

## Teachers Change Lives – Richard Lederer

One of my favorite newspaper corrections reads: “It was incorrectly reported last Friday that today is T-shirt Appreciation Week. In fact, it is actually Teacher Appreciation Week.”

In 1985, the National Education Association and National PTA set aside the first full week in May as a time to honor teachers and show respect for their profession. Every day should be devoted to Teacher Appreciation and made a time to recognize members of the most unheralded, labor-intensive, multi-tasking, exhausting, income-challenged, and rewarding of all professions. Indicative of all this is a recent survey that showed that 71 percent of teachers in U.S. public school systems purchased books and supplies with their own money to cover textbook shortages.

Having been an Inmate in the House of Correction (aka an English teacher) for twenty-eight years, I’m biased of course. To George Bernard Shaw’s mean sneer, “He who can, does. He who cannot, teaches,” I would oppose Lee Iacocca’s “In a truly rational world, the best of us would be teachers, and the rest of us would do something else.” I truly believe that teachers deserve the nice things people say about them:

- And gladly wolde he lerne and gladly teche. -- *Geoffrey Chaucer*
- No bubble is so iridescent or floats longer than one blown by a beloved teacher. -- *Sir William Osler*
- A teacher is the candle that lights the way for others in consuming itself. – *Giovanni Ruffini*
- Teaching is not a lost art, but the regard for it is a lost tradition. -- *Jacques Barzun*
- A teacher affects eternity. No one can tell where his influence stops. – *Henry Brooke Adams*
- A mind that is stretched by a new experience never goes back to its old dimensions. – *Oliver Wendell Holmes*
- Every time you stop a school, you will have to build a jail. What you gain at one end you lose at the other. It’s like feeding a dog on its own tail. It won’t fatten the dog. – *Mark Twain*
- A gifted teacher is as rare as a gifted doctor, and makes far less money. – *Author unknown*
- He who opens a school door, closes a prison. -- *Victor Hugo*
- To teach is to learn twice. – *Joseph Joubert*
- I was still learning when I taught my last class. – *Claude M. Fuess*
- Teachers open the door, but you must enter yourself. – *Chinese proverb*
- Give a man a fish, and he will eat for a day. Teach a man to fish, and he will eat for the rest of his life. – *Chinese proverb*
- Better than a thousand days of diligent study is one day with a great teacher. – *Chinese proverb*
- If you plan for a year, plant a seed. If you plan for ten years, plant a tree. If you plan for a hundred years, teach the people. – *Kuan Chung*
- **There are obviously two educations. One should teach us how to make a living and the other how to live.** -- *James Truslow Adams*
- Don’t judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds that you plant. – *Robert Louis Stevenson*

- Education's purpose is to replace an empty mind with an open one. -- *Malcolm S. Forbes*
- Education is not filling a bucket, but lighting a fire. – *William Butler Yeats*
- The teacher who is indeed wise does not bid you to enter the house of his wisdom but rather leads you to the threshold of your mind. – *Kahlil Gibran*
- The important thing is not so much that every should should be taught, but that very child should be given the wish to learn. – *John Lubbock*
- By learning you will teach, by teaching you will learn. – *Latin proverb*
- Only the educated are free. -- *Epicectus*
- Education is light; lack of it is darkness. – *Russian proverb*
- Whoever teaches his son teaches not only his son but his son's son, and so on to the end of generations. – *Hebrew proverb*
- The pupil who is never required to do what he cannot do never does what he can do. – *John Stuart Mill*
- I am indebted to my father for living, but to my teacher for living well. – *Alexander the Great*
- The man who can make hard things easy is the educator. – *Ralph Waldo Emerson*
- The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires. -- *William Arthur Ward*
- Better than a thousand days of diligent study is one day with a great teacher. – *Japanese proverb*
- He who is afraid of asking is ashamed of learning. – *Danish proverb*
- Teachers, who educate children, deserve more honor than parents, who merely gave them birth; for the latter provided mere life, while the former ensure a good life. – *Aristotle*
- All one can really leave one's children is what's inside their heads. Education, in other words, and not earthly possessions, is the ultimate legacy, the only thing that cannot be taken away. – *Wernher von Braun*
- Liberty cannot be preserved without a general knowledge among the people. – *John Adams*
- The pupil who is never required to do what he cannot do never does what he can do. – *John Stuart Mill*
- The teacher is one who makes two ideas grow where only one grew before. – *Elbert Hubbard*
- Teachers are expected to reach unattainable goals with inadequate tools. The miracle is that at times they accomplish this impossible task. – *Halm G. Ginot*
- The dream begins with a teacher who believes in you, who tugs and pushes and leads you to the next plateau. Sometimes poking you with a sharp stick called truth. – *William A. Ward*
- When love and skill work together, expect a masterpiece. – *John Ruskin*
- I am still learning – *Michelangelo*
- **The most beautiful thing in the world is the conjunction of learning and inspiration.** -- *Wanda Landowski*
- Education is a better safeguard of liberty than a standing army. – *Edward Everett*

