

The Importance of People

Stephen M. Corey

A PLEASANT DAY FOR ALL

Cast of Characters:

MR. BROWN, superintendent of schools in Topia

MRS. BROWN, his wife

MR. CAHILL, principal of the high school in Topia

MISS WELCH, head of the English department in the high school

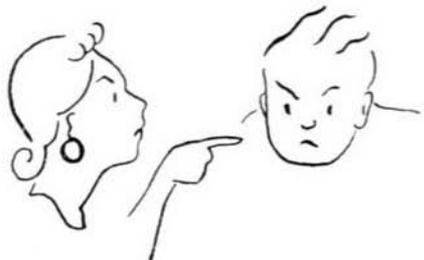
MISS YOUNG, a "beginning" teacher of English

ARTHUR DEMOS, a twelfth-grade boy whose father owns a grocery store

The series of dialogues starts as Mr. Brown is about to finish his breakfast. He is eating alone although Mrs. Brown is across the table from him. The atmosphere is a bit strained.

MRS. BROWN: Why do you have to show off so whenever you have dinner at one of the board member's homes?

MR. BROWN: What do you mean, "show off"?



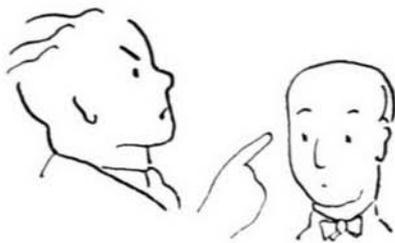
MRS. BROWN: Oh, trying to use Latin expressions and give the impression that you're a student of the classics. You certainly looked silly talking about what Caligula said and then having to admit that you didn't have any idea who Caligula was. Everybody was laughing at you behind your back.

Mr. Brown leaves the table a bit red at the back of the neck, and goes to his office without saying good-bye to his wife.



9:30 the same morning. Mr. Brown has called in Mr. Cahill, the principal of the high school, and has him on the carpet.

MR. BROWN: This is the third time I find it necessary to remind you that when requisitions come from your office to mine I want them properly filled out. Unless you can attend to a minor administrative detail such as that I find



it difficult to understand how you can expect to give proper attention to more fundamental matters.

MR. CAHILL: Yes, sir.

Mr. Cahill leaves the office a little bit red at the back of the neck.



11:15 the same morning. Mr. Cahill has called Miss Welch, the head of the English department, to his office and has her on the carpet.

MR. CAHILL: Miss Welch, I have spoken to you a number of times regarding the importance of getting reports about examinations given by the English teachers to my office immediately. As you undoubtedly know, these reports were due last Friday and it is now late Monday morning. What excuse have you?

MISS WELCH: I'm so sorry, Mr. Cahill. Miss Young was out of the city over the week-end and she said it would be impossible for her to get the summary to me before this noon. I thought I would then bring everything down to you early this afternoon.

MR. CAHILL: If Miss Young had planned to be out of town over the week-end,

she should have arranged to have her work done before she left. One of your responsibilities as head of a department is to see to it that those teachers who serve under you comply with the very reasonable regulations that come from this office. It is a bit difficult for me to understand how you can discharge faithfully the important functions of your office and still be careless and irresponsible on the details. Good morning!

Miss Welch leaves the office slightly red at the back of the neck.

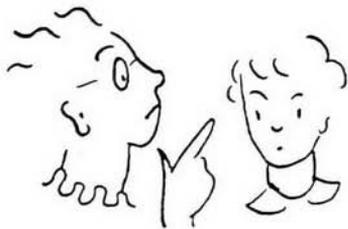
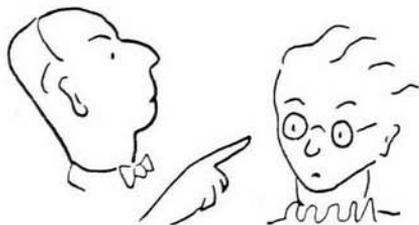


1:15 the same day. Miss Young is in Miss Welch's room, having given her the reports on the examination.

MISS WELCH: It is certainly no credit to a new teacher to be responsible for holding up the reports of an entire department because she was out of town over the week-end.

MISS YOUNG: But, Miss Welch, I went out of town because I . . .

MISS WELCH: It makes no difference why you went out of the city. You should have planned to get these reports in before you left so that our entire department would not be em-



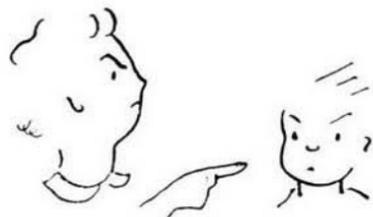
barrassed by one teacher's delinquency. Please see to it that this does not happen again. It is difficult for me to understand how a teacher so careless in details can be effective in important matters.

Miss Young leaves the room a bit red at the back of the neck.



2:45 that afternoon. It is near the end of the last period and Miss Young is before her twelfth-grade English class. Arthur Demos has just made a poor recitation.

MISS YOUNG: It is hard for me to understand, Arthur, how you can expect to succeed in important things if you don't meet your classroom obligations. Were it not for the fact that I know you deliver groceries after school, I would insist that you stay and read that entire essay. As it is, I think you should know that you are



the poorest student among the boys in the senior class.

ARTHUR: Yes, ma'am.

The bell rings and Arthur leaves the room slightly red at the back of the neck.

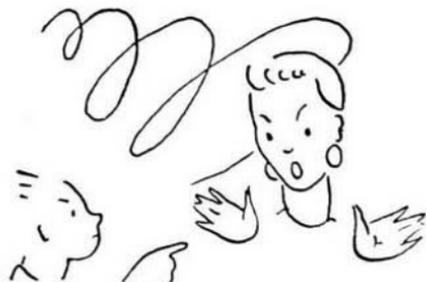


4 o'clock the same afternoon. Arthur Demos is talking with Mrs. Brown, the superintendent's wife, after he has delivered the meat.

MRS. BROWN: Oh, I'm so sorry, Arthur, I don't have a cent of change in the house, but I've got to have the steak for dinner. You'll let me keep it, won't you, and I'll pay you the next time you come?

ARTHUR: No, I won't. You do that too often and you know my dad runs a cash store. The steak goes back!

It does. The door slams. Mrs. Brown stands there a bit red at the back of the neck.



Illustrations by Ruth Cunningham

CHILD CARE CENTERS have become the three C's of the program in elementary education. America's all-out war effort to free the world has enlisted the elementary school in the development of the whole child.—*New York State Education*, October, 1943.

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