Class Activities

# Chapter 2: Recognizing Your Traits

## Guide to the Class Activities

Each activity is designed based on Fink’s Learning Taxonomy and is tagged with the following tags under the taxonomy’s learning and assessment structure:

1. Foundational Knowledge (F)
2. Application (A)
3. Integration (I)
4. Human Dimension (H)
5. Caring (C)
6. Learning How to Learn (L)

These activities may be used in either small-group or large-group settings, depending on class size and time available. Some may also be suitable as homework.

## Activities

### A Speech to Secure Goodwill (A, I, H, C)

From Chapter 2 it is clear that leaders need to communicate well with diverse audiences and motivate others to action. Though we will focus on the *skills* of leadership in Chapter 5, this assignment provides an opportunity for students to practice sharing some of their important beliefs with others. Familiar to public relations professionals and those who teach public speaking, a speech of goodwill aims to gain public support for a cause, profession or organization. The primary purpose of the speech is not to persuade (change others’ opinions or behavior), but to develop a favorable attitude by (a) giving the history of an issue or organization, (b) explaining the components of the issue or how the organization operates, and (c) showing how the issue or organization benefits the community.

In a leadership class, a speech to secure goodwill lets students practice building connections with others and inspiring a common vision. It can help students develop (a) intelligence by practicing language skills and reasoning ability; (b) confidence by understanding why they believe what they do; (c) charisma by articulating strong values; (d) determination by articulating a vision and encouraging others to care; (e) sociability by showing concern for others’ well-being; and (f) integrity by expressing their authenticity.

Sample topics:

* Voluntary organizations or programs that students participate in, such as animal shelters, soup kitchens, Big Brothers Big Sisters, after school tutoring, etc.
* Organizations or programs that have had a positive influence on students, such as Boy Scouts, the military, sports camp, an online support group, or a religious group.
* A cause that is important to the student, such as AIDS research, climate change, the local food movement, or animal rights.

Topics that are potentially divisive should be discouraged. Speeches should be about 5 minutes long. They should not be evaluated on delivery, but on content and effect on the audience. Constructive feedback should address the following: Did the speaker give sufficient and clear information about the history of the organization or cause? How did the presentation connect with the audience’s interests and needs? How else could the speaker have made the audience care about this topic? What traits were exemplified in the presentation?

Students can look up examples (both good and bad) of goodwill speeches on YouTube. Instructors can find guidelines for goodwill speeches at [www.textcommons.org/node/4](http://www.textcommons.org/node/4) and [www.tpub.com/content/photography/14129/css/14129\_162.htm](http://www.tpub.com/content/photography/14129/css/14129_162.htm).

### The View (I, H, L)

Based on the ABC talk show of the same name, this activity provides groups of students opportunities to share their viewpoints in a lively mutual exchange. Have students form 9 small groups and assign each group a different historical person from Chapter 2 to research (e.g. George Washington), and one group to serve as the program hosts. Research groups should seek to learn more about their subject’s history, traits, and leadership experiences. What was life like for the average person during this period of history? What other leaders were around during this time? What makes this person stand out? If time allows, have students view some documentary films or read some speeches by their subjects to get a fuller sense of their characters. Group members should be assigned different sources and topics for research, to maximize group learning. (Instructors may wish to ask students to turn in a list of references they consulted). The host group should also do some background research on the leaders profiled in Chapter 2, but their primary task is to develop at least three questions for each of the historical “guests” on the show. Some sample questions can be found in the “Discussion Questions” resource for this chapter. Other examples:

* (For George Washington) – Did you have any political opponents? On what issues did you differ?
* (For Bill Gates) – What made you decide to give away so much of your money? How do you decide which causes your foundation will support?

At the next class period, ask groups to meet and share their findings with one another. Each group should prepare a brief biography in which they tell their subject’s story. They should also prepare a few questions that they would like to ask the other guests on the show, from their subject’s perspective. For example, Bill Gates might ask Nelson Mandela what the greatest needs are in his country. Oprah Winfrey might ask Bill Gates if his foundation work is as exciting to him as being CEO of Microsoft. Mother Teresa might ask Harriet Tubman about her home for the aged and indigent. Winston Churchill might ask Eleanor Roosevelt about how she and her husband tried to keep up America’s morale during WWII. Allow 15-20 minutes for this discussion.

Staging the show: Each small group will represent its historical person on the show. The host group will invite each group to share its brief biography with the class. Then the hosts can moderate the discussion by posing their questions to the guests and encouraging the guests to ask questions of one another. Every student should be encouraged to contribute. The instructor can facilitate if needed, by asking questions, probing for more reflection, and keeping the discussion focused on leadership and traits. Allow for at least 15 minutes for this portion of the class.

