

Identify and infer stated and implied character traits

8th Grade Assessment

NONFICTION: Remarks of Senator Barack Obama: Wesleyan University Commencement, Middletown, CT, May 25, 2008

These are some statements that President Obama made to a college graduation.

During my first two years of college, perhaps because the values my mother had taught me –hard work, honesty, empathy – had resurfaced after a long hibernation; or perhaps because of the example of wonderful teachers and lasting friends, I began to notice a world beyond myself. I became active in the movement to oppose the apartheid regime of South Africa. I began following the debates in this country about poverty and health care. So that by the time I graduated from college, I was possessed with a crazy idea – that I would work at a grassroots level to bring about change.

I wrote letters to every organization in the country I could think of. And one day, a small group of churches on the South Side of Chicago offered me a job to come work as a community organizer in neighborhoods that had been devastated by steel plant closings. My mother and grandparents wanted me to go to law school. My friends were applying to jobs on Wall Street. Meanwhile, this organization offered me \$12,000 a year plus \$2,000 for an old, beat-up car. And I said yes. ...

It wasn't easy, but eventually, we made progress. Day by day, block by block, we brought the community together, and registered new voters, and set up after school programs, and fought for new jobs, and helped people live lives with some measure of dignity. ...

We will face our share of cynics and doubters. But we always have. I can still remember a conversation I had with an older man all those years ago just before I left for Chicago. He said, "Barack, I'll give you a bit of advice. Forget this community organizing business and do something that's gonna make you some money. You can't change the world, and people won't appreciate you trying. But you've got a nice voice, so you should think about going into television broadcasting. I'm telling you, you've got a future."

Now, he may have been right about the TV thing, but he was wrong about everything else. For that old man has not seen what I have seen. He has not seen the faces of ordinary people the first time they clear a vacant lot or build a new playground or force an unresponsive leader to provide services to their community. He has not seen the face of a child brighten because of an inspiring teacher or mentor. He has not seen scores of young people educate their parents on issues like Darfur, or mobilize the conscience of a nation around the challenge of climate change. He has not seen lines of men and women that wrap around schools and churches, that stretch block after block just so they could make their voices heard, many for the very first time.

Source: Wesleyan University

Questions developed by Center for Urban Education for use by Chicago Public Schools 2008-2009.

Directions: Choose the best answer for each question

1. What is a character trait that Barack Obama tells he learned from his mother?

- a. honest
- b. legal
- c. example
- d. advice

2. What is a character trait that the older man advised Barack Obama to have?

- a. smart
- b. dedicated
- c. selfish
- d. rich

3. What is a trait that Barack Obama wants the people listening to his speech to have?

- a. caring
- b. confident
- c. careful
- d. cynical

4. What shows that Barack Obama has this trait: empathy, which means understanding other people?

- a. his examples
- b. his speech
- c. his law school degree
- d. his friends

5. Write your own answer to this question.

How can you infer what a person's character traits are?

TEACHER NOTES: Develop Students' Skills: Exercise Thinking

These questions have not been validated, so decisions about student's achievement should not be made based on their responses. They are intended to exercise skills. Recommended activities include: students work in pairs to choose the best response; give students the questions without the responses so they generate their own answers; students make up additional questions; students make up questions like these for another passage.

Answers: You can remove this answer key and then give it to students and ask them to figure out the basis for the correct response.

Item	1	2	3	4
Answer	a	c	a	a

Question 5 is open-ended. Here is a suggested response.

5. By the person's actions.