

Responsibility

Syllables

re•spon•si•bil•i•ty

Pronunciation

ri-spon-suh-bil-i-tee

Definition

Taking action as a trustworthy person.

(Ann took **responsibility** for her puppy by feeding, watering, and walking him every day.)

Simply put: I'll answer for my actions.

Related Terms

Accountable: Answerable.

Fundamental Question:

What responsibilities do I have to myself, my family, my community, and my world?

Students will investigate the idea that we each have responsibilities to ourselves and others. Responsible people do the best and most complete jobs they can. When responsible people make mistakes, they don't blame others. They take responsibility for their actions.

Objectives

Each student will:

1. Investigate the idea of age-appropriate responsibilities.
2. Examine historical examples of children's responsibilities.
3. Identify several of his or her own responsibilities.
4. Imagine what might happen to one who was totally disorganized and irresponsible.

Before you begin

- Print out a copy of *The Ballad of Scattered Sal* for each student.

Suggested Sidebars:

Speaking of Responsibility (Discussion Idea)

Tell about some of the responsibilities kids your age have. Tell how you think your responsibilities will change or stay the same as you grow up.

Taking It to the Next Level

Distribute a stapled packet of four sheets of lined paper to each child. At the top of the first page, the child should write the word myself. The words my family, my community, and my world (or my planet, depending upon the interests of your class) go at the top of pages two through four, respectively. Ask each child to write down three responsibilities that (s)he has (or ought to have) to self (e.g., brushing teeth), family (e.g., setting the table), community (e.g., serving as a crossing patrol), and world (e.g., being aware by reading the newspaper) or planet (e.g., picking up trash in the park). Have the child select the one idea from each page that (s)he will consciously act upon this week. The bottoms and backs of each sheet should be used as a mini-journal on which the children can record events and reflections related to their four projects. At the end of the week, come together as a large group to discuss the individual projects and "findings."

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Procedure

1. Read aloud to your class *Little House in the Big Woods* by Laura Ingalls Wilder (HarperCollins, 1990). As you read, have the children actively listen for pioneer children's responsibilities. Chart many different examples of dependability, reliability, organization, punctuality, commitment, and other aspects of responsibility from the book. Then, have the class identify those that are identical to their own responsibilities. (Sweeping the floor is more likely than gathering the eggs, but you never know.)
2. Review the chart of responsibilities of pioneer children. Say: "Who were some of the most responsible characters—children and adults—in the story? Give examples of how you know that the character was a responsible person." (List each name suggested and a brief rationale on the board. Example: Ma: Keeps trying no matter what. Pa: Always thinks of others.)

Some Traits of People Who Are Responsible:

Responsible people:

- are organized and on time
 - think before speaking or acting
 - consider consequences of their actions (and inactions)
 - keep their promises
 - do helpful things
 - do their part
 - do their best work
 - are persistent (keep trying)
 - fix their own mistakes and don't blame them on others
 - complete their work
 - set a good example for others
 - show self-control
 - don't procrastinate or put things off
3. **Follow up:** Distribute and discuss the directions to *The Ballad of Scattered Sal*. If possible, ask your school's music teacher to help the children put their lyrics to music.

Reminder: Responsibility means taking action as a trustworthy person.

Being organized is very important to a person who is responsible. Without being organized we might get bogged down or over-scheduled. We might forget appointments — or like sad Scattered Sal — promises.

A ballad is a musical poem. Write a ballad that tells the story of Scattered Sal, who forgot one promise too many.

[illegible]

Today's Thought: *Manners are a sensitive awareness of the feelings of others. If you have that awareness, you have good manners, no matter what fork you use.* — **Emily Post, authority on social behavior**