

“TEACHING PARABLES TO GRADE 9 STUDENTS: A GUIDE TO MORAL AND CRITICAL THINKING”

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Have you ever heard a story that left you changed, or at least made you see life in a new light? That's what parables do. These brief, uncomplicated stories pack a powerful punch when it comes to moral or spiritual messages. That punch still lands today, even if the stories themselves are old or outdated. What Grade 9 students learn from parables goes beyond just understanding the story. They learn to think critically, to reflect on what really matters to them, and to put their ideas into words in a way that feels natural. By diving into these ageless tales and discussing, then applying, those lessons to the world around them, students can see just how relevant those old lessons really are. And that's where the actual education takes place.

Why use parables in teaching? Telling stories is teaching far beyond just a simple narrating. It encompasses great moral issues, human action, and significant life choices. In the case of grade nine learners, who are at the peak stage of trying to discover their identities and make decisions starting from this age, need encouragement to go over parables at deep and thoughtful level. Such stories are timeless in nature and help them understand better about their identities and values, perspectives that are around and even the world around them.

There are some very notable reasons in teaching parables. Firstly, students' moral development is supported by encouraging learners to ponder on what they consider right or wrong. Then students learn to look beyond the surface meaning of the story and draws out deeper meanings which promotes critical thinking. Such stories also help draw attention of diverse cultures to students because of the diverse traditions catered in such

stories, be it biblical, fables or philosophical teachings. Fourth, students' ability to understand concepts with different approaches are enhanced which is also known as creative interpretation. Parables further help express ideas and concepts using story telling which enable learners to draw from different concepts freely.

In spite of the benefits attributed to parables as aids for moral and critical thinking in students, it seems that many learners today have little or no interest in reading them. Parables arise from ancient texts, the Bible, or other moralistic tales. Few of these people would want to identify with such stories especially after growing up accustomed to fast-paced technology content. They can safely be said to be competing with more captivating entertainment like YouTube, TikTok, video games, and Netflix. Students today have to contend with social media, mental health issues, peer pressure, and schedule academically demanding classes, and unless the parables are linked to their experiences in some way, most students are likely to find them irrelevant. Moreover, most parables are full of symbols and metaphors which demand interpretation and such students would understandably prefer plain language that gives them direct answers. Furthermore, at Grade 9 level, students become more independent, challenge authority and start forming unique personal belief systems, and so such students are likely to dismiss what portrays them and assumes control over them. These supposedly authoritative narratives require an approach that encourages debate and personal interpretation to foster acceptance.

For effective teaching in the parables of the present world, an excellent approach is needed to keep them into telling engagement and relevance with students' lives. From the first, it must connect moral lessons of parables to scenarios and issues relevant to today's generation so that students can relate to them, social media ethics, peer pressure, or personal accountability and draw parallels with the characters' challenges within the parable against any that they may face in their lives. Another important basis for really enriching the students' learning perspective is asking students questions that provoke thinking to open-ended reflections like "What does this story teach us about forgiveness

or kindness?" or "How can the lessons of this parable be applied to real-world situations today?" Another effective teaching method is through dramatization and role-playing. Not only does it help in understanding the motivation behind characters' actions, but it also brings out creative expressions of the play. Such group discussion and debates could be an important aspect of the program, thereby enabling students to voice opinions, challenge notions, and learn to listen to different perspectives.

Along the same lines, multimedia resources such as video clips, podcasts, or Internet-based platforms can provide a fresh and vibrant experience for these old stories, engaging the techno-savvy learners of today. By integrating these dynamic teaching aids into their teaching approaches, teachers create an atmosphere where parables are not just read but actively explored by the students to help connect ageless wisdom with their own experiences and the world around them.

Teaching parables is not just about opening a window to ancient stories, more importantly, self-discovery, critical thinking, and morality. While it is a challenge to deal with today's tech-savvy, fast-paced learners, new-age strategies like relating parable teachings to a contemporary issue, understanding debate, and using multimedia in the classroom could revitalize such old tales. In fact, parables would now have value beyond the story itself, they would be used to equip students to think about some of life's most significant questions, challenge their own assumptions, and become more thoughtful and empathetic individuals. Indeed, as a teacher, these strategies help students not just understand the relevance of these stories, but also would inspire them to put them meaningfully into practice in life. Through parables, it has much beyond the inside of the classroom; students become well-rounded, reflective thinkers able to take on the intricacies of life outside walls.

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