

Building Language Skills with The Seattle Times

January 28, 2016

Article: “How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying (Symbols of Success)”

Sunday, January 24, 2016 in the e-Edition of The Seattle Times, NIE special section, page S2

Pre-Reading:

Read the title of this article. How do you think you could succeed at something without really trying? What does it mean to be successful? What do you think a symbol of success might be?

Vocabulary:

As you read, look for the following vocabulary words that appear in today’s article. Write down what you think the words mean based on the “context,” or how the words are used in the sentence in which they appear. Next, look up the definitions in a dictionary and see how close your guess was for each word.

ambition

anxious

concept

consciously

element

intentional

layered

meritocracy

potential

prevailing

protagonist

social mobility

at stake

symbolic

succeed

trait

Comprehension:

1. In the musical “How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying” Finch is the _____. **(Fill in the blank)**

2. What is Finch anxious to do?
3. What is a trait that Finch in some ways represents and that many consider to have helped build our country?
4. What does musical theatre, like so many other art forms, rely on to communicate ideas and to help tell a story?
5. Theatre artists strive to make every instance of symbolism _____ regardless of whether or not every symbol is consciously noticed by an audience. **(Fill in the blank)**
6. Throughout a play or musical, we frequently see an increase in what is at stake for a character. What is at stake for Finch as the story progresses?
7. In American society, there is a prevailing belief in upward social mobility as a reward for what?
8. This belief is the basis for what concept?
9. Every element of a musical has the potential to be symbolic – **true or false?**

Post-Reading:

Read the following passage from the article and discuss the following questions in a group:

“In the musical *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*, the protagonist, Finch, is ‘anxious to rise quickly and easily to the top of the business world.’ In some ways, he represents American ambition – a trait that many consider to have helped build our country.”

What does it mean to be ambitious? Do you consider yourself to be an ambitious person – why or why not? Is it important to have ambitions? What are some of your ambitions? Do you think the rest of the world views Americans as being ambitious? Do you think American ambition helped build our country and make it great – why or why not? What are some examples of American ambition?

Building Language Skills:

Read the following passage, and complete the activity below:

“In American society, there is a prevailing belief in upward social mobility as a reward for one’s personal achievements.”

What does upward social mobility mean to you? Do you believe if you work hard you will “get ahead” – why or why not? What personal achievements do you think you need to accomplish in order to move upward socially? What factors in life could keep someone from achieving upward social mobility? Look through your two-week archive of the e-Edition for achievements (personal achievements by others) you think represent upward social mobility. Also, look for examples of things that could contribute to downward social mobility. Print out or write down the examples you found of both upward and downward social mobility in the newspaper.

Comprehension Question Answers:

1. protagonist
2. He is anxious to rise quickly and easily to the top of the business world.
3. ambition or American ambition
4. Musical theatre relies on symbolism to communicate ideas and to help tell a story.
5. intentional
6. It becomes more crucial that he succeeds as the story progresses.
7. There is a prevailing belief in upward social mobility as a reward for one's personal achievements.
8. Meritocracy
9. True