life according to this standard. Doing this, you will leave your world a much better place than how it was when you arrived.

However, success is not a relative term. According to this definition, a person is either successful or not. You need to be careful to avoid making yourself feel better about your own “success” by believing that you are a better person because of someone else’s failure. People who fall into this trap say things such as “I might’ve cheated on this worksheet, but that person copied their entire research paper from *Encarta*. So, my cheating is okay because their plagiarizing is worse.” The reality is that both cheated themselves out of a meaningful experience of doing something positive and, therefore, bettering themselves in the process. No matter what popular advertising tries to tell you, there are not shortcuts to living a successful life. Setting out to make each day more fulfilling and better than the day before is the only path for making the world better for your having existed in it. It is a difficult path, but one that will allow you to look back and be proud of who you are and what you’ve accomplished in life.

*Our living is determined not so much by what life brings to you as by the attitude you bring to life;
not so much by what happens to you as by the way your mind looks at what happens.*

John Homer Miller

Nothing builds self-esteem and self-confidence like accomplishment.

Thomas Carlyle

The average among us estimates their life by what they do, the excellent among us by who they are.

Johann Friedrich von Schiller

*Success means doing the best we can with what we have.
Success is in the doing, not the getting – in the trying, not the triumph*

Wynn Davis

To be what we are, and to become what we are capable of becoming, is the only end of life.

Robert Louis Stevenson

Referenced article:

Colby, A. & Damon W. (1992). *Some Do Care: Contemporary Lives of Moral Commitment*. New York: Free Press.

Mr. Jones
World History – Renaissance to Present
Philosophy of Success Discussion

Over the course of the year, we've had several discussions on personal success and failure and I've had you use this personal definition as you've judged people and nations on several assignments and essays. As the essays have developed, many students, including all of them in my smaller sample, have progressed in their development of success definitions from a basic Machiavellian perspective of all one has to do to be successful is accomplish their goals to the much more nuanced definitions described below. In order to specifically track this development, I randomly selected 15 students to follow the progression of their definitions. The 15 essays from the last two tests have generally fallen into two categories, which I have outlined here.

The first category follows the moral philosophy of eighteenth century philosopher **Immanuel Kant**. According to Kant, the virtuous life is one that never compromises on action. According to the well-known German, there can never be a moral end of any action to achieve the end can be considered immoral. In the Age of Imperialism unit, 13 of the 15 essays followed this moral philosophy by judging that the nations that colonized in that time period used immoral means to achieve their goals, which made them failure. In the Second World Wars essays, this was still the majority view. An example from the essays is "...all three nations killed thousands or many innocent people and had something to do with some type of betrayal. Therefore, they cannot be considered a successful nation that has completed a goal without hurting themselves or another nation with only themselves receiving the benefits." Several of those students who wrote with this philosophy actively wondered if it was possible for a nation to be considered a success. However, only eight of the 15 essays still held this view in the Second World Wars essay.

Seven of the essays developed a view of success that was similar to the **Hegelian Superman**. According to nineteenth century German philosopher Georg Hegel, if a cause was noble, then it would be okay to compromise the moral virtues of life to achieve the noble cause. For instance, if Hermann Graebe would have killed the Nazi SS soldiers he saw killing Jewish men, women and children, then his purpose would have been noble enough to justify the killing of another person. In the Second World Wars essays, an example of the Hegelian Superman is "...those who murdered their own people were complete failures. Those who fought for the safety of their people that they would not be harmed, were indeed successful. When you fight for the right reasons, that makes you a success, when you fight for all the wrong reasons, out of selfish ambition and not humility to others, that makes you a failure."

Discussion Questions

- 1) Which of the above philosophies has the most credibility? Why?
- 2) Examples of the Hegelian philosophy in action...
- 3) Can we write a definition of success (moral behavior) that takes both accounts into consideration? If yes, what is it? If no, why not?