

KEY - Overcoming Adversity

After **Fred Astaire's** (1899 -1987) first screen test, a director noted, "Can't act. Can't sing. Slightly bald. Can dance a little." He went on to become a successful singer, actor and dancer. "The higher up you go, the more mistakes you are allowed. Right at the top, if you make enough of them, it's considered to be your style."

Charles Dickens (1812 -1870), English author, spent much of his childhood in poorhouses and workhouses. He wrote the classic novels *Oliver Twist* and *David Copperfield*, focusing on the need for social reform. He quoted, "Reflect upon your blessings, of which every man has plenty, not on your past misfortunes, of which all men have some."

Albert Einstein (1879 - 1955), famous scientist was rejected from college for failing the entrance exam. He is known as the father of modern physics for writing important scientific theories. "A person who never made a mistake never tried anything new."

Bethany Hamilton (1990 -) was raised by surfer parents in Hawaii. At age 13 she lost her left arm in a shark attack. One month later she was in good spirits and back on her surfboard. She has gone on to become a professional surfer. Her life story can be seen in the motion picture *Soul Surfer*. "Courage, sacrifice, determination, commitment, toughness, heart, talent, guts. That's what little girls are made of; the heck with sugar and spice."

Stephen Hawking (1942 -) is well known for his contributions in the areas of physics and cosmology and has written several books including the best seller "A Brief History of Time" which helps explain some of the world's biggest mysteries. He has accomplished all of this despite having been diagnosed at age 21 with Lou Gehrig's disease. This disorder includes weakness and muscle atrophy. "Intelligence is the ability to adapt to change."

Singer, **Jewel** (1974 -), was raised by her father in Alaska, where she lived in a home with no plumbing. She sang with her father at local bars for money. After high school she lived in her van and traveled the country playing her music in the street and at small coffee houses. "Forgiveness is the needle that knows how to mend."

Michael Jordan (1963 -) was cut from his high school basketball team, but he didn't give up on his dream of becoming a basketball player. He states, "I have missed over 9,000 shots in my career. I have lost almost 300 games. On 26 occasions, I have been entrusted to take the game winning shot and I missed. I have failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed."

Teacher Resource:

Helen Keller (1880 - 1968), well known American author, was deaf and blind since she was 19 months old. With the help of her teacher Anne Sullivan, she learned to communicate. Ms. Keller went on to write a number of books and stories, including her autobiography. "Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence."

Stephen King's (1947-) well known novel "Carrie," received 30 rejection notices before being acknowledged. He has since published hundred of novels and is now known as a bestselling author of all times. "Life is like a wheel. Sooner or later, it always comes around to where you started again."

Jason Lester (1974 -), world class endurance sports champion, was hit by a car when he was 12 and suffered several injuries including a paralyzed arm. He wrote, "If you don't stop, you can't be stopped."

Abraham Lincoln (1809 - 1865) **obstacles** did not keep him from becoming the 16th president of the United States. He is best remembered for preserving the Union during the U.S. Civil War and bringing about the emancipation the slaves. "Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power."

J.K. Rowling (1965 -) was depressed and depended on welfare prior to writing the Harry Potter series of novels. She is now considered one of the richest women in the world. "It is impossible to live without failing at something, unless you live so cautiously that you might as well not have lived at all, in which case you have failed by default."

The famous film director, **Stephen Spielberg** (1946 -), was rejected from the University of Southern California School of Theatre, Film and television three times. He attended a different school but dropped out and began directing. He completed his degree 35 years later. "I'm not really interested in making money."

Melissa Stockwell (1980-) is a US Army war veteran, purple heart recipient, paralympian, paratriathlete and an above the knee amputee. She says, "I can really do anything I want to do, missing a leg or not."

Actress **Hilary Swank** (1974 -) was raised in a small tailor by a lake. She was looked down on by her peers for being poor. Ms. Swank and her mother lived out of a car before she landed her first acting job. "Growing up in a lower-income family, you don't have the resources to make ends meet and you have to find creative ways to get by."

Famous composer, **Ludwig van Beethoven** (1770 - 1827) learned to play the piano and violin (and other instruments) and was performing live at age 7. He began losing his hearing at age 26 but continued composing music. He completed nine symphonies, a number of concertos, sonatas, string quartets and an opera. "This is the mark of a really admirable man: steadfastness in the face of trouble."

Teacher Resource:

Even though **Vincent Van Gogh** (1853 - 1890), Dutch post-Impressionist painter, only sold one painting in his lifetime, he continued to paint. His 800 known works now sell for hundreds of millions of dollars. "If you hear a voice within you say 'you cannot paint,' then by all means paint, and that voice will be silenced."

When he died, **Sam Walton** (1918 - 1992), founder of Wal-Mart, was the world's richest man, but when he started, bankers refused to lend him money. He began his business by focusing on rural areas rather than urban areas. "High expectations are the key to everything."

Oprah Winfrey (1954 -) was born to a teenage single mother, endured an abusive upbringing and gave birth to a son (who died in infancy) at age 14. She was fired as a television reporter and told she was "unfit for TV." She quotes, "Be thankful for what you have; you'll end up having more. If you concentrate on what you don't have, you will never, ever have enough."