- What office is there which involves more responsibility, which requires more qualifications, and which ought, therefore, to be more honorable, than that of teaching? – *Harriet Martineau*
- A school is a building with four walls and tomorrow inside. -- *anonymous*
- To me the sole hope of human salvation lies in teaching. -- *George Bernard Shaw* (Yes, the same GBS.)

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Speaking of salvation, Saint Peter hears a knocking at the Gates of Heaven and calls out, “Who’s there?”

“It is I,” a voice responds.

“Oh no, not another English teacher,” sighs Saint Peter.

Saint Peter welcomes the teacher into heaven and says he will show her to where she will reside for eternity.

The first neighborhood is lovely -- exquisite mansions set in gorgeous grounds. The teacher asks if this is where she will live, but Saint Peter says it’s just for lawyers. The teacher rolls her eyes and sighs.

They float on, and the teacher sees another neighborhood that is even more beautiful. The mansions are even more lavish. People stroll park lawns, socialize, and play golf on a beautiful course. Everyone is having a terrific time. Again she inquires if this is where she will live, but Saint Peter says it’s for doctors.

On through the clouds they drift and soon come to a third neighborhood. It is the most luminous of all. Added to the grandest mansions, parks, pools, and golf courses are magnificent libraries, schools, theaters, and concert halls. Saint Peter tells the teacher this will be her new home in Heaven. The teacher is thrilled, but she notices that no one is around, and all the mansions seem to be empty. She asks Saint Peter where everyone is. Don’t many teachers make it to Heaven? Saint Peter announces that yes, there are lots of teachers in Heaven, and they won’t return until the next day. They are all in Hell attending an in-service training session.

Back on earth, almost a half century ago, during the administration of Dwight D. Eisenhower, James Michener, author of *Hawaii*, *The Source*, and other mega-sellers, was invited to a celebrity dinner at the White House. Michener declined to attend and explained: “Dear Mr. President: I received your invitation three days after I had agreed to speak a few words at a dinner honoring the wonderful high school teacher who taught me how to write. I know you will not miss me at your dinner, but she might at hers.”

Michener received a handwritten reply from the understanding Ike: “In his lifetime a man lives under fifteen or sixteen presidents, but a really fine teacher comes into his life but rarely. Go and speak at your teacher’s dinner.”

A Middle East legend tells of a sparrow lying on its back with its legs up in the middle of a road. Along comes a horseman who, seeing the sparrow, dismounts and asks, “Why are you lying here on your back in the middle of the road?”

“Because I have heard that the heavens will fall today.”

“I see. And you think you can hold them up with those spindly legs of yours?”

And the bird answers: “One must do what one can.”

*Blessed be the teachers. They do what they can, and then they do more than they can. Amalgams of scholars, mentors, counselors, coaches, traffic controllers, and baby-sitters, they march in the company of secular saints. May their tribe thrive*