

THE MAKING OF A GOOD ENGLISH TEACHER

by:

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Students will always have their favorite teachers. They perceive their educators and rate them according to specific criteria. One way or another, students will develop a liking and appreciation for the teacher who qualifies for these criteria. In the study of Miller (1987), students characterized good teachers as having contagious enthusiasm, creativeness, proper pacing, and humor. Someone challenging, encouraging and patient, genuinely interested, and not prejudicial. They also “know grammar well and can explain something on the spot.” These teachers will go the extra mile and “take a minute or two to answer a question after class” and “leave their emotional baggage outside.”

These characteristics are also reflected in Sarmiento’s (2022) classroom, where he asks his students’ opinions at the beginning of the school year with a question along the line of “what kind of teacher do you want me to become?” As you would expect from English teachers, the students responded, “fluent, confident, and smart.” But that’s not all. They also answered, “understanding, passionate, and approachable.” It was a wake-up call for teachers to teach, touch, and transform the students’ lives entrusted to their care.

These remind me of the adage I fell in love with ever since I saw it posted on my high school library wall. It was penned by Henry Adams and said, “A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops.” Nothing can be further from the truth. It is validated by the numerous encounters we have inside the classroom. There are students who, before we are a teacher, need our being a human first. Where does our humanity lie?

The confusion and anxiety brought about by the pandemic tested our very humanity, in one way or another. Do we stop considering our students' family and home situations before giving them the marks we thought "they deserve?" Do we stop to think of their struggles, considering that we face the same problems and concerns, too?

An English teacher's competence and methods (pedagogy) can be a great advantage in becoming an impressive English educator, but only socio-affective skills set you apart (Nghia, 2015). With all these discussions, it is no wonder why, in the study of Mahmoud and Thabet (2013), students from Saudi and Yemen identified a "good English teacher [as] patient, relaxed, good-tempered, fair, helpful, encouraging, respectful, kind, loving and caring."

If someone asks you today, "what makes a good English teacher?" What will your response be? Will you also say competent, fluent, or confident in the language? Or will you also include kindness and empathy?

In the great screenplay written by John H. Secondari entitled "I, Leonardo Da Vinci," he said, "And once you have tasted flight you will walk the earth with your eyes turned skyward, for there you have been, and there you would return." It alludes to us teachers that we all have experienced having "great teachers" in our lives. And once we have encountered them, we will always look forward to meeting another, not settling for less than great.

Years from now, after your students have reached maturity and adulthood, they will look back and talk about their school experiences. Will they remember you? If so, how will they remember you? How do you want to be remembered?

And so, we wonder. What makes a good English teacher? Are you a good teacher? Are you a good English teacher?

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