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| Title: 5th Grade *Salt in His Shoes* Inquiry | | | | |
| **Compelling Question** | What makes someone great? | | | |
| **Standards** | **Common Core Standards**   * Anchor Standards: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher- led) with diverse partners on *grade 5 topics and texts*, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly. * Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.   **NCSS Theme**   * The study of individual development and identity will help students to describe factors important to the development of personal identity.   **NCSS Inquiry Arc**  (4) Communicating conclusions and taking informed action. | | | |
| **Staging the Question** | Brainstorm traits of people considered to be great. | | | |
| **Supporting Question 1**  **(Before reading)** | | **Supporting Question 2**  **(During reading)** | | **Supporting Question 3**  **(After reading)** |
| What makes someone great? Is it a natural ability that we are born with? Or a result of hard work and dedication? | | What does Michael think will make him better at basketball? Does height make a basketball player great? Do you think his mom’s advice will work? What does Michael’s dad say that changes his mind about giving up? | | Did Michael have natural ability? Did that alone enable him to be great? What did Michael Jordan do to become so great? |
| **Formative Performance Task** | | **Formative Performance Task** | | **Formative Performance Task** |
| Teacher presents students with questions about what makes a person great to elicit student views on hard work and effort. Students are then presented with a case study about a student who has natural ability that has not been fostered, which results in the student being cut from his school soccer team. Students are asked to complete a series of questions about the case study. | | Students engage in discussion with each other while teacher reads them a book and asks questions based on the book. | | Students watch a YouTube Video about Michael Jordan’s devastation about being cut from his high school basketball team and his response. |
| **Featured Sources** | | **Featured Sources** | | **Featured Sources** |
| Case Study: Carlos Rodriguez | | *Salt in His Shoes*  Deloris Jordan | | YouTube Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1k2uD-P3Z3Y |
| **Summative Performance Task** | **Assignment** | | Students will retell the story of Michael Jordan to their parent(s). Students will ask their parent about which athlete he or she holds to be great and what qualities made that athlete so great. | |
|  | **Extension** | | Students will create a Venn Diagram comparing and contrasting Michael Jordan to the athlete his or her parent chose. | |
| **Taking Informed Action**  **(Enrichment)** | Students will create their own story with a moral about a particular quality that makes a person great. | | | |

Psychology Under Construction

Staging the Lesson

           This lesson can be introduced in various ways depending on your teaching style. The initial goal is to get your students to contemplate innate ability and learned ability. In other words, are we born with a set of natural talents or are our efforts what make us great at something?  This should stimulate quite a discussion because there will most likely be a pretty even amount of students on each side of the argument. This is when you should try to steer the conversation in a way that all of your students can see the other point-of-view in the room.  If there is a heavy majority taking a stand on one side, try to foster a debate in the room.  The important thing here is to get them to understand the difference between natural ability and gained ability from our efforts.  It is OK if some of them say both play a role, which is probably true. Ultimately, you just want them to see that they have a fighting chance at something that they may have assumed they were terrible at.  If you can get your students to truly believe in that, then they will be willing to work even when the going gets tough.

           Here is one way to get the conversation flowing.  Without any preface, write the question “What makes people great?” on the board.  This is a very general question, which can often be a good thing because there is really no wrong answer.  Students can take this down many different avenues and you can bounce off of the answers that bring you to your point.  You may get answers like “hard work,” “mastery,” “success,” “practice.”  These are all great starting points.  If volunteers are hard to come by you may have to be a little more specific.  Pose a specific example such as, “What made Albert Einstein a great scientist?” (here is a good time to try and relate to your students, pick an example that would be of interest to some of them, especially those who normally enjoy tuning you out).  Once students are asked a more specific question such as the Albert Einstein example, surely they will come up with things such as “he was a genius,” “he studied a lot,” “he was determined.”  It is true he was a genius, but he really did not do well in school.  He nearly dropped out and no teacher ever took him seriously.  He only truly fostered his ingenuity later in life when he discovered his love for physics and mathematics.  Here is a good time to ask if Albert Einstein was born a genius.  Many of them will say yes and for now, it is OK for them to feel that way. Don’t try and change their minds just yet.

           Once you feel your class has had a healthy debate and their neurons are firing away, they are ready for the case study found in your teacher resources at the end of the chapter.  You can either make copies for each of your studies or just read it aloud, whichever you prefer.  Tell your students to keep in mind all of the points they and their classmates just made and then read the case study about Carlos Rodriguez. After you are done with the story have them work in groups or pairs to answer the discussion questions. The questions are designed to make them think about the series of events that bring Carlos to see he has to put in effort to deserve a place on his school team.  In the beginning, Carlos was cocky and boastful, not even willing to practice with his friends. By the end of the story Carlos realizes that in order to be truly great at soccer he has to practice like everyone else. Only after his hard work did he make the school team.  At this point it is clear that effort plays an important role in one’s abilities.  Not all of your students will be fully convinced just yet, but have no fear we are not done here!

