

Lesson 4

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Responsibility

To be responsible is the ability to act without guidance or superior authority. If you are responsible, you are able to make good decisions on your own.

How responsible are you? Put your initials on the line below to show to what degree you think you are responsible.

| \_\_\_\_\_ |  
I am very Responsible I am not very Responsible

Now ask four of your classmates to put their initials on the line below in answer to the same question.

| \_\_\_\_\_ |  
I am very Responsible I am not very Responsible

Now read the selection titled: Home & Family, "*We Were a Cheerful and a Vital Family.*" After you have completed the reading, please complete the activities below.

I know President Eisenhower was responsible as a young boy because:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



The Eisenhower family in 1902: (top row) Dwight, Edgar, Earl, Arthur, Roy;  
(bottom row) David, Milton, Ida.

Are the chores that President Eisenhower did as a young boy similar to the chores you do at home? What chores do you help with at home?

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Do you think it is important for the whole family to pitch in and help at home? Why or Why not? \_\_\_\_\_

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"One circumstance that helped our character development: we were needed. I often think today of what an impact could be made if children believed they were *contributing* to a family's essential survival and happiness. In the transformation from a rural to an urban society, children are--though they might not agree--robbed of the opportunity to do genuinely responsible work."

From: *At Ease: Stories I Tell to Friends*, by D.D. Eisenhower

What did President Eisenhower say about character development in relation to children 'contributing' to the family's livelihood? Try to explain it in your own words.

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Is there someone in your life that you feel is a responsible person? Who are they, and what do they do that makes you believe they are responsible? You can name more than one person!

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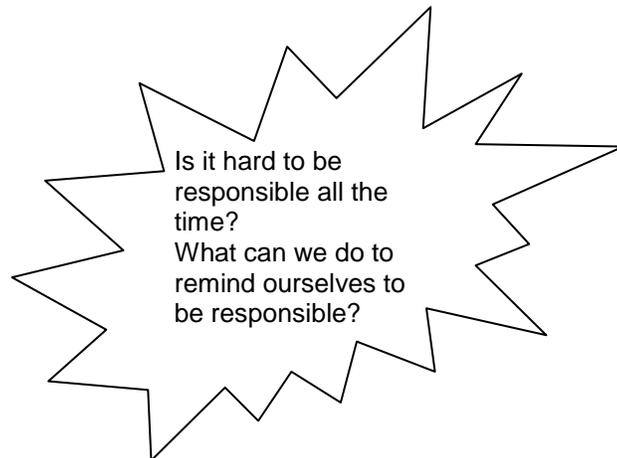
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When you go home tonight take the story about President Eisenhower and share it with your family. They will enjoy hearing about one of our great presidents.

You might also want to write your own story about responsibility. Please share it with your family or class.

Something to think about:





## HOME & FAMILY

*“We Were a Cheerful and a Vital Family”*

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Mother and Father maintained a genuine partnership in raising their six sons. Father was the breadwinner, Supreme Court, and Lord High Executioner. Mother was tutor and manager of our household. Their partnership was ideal . . .

Before their children, they were not demonstrative in their love for each other, but a quiet, mutual devotion permeated our home. This had its lasting effect on all the boys.

--Dwight D. Eisenhower

In the small Midwestern town of 1900, the extended family was society’s primary unit. Its members were responsible for the welfare of all, and everyone could be counted on to help in difficult times. Whether it was misfortune, illness, or death, it was the family that responded first. For people of this era, to have sought charity outside the family would have been a disgrace. To be of “good” family—one that reflected the accepted values of the community—was a title worthy of respect in the town.

By today’s standards, families were nearly self-sufficient in providing the necessities of life. For many, hard cash was scarce; however, most people had adequate clothing, reasonably comfortable homes, and, in ordinary times, an abundance of homegrown food. Every backyard had a vegetable garden and chicken pen, a source of fresh food with plenty more to “put up” in the cellar. Anything extra could be sold for pocket money.

Boys grew up expecting that they would marry and support a wife and children. Girls were raised to view marriage and motherhood as their life’s goal. For a young woman, to fail to marry was to be doomed forever to be an “old maid,” the object of pity. It was

common for extended family members—generally grandparents or unmarried aunts or uncles—to live with relatives. And, if an unfortunate husband or wife were widowed, a minimum of one year of mourning was considered proper before remarriage.

