

Lesson 3a

Leadership at the Movies: "Invictus"

This lesson introduces the students to the trait theory of leadership by using the film *Invictus*. Use either this lesson or lesson 3b, *Miracle*, but not both.

Overall Goal

Students will identify and describe traits of positive, successful leaders.

Objectives

1. Watch carefully leadership traits on display in a scene from *Invictus*.
2. Identify and describe leadership traits demonstrated by the two main characters.
3. Explain why a team's performance can affect the larger institution, be it a school or a nation.

A/V Support

A cadet will be needed to cue the videos and manage the DVD player. This cadet should be someone other than the instructor.

Lesson Outline

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| 1. Attention / Viewing: White Body Guards | 2 min |
| 2. Background Information About Nelson Mandela | 2 min |
| 3. Viewing: Rugby Captain Meets President | 6 min |
| 4. Discussion Questions | 10 min |
| 5. Take-Aways | 4 min |
| a. We can identify leaders by the traits they display. | |
| b. Leadership by example is the foundation of leadership. | |
| c. Young people can develop the same traits President Mandela displayed | |
| 6. Conclusion | 1 min |

Estimated Duration 25 - 35 min

LESSON PLAN

Attention: "White Body Guards"

Show Invictus 13:22 to 14:43 from where Jason, the head bodyguard, barges into President Mandela's office to complain that white guards have been assigned to his team. Following the clip, cue the film to 45:40 for the next scene to be discussed.

Background Information About Nelson Mandela

For 26 years, Nelson Mandela was imprisoned by the government of South Africa because of his political views. The nation governed itself under a policy called *apartheid* or segregation of South Africa into two societies, based on race. White South Africa was generally wealthy, healthy, well-educated, and happy. Black South Africa was terribly impoverished.

In the early 1990s, corrupt and unjust governments around the world were yielding to the popular demands of people for a fair society. It was in 1992 when Nelson Mandela was released from prison. Shortly thereafter, he was elected president of his nation.

But that's not the end of the story. President Mandela inherited a nation bitterly divided across racial lines. On one side you had the blacks, many of whom demanded retaliation against the minority (but wealthy) whites. On the other side, you had the whites, who feared the new government would be corrupt, petty, and interested only in bringing down the whites.

Which side did President Mandela pick? Which side would you pick?

President Mandela did not choose the black or the white side, but instead chose to fight for a unified South Africa.

Set-Up

In this next scene, President Mandela, played by Oscar winner Morgan Freeman, meets with the captain of the national rugby team, Francois Pienaar, played by Matt Damon. The team is expected to perform very poorly in the tournament, but watch as Mandela deftly plants a seed in the captain's mind. And as you watch ask yourself this: What is "leadership?" And what traits do you see in these characters that make them leaders?

Show Invictus from 45:40 to 51:15, from where Matt Damon enters the president's office until he tells his wife what the president wanted.

Discussion Questions

1. According to President Mandela, as portrayed by Morgan Freeman in this film, what is the essence of leadership?

Suggested Reply: Leadership includes “allowing me to expect more of myself” and to inspire a team not only to be their best, but to become even better than they thought they could.

2. What are some traits we see in President Mandela’s character that shows he’s a good leader?

<i>Humble</i>	Pours the tea himself instead of being waited upon
<i>Open-Minded</i>	Enjoys tea, even though it is a British and not African custom
<i>Polite</i>	Kind, welcoming, respectful, addresses his secretary as Mrs., etc.
<i>Informed</i>	Knows of Francois’ ankle injury; seems to take a personal interest in people
<i>Visionary</i>	Sees himself as president of a single nation, not two rival races; wants to use his leadership skill to make South Africa a successful and unified nation

3. What’s Francois’ philosophy of leadership? Is it a good one?

Suggested Reply: He tries to lead by example. Those who lead by example show that they are trustworthy, hard-working, and focused on the needs of the team.

4. What are some leadership traits we see in Francois?

<i>Good Listener</i>	Recognizes that though he’s a big-shot rugby star, President Mandela has much more life experience and therefore deserves his full attention
<i>Respectful</i>	Acknowledges that his job as rugby captain is nowhere near as challenging or important as President Mandela’s
<i>Team-Focused</i>	Understands that his job as captain is to help the team perform at its best so he tries to inspire with silence, with song, and aggressive play on the field
<i>Drug-Free</i>	Drug use never comes up, but we get the sense that Francois is an honest and pure competitor who does not tolerate drug use on his team.

5. What does the poem “Invictus” mean to Mandela? What might we expect “Invictus” to mean for South Africa as a nation?

Suggested Reply: When you’re down, you have to get yourself up. Mandela believes that even though South Africa is a wounded society, it can pull itself up and unify. As a leader, it is his job to show the citizens of South Africa how and why to do that.

6. Do you think the rugby team can have an impact on the nation overall?

7. Can sports teams, clubs, and the like in your school have a similar impact on overall student life?

Suggested Reply: According to President Mandela's philosophy, they will.

Take-Aways

Invictus looks like a good movie, but so what? So what? What can we take-away from this movie to help us become better leaders?

Suggested Reply:

We can identify leaders by the traits they display.

Leadership by example is the foundation of leadership.

Young people can develop the same traits President Mandela displayed.

Conclusion

Notice that President Mandela never explicitly directed Francois to go win the world cup. He was planting a seed that might blossom over time. So as not to spoil the movie, we won't say if the Spring Boks won the tournament, but Nelson Mandela was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1994.

As middle schoolers, you might not have the same challenges as President Mandela, but you can try to develop some of the same leadership skills.