



learning for life

embracing core values

your details

name/names: **Charlotte Stenson**
 year: **52**
 school: **George Heriot's**
 teacher: **Mrs Campbell**

favourite quotations

"Where ever you are, it is Friends who make your world" - William James
 "Most folks are about as happy as they make up their minds to be" - Abraham Lincoln
 "No act of kindness, however small is wasted" - Aesop
 "Great oaks from little acorns grow".
 "If you don't make mistakes, you won't make anything" - Joseph Conrad

favourite stories

The Umbrella Man
 Once upon a time, in a Faraway land, there lived a man who turned his time of retirement into an opportunity to find ways to be of loving service to others. Since his house was near a bus stop, the man would invite people who were waiting for the bus to step up on his screened porch when it was raining. On occasion, the man would see passengers alight in a downpour and go out to meet them with an umbrella. The people would return the borrowed umbrellas and, through loving thoughtfulness, the man made many friends.
 The End.
 This story caught my eye as it emphasises the power of simple, loving actions towards others and their consequences. Kindness is a chain reaction - if you are kind to others then they will return the gesture. People acknowledged The Umbrella Man's kindness and, although he was being about as unselfish as you can be, he still benefited from putting others first. People returned his kindness and enriched his life.

01 personal development

- positive outlook
- gratitude
- love
- enthusiasm
- happiness/joy
- perseverance
- generosity
- honesty/integrity
- humility/modesty
- wisdom

your choice:

To lead a fulfilling and successful life, I believe you must be happy. Happiness enriches your life and the lives of others in countless ways. However, it cannot be bought or obtained. It also contributes hugely to other areas of personal development.

02 successfuliving

- creative thinking
- learning
- focus
- work
- ideals
- purpose
- courage
- friendship
- confidence
- self-discipline

your choice:

Friendship is a wonderful gift. A true friend can give us all these aspects of successful living and more. Nothing beats a special memory shared with a friend. They can make such a difference in life.

03 turning things around

- problem → solutions
- potential → actual
- loss → gain
- pessimism → optimism
- worry → moving on
- mistakes → learning
- anger → calm
- put it off → do it now
- fear → fearlessness
- stress → stillness

your choice:

"Failure is the source of success". To be able to learn from our mistakes is extremely important in life. Mistakes can sometimes be painful, but if we can suffer the consequences with an open mind and a courageous heart, then we can hopefully turn things around.

04 personal relationships

- co-operation
- responsibility
- empathy
- trust
- kindness
- forgiveness
- respect
- volunteering/service
- listening
- openness

your choice:

Kindness is such an important quality in a person. Such a simple thing and yet it would make such a difference in the world. A small act of kindness will enrich your relationships and increase your self-esteem, helping to develop your personality.

inspirational figures

The African Children's Choir
 Last summer I went see the African Children's Choir with some friends in a church near where I live. I did not imagine for a moment that I would be writing about it as my inspiration in of the competition more than a year later, nor did I foresee how much this experience would open my eyes and make me reflect on how privileged and fortunate I am. The African Children's Choir is a charity organisation that takes care of abandoned orphans who have lost their families to HIV, AIDS, war or just extreme poverty. What struck me most about the children was that, although they have lost both their parents and possibly their siblings also, they still sang with the most unspoiled joy; a joy purely of being alive, unmarked by greed or selfishness. Even though HIV or AIDS had cruelly split apart their families and left only grief for them to live off, they still have the utmost faith in Jesus and his love for them. Their singing was so uplifting and enjoyable. It was all you could do not to smile at their rapturous faces. They had so much energy and confidence - children as young as seven were singing their hearts out, clicking their fingers and shaking their hips! But I knew that behind all that laughter and fun lurked a heartbreaking past, full of suffering and poverty.

This experience made me reflect on how lucky I am and the injustice of everyday life for these orphans. As a normal schoolgirl I never wake up and worry where my next meal will come from. I am secure in the knowledge that I will have a warm, safe house and a loving family to come home to. I am quite unashamed to fight over the last 'corner yoghurt' with my younger brother and sister. I have days where I just can't be bothered to get up and go to school (these don't occur often you understand)! All these things that we quite happily take for granted are merely a fantasy for those starving African orphans.

I hope that in my lifetime I see justice for these stricken children. In the meantime, all I can do is learn from them. Their unselfishness and joy even in the most profound poverty has made me realise how fortunate I am. I know it is an experience I will never forget. Sir or Madam, in the time it has taken you to read this, around 25 children have died as a result of poverty. Think about it.

personal reflection

The big questions
 Life; the state or condition of being alive.
 Definition: The Concise English Dictionary

Is life just being alive, or is it something more?

The big questions: is there a God? Is there anything after life? Are we reborn? What is the meaning of life? How was the world created? Who am I? Many people dedicate their whole lives trying to find the answers to these questions, but no one really knows the answer. People ask the question, 'why are we here?' I don't know the answer to this question, but here is something I do know. We are here on this incredible planet with the gift of life. We should appreciate it with its full potential and live it like there is no tomorrow! I believe that life is what you make it. We unlike so many have the opportunity to make our lives full and successful. We have the examples of so many remarkable people who have contributed towards making the world we live in today a better place.

But what inspiration will young people in a hundred years have? I would hope that it would be us, the young people of the 21st century. If we have the courage to follow our dreams and speak out for what we believe in, we in turn can help to make the world that little bit better for those young people in the future. We, the politicians, teachers, doctors, scientists, artists, architects, explorers, athletes and people of tomorrow have the power to effect change. Some of us may work to stop global warming, some of us may make vital discoveries in science, some of us will set new sporting records, but all of us have the potential to make a difference if we stay true to ourselves and our ambitions.

But success in life is not marked by our achievements alone. I think just simply being a kind, forgiving, loving person is equally important. A simple concept is it not, but one which is sometimes lacking in society today. Take the growing figures in teenage crime and antisocial behaviour for example, or the terrible conflict in the Middle East. The Dalai Lama said, 'I believe happiness comes from kindness' and I think is absolutely right. When we are kind to each other, the gesture is often returned and this can enrich our relationships and personal development, which in turn makes us happy. Happiness is something we all strive to achieve in life, although some of us are luckier than others in our pursuit.

Why is it then, that some people live in such poverty and conflict that happiness is merely a thought, a reminder of peaceful and better times? Others live in wealth that we can imagine, yet are they truly happy? I don't think that being happy is having everything perfect in your life. Perhaps it is about stringing together all the little joys and moments of life that make us glad to be alive. A giggle with a close friend, reaching the summit of a mountain, a happy family gathering, singing your heart out, that peaceful feeling you get when you give to charity or help someone. Little things like that make you smile when you look back on them, those are the moments that you remember forever and make life worth living. However, most are less blessed with happy memories than I have been throughout my childhood. Sometimes it is not until someone experiences great sorrow in life that you realise their true character in the way they have coped with it. Those of us that have the courage to grieve but also the courage to let go of our sadness are truly admirable people. I don't think I will ever truly appreciate how lucky I am to be happy, have wonderful friends and family and live in a peaceful country where I am entitled to a good education. I think the people out there who are not necessarily famous, but simply kind, loving people who do their very best at whatever they do in the world are the ones to be inspired by.

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