



Nom de Plume: _____

Something to Teach

Idea Worth Teaching: Family

Pre-reading Activities

Directions: Read the following quote:

"Advice is seldom welcome; and those who want it the most always like it the least."

Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, from *Letters to His Son*

Explore the Language

1. Paraphrase the quote above, i.e. put it in your own words.
2. Do you agree or disagree with the Earl of Chesterfield? Explain your reasoning.

Directions: Consider the thinking/writing prompt(s) below. For each one, write a reasoned response. Use complete sentences.

1. Why does it take courage to ask for help?
2. Think about all of hurdles you will face as an adult. Make a list of the things you will need help with.

AURIBUS TENEO LUPUM

"I have a wolf by the ears"

"Have you talked to your parents?"

Kelsey's shoulders slumped as she looked down, dejected. She was afraid that he would say this. Adults always wanted you to talk to your parents. No matter what. There were some topics that Kelsey didn't mind asking her parents about - girl questions for her mom and boy questions for her dad. But this one? Kelsey didn't see how she could tell her parents. They would explode.

"I can't talk to them," she mumbled.

Mr. Moore frowned, studying her for a moment. He was glad the young lady had confidence enough in him to unburden herself, but he was a trifle troubled that she hadn't tried to talk to her parents first.

"Excuse me?" her English teacher said. "How's that again? I don't think I heard you correctly. You said that you can't talk to your parents? Does that mean that in the presence of your mother and father you are rendered mute? I find that hard to believe because I have seen you chatter away with your friend Brenda during class. Sometimes she can hardly get in a word edgewise."

Kelsey smiled. Barely.

"I can see by your smile that I must be mistaken. Then the only other answer is that this is a subject you think your parents can't, or won't, understand."

Her smile faded. "They won't understand. They're going to freak out. My parents are..." She searched for the words. And couldn't find them. All Kelsey knew was that she couldn't talk to her parents about this. Ever.

"Young lady, you came to me for advice, so I'm going to tell you some things.

"Are you going to tell my parents?"

He shook his head. "No. I'm not." He paused. "I should, but I won't."

"Why not?"

He sighed. "This is one of those times when I have to trust you. You did the right thing by coming and talking to me. That took guts. You trusted me. I want you to be able to continue to trust the adults that you ask for help. If I broke your trust, then you might not ask for help in the future. That would be a bad thing. What if you were in a desperate, life-or-death situation, and you refused to ask for help?"

"But isn't this already a pretty serious situation? I mean...I'm scared. Really scared."

"And that is precisely why you should talk to your parents. They will understand and they will help."

"It's not that simple, Mr. Moore," Kelsey protested. "I promise you it's not."

"And I promise you it is that simple. They will understand and they will help."

"But..."

He held up a hand, interrupting. "Let me ask you a question. Have you ever had an argument with your chatterbox friend Brenda?"

Kelsey gave a half smile. Sure, they fought sometimes. Who didn't?

"Yeah," she said. "Everybody fights."

"Yes, I agree. My wife and I have been known to have our occasional spats. But, let me ask you this. Have you ever had a fight with Brenda and thought that your friendship was over?"

Kelsey thought for a moment. It didn't take long for her to remember a few really nasty rows they'd

Something to Teach

had. But were they bad enough to stop being friends?

"Maybe," she admitted.

"You should know that friends will come and go throughout your life. I do hope that you manage to keep some for a very long time. They're good for you. However, there are two people that will love and support you throughout your whole entire life, no matter what. They will always have your best interests at heart. And these two fine people of whom I speak are..."

"My parents," Kelsey said, sighing heavily. "I know."

"I'm not sure that you do," he said. "Let me let you in on a little secret about parents. I am one, you know. That's why I'm so wise and such a good teacher. The secret is this. A mom or a dad might get angry and blow his or her stack about something that seems so small and trivial. You want to go to an R rated movie with your friends late at night. Your parents nix the idea. So what's the big deal? They are making a mountain out of a molehill. The movie is not so bad and you're going with your friends. You'll be safe and you have your phone with you in case there's an emergency. Yet, your parents freak out and go all protective on you. They don't understand. Right?"

She nodded.

"Well, parents are prone to freaking out over the small stuff because we think that if we go crazy over the small stuff, then there won't be any big stuff to worry about. When the big stuff does happens. We're pretty calm. We just want our children to be safe. It's just like I said. They will understand, and they will help."

"This is pretty big stuff though."

"Yes. Yes, it is, but how many big things have happened in your life? Real emergencies? Something really bad? Dangerous bad? How many times have you asked for Big Help?"

"I guess I never really have."

"So what makes you think they're going to go all crazy on you? You've never really asked for Big Help before? Why not give them the chance?"

Kelsey chewed the inside of her cheek as she sat and thought. His words were a big pill to swallow. She knew it was good medicine, but that didn't make it any easier. The teacher stood, waiting and watching. Finally, she looked at him and said, "I know I'm not supposed to ask, but do you think I could use your phone to call my mom? My phone is in my locker."

Mr. Moore smiled. "Help yourself. Uh...do you want me to leave so that you can speak to your mother privately?"

She shook her head as she dialed.

"Hello, Mom?" Kelsey said, then her voice caught in her throat. She couldn't talk, fighting for control. She knew that Mr. Moore wouldn't mind tears, but she wanted to be strong. Finally, she managed, "It's me. Kelse. Yeah, everything's okay." Then stopped. Everything was not okay. Everything was terrible and she didn't know what to do about it. The whole weight of the world seemed to be pressing on her shoulders, and it finally felt good to be able to talk to her mom. All of the tension that she'd been holding was released as tears streamed down her cheeks. For a long time there was only sniffles as Kelsey stood and held the phone.

"Mom?" she whispered finally. "I need your help."

Mr. Moore waited patiently as Kelsey spoke to her mother, tears continuing to flow freely.

"I'm in Mr. Moore's room. Yes, I'm safe. He's the one that told me to call you. Uh...okay. Bye."

She turned and looked at Mr. Moore, her eyes were shining.

"So? Was I right?"

Something to Teach

"Sometimes I hate teachers," Kelsey said, sniffing. "Why do you always have to be right?"

He smiled at her.

"And Mr. Moore?" she said.

"Yes?"

"Can you walk me down to the office? My mom is coming to get me. Right now. She's coming to help."

END



POSTSCRIPT

Directions: Consider the thinking/writing prompt(s) below. Choose one (1), and write a reasoned response on the lines provided below. Use complete sentences.

- 1. Are adults unreasonable creatures? Explain your reasoning.
- 2. Why is "holding a wolf by the ears" such an apt metaphor for this story?
- 3. Mr. Moore said the following, "And I promise you it is that simple. They will understand and they will help." Why do young people make things so difficult?
- 4. Why is it important to Mr. Moore that Kelsey continues to trust him?