The well-being of the family unit was of far greater concern than the desires of any individual. For this reason, each family member had a role that he or she was expected to fulfill. For example, the husband was undisputed head of the family and chief wage earner. Men expected to work at least twelve hours a day, six days a week, at hard physical labor for very modest pay. Many wives supplemented the family income with “egg and butter” money.

Women were at the center of the family and home. Large families were the rule, demanding creativity and hard work from women. How well a wife and mother carried out her duties of housekeeping, cooking, and laundry was critical to her reputation in the community. Women kept a garden, cared for poultry, made butter, and preserved produce from the garden. All the family’s clothing and most of the bedding was sewn by women. Out of necessity, women were skilled practitioners of home medicinal remedies.

Every housewife knew that a sore throat required a mixture of turpentine and lard rubbed onto the throat, which was then

### **A Day for Everything**

Monday—washing  
Tuesday—ironing  
Wednesday—sewing  
Thursday—gardening  
Friday—cleaning  
Saturday—baking  
Sunday—go to church

wrapped with a woolen cloth. To help with the never-ending household tasks, a “hired girl” often lived with the family at a reasonable cost of \$1.50--\$2.00 a week.

In 1900, the role of children in the family was different from today’s. This was an age when, above all else, unquestioned obedience to parents

and authority figures was expected. Society supported the view that children were to be “seen and not heard.” Mother was the disciplinarian of first resort, but father was the much feared force of reckoning. The philosophy of “spare the rod and spoil the child” was a universally accepted belief.

The typical home in 1900 had two stories with high ceilings and a wide front porch. Homes reflected a preference for Victorian decoration and furnishings. Dark, rich colors covered the walls and windows with similarly colored rugs on polished, wood floors. Furniture and walls were covered with lace decoration and bric-a-brac. By this time, many homes in town had electricity, but unpredictable currents made lighting dim. Each home had a prized front parlor, furnished with the best the family could afford, but was rarely used. The focal point of the parlor was the family’s “what-not” cabinet that displayed special treasures and mementos. Kitchens had a large wood- or coal-burning stove, a sink, an icebox, and a large kitchen table. Modern bathtubs in a bathroom were a luxury, and most children dreaded the weekly bathing ritual in a large tub on the kitchen floor. Stored in the cellar below the house were bins of apples, onions, and potatoes and shelves filled with canned fruits and vegetables. Even those who lived in town had a barn in the back for the family horse and carriage.

In 1900, the day began with a hearty breakfast of meat, eggs, and potatoes, all fried in lard or butter. Oatmeal with cream and toast or biscuits with homemade butter and jam, were served on the side. Dinner (the noon meal) and supper were also large meals. Roast beef, pork, or fried chicken was typical with potatoes and gravy and an assortment of vegetables. Homemade bread and freshly churned butter rounded out the meal; for dessert, pie or cake was served. Except for occasional hard candy, junk food was virtually unknown at the turn of the century.

Even by the standard of the day, the Eisenhower home on southeast Fourth Street in Abilene, Kansas, was small, modest, and—with six growing boys underfoot—crowded. Ida furnished it sparsely and decorated it with her own “fancy work.” Out back were the chicken coop and a large family garden with small plots for each of the boys. North of the house was a large barn for the horses and cows where Uncle Abraham Lincoln Eisenhower had set up his veterinary practice when he owned the home.

From their mother, Ida, Dwight and his brothers learned to cook, clean, iron, and sew. On Sunday, the boys were responsible for family meals entirely. David, their father, worked long hours as a refrigeration engineer at nearby Belle Springs Creamery. Still, there was never money enough. Ida recycled David’s old clothes for the boys. To his embarrassment, Dwight sometimes had to wear his mother’s old high-top, buttoned shoes to school or go barefoot. To earn money for extras, the Eisenhower boys grew and sold vegetables, door to door. For variety, they peddled hot tamales from their mother’s Texas recipe.

Ida was the enduring influence in their lives. She was a patient teacher and an openly loving parent who set strict standards and high expectations for her boys. To their constant delight, Ida was a cheerful parent who found fun and humor in life.

David was different. He was the distant and stern disciplinarian. A very formal man, even his work overalls and shirt remained clean and pressed throughout the day. In the evenings, David preferred to sit in the parlor alone, reading.

Despite differences in personality, Ida and David each instilled in their sons a belief that the world was theirs for the taking. All it took was lofty goals, a good education, and hard work.

Recommended Readings from *At Ease: Stories I Tell to Friends*: 36-37, 39-43, 51-53, 68, 76-8