Debrief the exercise with the students either through discussion or writing. What new insights did they gain into these leaders? Which leader faced the biggest challenges? What was their favorite part of the conversation? In what ways are today’s leadership challenges the same as those in the past? Different?

### Person of the Year (A, I)

Several popular magazines profile the most influential people in a given year (Time, Forbes, U.S. News and World Report, etc.) Have students look through one of these special issues and select a leader who exemplifies desirable leadership traits. Have them report to the class (or in a one page written assignment) how this leader’s traits contribute to his or her effectiveness. Does the leader have any undesirable traits? How are these moderated? Besides traits, what accounts for this person’s rise to fame?

### Key Quotes (A)

Have students meet in small groups and select quotes from the chapter that they found compelling or questionable. Each group should select one quote to share with the class and to lead discussion on it. Discussion can involve debate, application, brainstorming or whatever form the group thinks is most productive.

### Class Debates (F, A, H)

Divide the class into groups and have them prepare to debate controversial statements focused upon the topic of leadership traits. Like any good debate, each group should be prepared to argue either side. You may elect to assign sides via a coin toss or other random method, giving them a few moments to finish their preparations after this assignment is made. Have the rest of the class serve as judges, voting for the winning side based on the effectiveness of the arguments.

Possible debate resolutions include:

* No leader can truly be effective without integrity.
* Traits cannot be developed that are not already present.
* Charisma is not essential for effective leadership.

### If They Were Here (A, H)

Ask students to imagine all six of the remarkable leaders profiled in chapter 2 together in one room. What would they say to each other? Ask of each other? Learn from each other? This could be a written assignment as well as class discussion.

### I’ll Know It When I See It (A)

Ask students to choose one of the six traits discussed in chapter 2 and search for images from magazines, newspapers, or other media that illustrate that trait. They should then assemble the images in a collage. For example, what does human intelligence look like to them? Do men and women express intelligence differently in the images? Do older and younger people express intelligence differently? How do the images tell a story?

### Storyboarding (A, I, H)

Storyboarding is a way of graphically representing information in consecutive steps that lead to a desired outcome, or answer a specific question. This planning strategy is explained in chapter 1’s Class Activities. Steps can be drawn as a series of circles or squares, suggesting a journey and growth process.

Option 1: For chapter 2, ask students to consider their strongest trait and how it has developed over time. When did they first become aware of this trait? Was it recognized by others? Affirmed by others? How did they practice it? When did they fail to use it? Has it changed over time? What are the outcomes of using that trait today? And so on. This can be done as homework or an in-class activity.

Option 2: Ask students to work in small groups to create a storyboard for developing one of the six key traits in the chapter. For example, what is the first step in developing determination? Is it recognizing that this is a weakness of yours that you want to develop? What is the second step? Third? After groups have completed their storyboards, class discussion can address:

* What steps do the storyboards have in common?
* Which paths seem the most challenging?
* How are people motivated for self-improvement?
* How are various traits connected?

### Guest Speakers (A, H)

Encourage students to attend campus lectures and presentations by community leaders and nationally known speakers. Class discussion can revolve around the speakers’ traits and their responses to contemporary issues.

Guest speakers can also be invited to class to talk about their own views of leadership, the leadership profiles in chapter 2, or current events.

## Writing Assignments

### If I Could Interview Them (A, C)

In class or as homework, ask students to develop interview questions for one of the leaders profiled in this chapter. What more do they want to know about this person? What more do they want to know about leadership? Ask students to share one of their most compelling or probing questions in class.

### Tracking the Future (A, H, C, L)

Some of the components of intelligence are being well-informed, perceptive and insightful. Insight may include the ability to sense unseen risk, spot trends, and consider the impact of today’s decisions on the future. Have students research some contemporary leaders who are doing futuristic thinking. They can be scientists, writers, business leaders, etc. In a 2-3 page paper, have students choose one such leader, summarize his or her vision of the future, and apply trait research to examine this person’s effectiveness as a leader. How well is he or she communicating a future vision? Influencing others to share that vision? What future trends most excite the student?

### Current Events (A, H, L)

Have students write a 1-2 page paper about a current leader in their community. Which of the leadership traits described in this chapter account for this leader’s effectiveness?

### One Minute Paper Topics (A, L, I)

Which of the leaders in Chapter 2 has been the most influential?

What inspires you to develop a leadership trait like confidence or sociability?

Who has most helped you in developing leadership traits and how did they do that?