Natural ability is so constantly praised and admired that we are programmed to think we have a maximum potential level for many activities and skills.  Think of how often you have either told others or been told, “You’re a natural!” “You are so smart!” When really you should have said or been told, “Wow, you must have worked really hard!”  It is true that not all things we are good at required hard work, but much of what we do, does require a great deal of effort.

Supporting Questions

           Now that your students have seen the results of effort and dedication it is time to read “*Salt in His Shoes*” by Deloris Jordan.  This is a great story because of two reasons. One, everyone knows who Michael Jordan is and what he has accomplished in his life and two, it teaches an important life lesson.  Again, read the story aloud allowing your students to soak in every detail of emotion you put into it. *Salt in My Shoes* begins by introducing us to a young boy named Michael, who loves playing basketball. Every day, Michael goes down to the basketball courts with his older brothers, hoping they will let him join in their game. Some days, when they are short a player, Michael actually gets to play. Immediately we find out that one boy in particular, Mark, the tallest boy in the game, picks on Michael and makes jokes about Michael’s height.

From the very moment Mark first made fun of Michael, Michael is down on himself and blames himself for losing the game. He begins to accept defeat and believes that he is a failure. He tells his brothers that if he was taller, he would have been able to help them win. When Michael gets home, he asks his mother if she knows a way to help him grow taller. Attempting to rekindle Michael’s spirit, his mother tells him to put salt in his shoes. At first, Michael is perplexed at her suggestion. Then he thinks about all the things his mom is good at, such as making the roses blossom in the garden, and he is convinced that her plan will work. At this point in the story, it is wise to ask students questions about whether or not height makes a basketball player great and if they think Michael’s mother’s plan will work. To develop their thoughts more, one might begin to ask them what they think Michael should do instead or what they would do if they were in Michael’s shoes.

The story continues with Michael’s mom consistently placing salt in his shoes each night in an attempt to help him grow taller.  Additionally, instead of tagging along with his brothers to the park, Michael began to stay home after school and practice his basketball playing skills. After two months of hard work, and salting his shoes, Michael stands tall hoping that he had grown just a few inches. He is crushed when he finds out he has not grown at all. However, he does not stop believing - he doesn’t give up. The message Michael gives to readers at this moment is critical. He did not give up and throw his dream away when there was little to no progress evident - he put his head down and began to dig deeper and work twice as hard. He continues to pursue his dream and is willing to double his efforts to get there. His determination drives him towards achieving his goal.

The plot advances with Michael practicing and waiting to grow taller. After another two months of practicing, but no change in his height Michael begins to feel discouraged. After a pep talk from his father, Michael realizes that he does have what it takes to be a great basketball player. Later that day, he goes down to the park and finds his brothers team in need of another player. He enters the game and ends up making the winning shot! It is here that the questioning is vital to teaching about grit and hard work. Without this effort, Michael would not have been able to achieve his dream. Students should, at this point, realize that it was not the salt that helped Michael win, but the practice and hard work day after day that made him a great basketball player.

Once the story is over, depending on your students, you may want to have them work alone on the “After Reading” supporting questions.  This may be a good idea because thus far your students would have discussed most parts of the lesson with each other. Now may be a good time to force each and every one of them to truly think about natural talent vs. effort. In the story about Michael there is a degree of natural talent present, but effort is emphasized when Michael realizes he does not need to be tall to be great. If his skill was determined by his height (natural ability or attribute in this case), then Michael would not have triumphed in the end.  As we learn in the story, Michael succeeds at basketball without growing an inch.  This should really drive home the point that you may have a knack for something, but it is true effort and commitment that leads a person to greatness.

Summative Performance Tasks

           The concluding part of this lesson calls for a short YouTube video about Michael Jordan’s devastation upon being cut from his high school basketball team and the actions he then took (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1k2uD-P3Z3Y).  The take-away from this video is that Michael did not give up after being cut. He actually worked twice as hard and made the team when he tried out again the following year.  Here is a good time to get another student-led, yet controlled, discussion going amongst the whole class.

Your class may also benefit from coming up with their own examples of natural versus learned ability indicators.  This will get them to see the theory as a separate idea from the story. Have your students individually fill out the T-chart on “Natural Ability” or “Learned Ability” found in the teacher resources section at the end of this chapter.  Here they will be able to come up with terms and phrases that imply either “Natural Ability” or “Learned Ability.”  Then have them share their thoughts with the person sitting next to them to double their responses.

           The home assignment is a great way to get your students re-hash this idea later at home, imprinting it even more into their brains while getting them to communicate with their parents! What could be better?  Once students retell the story in their own words, their parent(s) will pick an athlete they consider to be great and tell their child what they think made their athlete of choice so great.  Since we are involving adults here, we can hope hard work and effort will be amongst the reasons their parents’ give (we can hope, right?).

For an extension students will then have to compare and contrast Michael Jordan to the athlete their parents choose.  Hopefully, a few similarities emerge and initiate your students to have mini-brain pops at home and really get them to believe in this concept.

           For enrichment purposes, students can take this a step further.  At this point, your students know the difference between natural ability and learned ability.  They also know that even if you have some natural talent, effort is the driving force behind greatness.  Your adept students and hard workers will even if learned phrases that imply either natural ability or learned ability.  These students can take all of this knowledge and come up with their own story that shows the reader how someone truly becomes great.  If this is something you would like your whole class to do, but they are not all thrilled about having to be creative, there is another approach you can take.  Simply have them come up with a list of other famous people that put in endless amounts of hours of hard work and consequently became great.

Taking Informed Action

Without real life application of this theory, the lesson becomes meaningless overtime. Therefore in order to keep this theory fresh in students’ mindsets, teachers can simply extend the common practice of goal setting. In other words, when asking students to let’s say, list three short term goals, not only will they have to state the goals and their means to achieving those goals, but here they will also apply this new found theory. In addition to normal goal setting they will also have to list their own natural abilities as well as their learned abilities that will bring them to their end desired outcome. This will get them to think about how natural ability and their efforts both play a role in their success. An example worksheet is provided in the Teacher Resources. This is just one way that teachers can ensure that this theory is applied beyond one day’s lesson. Ultimately, we want our students to believe in their efforts and not be discouraged when at first they don’t succeed.

Teacher Resources

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| CASE STUDY: CARLOS RODRIGUEZ |
| **The Story:** |
| A fifth grader at The Jefferson Street School, Carlos Rodriguez, loved to play soccer more than anything and he knew he was great at it. Everyone at school often complimented Carlos on his natural skill. “You’re a natural!” they would say, as he effortlessly kicked the ball into the goal. He often dreamed about becoming a professional soccer player like Lionel Messi when he grew up. Try-outs were only a week away and all of Carlos’ friends were practicing after school every day instead of meeting at the park to play like they usually did. One day that week, Carlos’ best friend Jorge asked him why he wasn’t practicing with them to prepare for tryouts. Carlos replied, “Psh, I don’t need to practice, I’m a natural just like Messi.” After tryouts the following week, Carlos went home confident that he would lead the Jefferson Bulldogs to many victories.  When the roster was posted at lunch the next day, Carlos was shocked when he could not locate his name on the list.  As soon as he arrived home, he threw his soccer ball in the far back corner of his closet and slammed the door.  When his dad came home from work, he saw Carlos watching TV instead of playing soccer outside like usual, so he asked him why he wasn’t practicing. Carlos mumbled, “I’m no good at it anyways. I hate that dumb sport!”  Carlos felt like a failure inside, but his dad knew otherwise.  His dad then began to tell him about how his favorite famous soccer player, Lionel Messi, was cut from his soccer team when he was Carlos’ age. His dad explained, “He didn’t give up on himself. He knew that with more practice, he could get better and he could make it. And then, he did!”  This story really got Carlos thinking. Messi’s story sounded a lot like his! Maybe if he practiced and worked really hard, he could make the team next year and even make it all the way to the World Cup! For the rest of that year, Carlos practiced every single day after school and even on the weekends. When try-outs rolled around the following school year, Carlos was nervous, but confident that this year he was prepared to make the school team. And he did. |
| **Questions:** |
| 1)     Why didn’t Carlos make the team the first time he tried out?  2)     Why did Carlos change his mind about giving up soccer?  3)     What did Carlos learn after hearing Messi’s story?  4)     What was different about the second time Carlos tried out for the school’s soccer team? |

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Natural Ability Learned Ability

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

List 3 goals you would like to achieve by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

(set date)

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* What natural abilities do you possess that will help you achieve this goal?

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* What learned actions will you take in order to achieve this goal?

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* What 3 specific steps will you take to make this goal a reality?

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Goal 2: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* What natural abilities do you possess that will help you achieve this goal?

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* What learned actions will you take in order to achieve this goal?

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Goal 3: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* What natural abilities do you possess that will help you achieve this goal?

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