



Name: _____

Date Started: _____ Date Completed: _____ Score: _____

Learning Activity Sheet
Life Lessons from Literature

Directions: Read again the descriptive essay below. After reading answer the following questions. Write at least 3 sentences for each question.

1. What is the objective of the essay?

2. What is the theme or main idea of the essay?

3. Who is being described? What are her qualities?

4. Which paragraphs are the “descriptive” portions of the essay?

5. What is the relationship between the writer and the person she is describing?

Looking Through the Eyes of a Courageous

Woman: a Junior's Perspective

Carolina Talavera-Gonzales

Our Youth we can have time but today
We may always find time to grow old

Bishop Berkeley

As we sat eating hamburger and French Fries in Jollibee that afternoon of April 8, 2006, Mom casually told me that she wishes to reach her 100th birthday, adding that President Estrada also wishes his mother who's now 100 to reach 101.

I have yet to see a woman who has manifested so much optimism and endurance for life despite all odds and trials that go with living.

The courage to grow old—the most fitting descriptive phrase I can think of for my Mom as she, truly a living exemplar of courage had shown this quality during different periods of her life.

What is it like to be this woman of courage who answers to an equally fitting name “Gloria”? Losing her father at an early age of three, she grew up and learned to be independent and strong as if to compensate for a missing father figure in the family.

Hard work is not a strange word for this indefatigable woman as can be gleaned in the way she has lived her life.

During the pre-war days, she bought raw balut and penoy eggs from Pateros, cooked and sold them at the footbridge at Paco, Manila. Upon the arrival of the American G.I.s she did the washing of heavy G.I. pants at the expansive Tarlac River. During the post-war days, she cut and harvested banana leaves and sold them at the Tarlac town market. All these may seem to be light for a normal adult, but not for a teenager nor to this hard working teener crossing daily the wide Tarlac River all through summer and rainy seasons in order to study at Tarlac High School and still emerging as the top writer in a high school writing contest in search for the editorial staff of the high school organ.

In College, she found employment after high school graduation as a sales lady at the Wellington Department Store, Escolta where she won third prize for garnering the biggest sale in shoes and bags. While working at the National Development Company as typist in its Audit Department, she studied nights at the Far Eastern University and took an AB English course, but then suddenly got sick and had to be hospitalized for ten months at the Quezon Institute.

She married my father at 26 and bore eight children in a span of ten years. Doesn't that too show courage (as I now recall and imagine the labor pains she had to go through for eight times, almost every year)? I am the third child.

My Mom was a working mother—working as part of the Secretarial Staff of Joaquin Cunanán and Co. for eight hours and upon reaching home, also continuing her role as a working mother as she then performed household chores.

What lessons in life did I learn from this woman of courage? I learned “courage” from her; she didn't lecture about courage and how to endure living in our world full of sorrows, pain and problems. She has lived it and has set a model for me to follow. She has endured life sorrows with a brave heart—she is one of the few I consider with a brave heart.

She did cry like any woman or mortal does when in pain but after shedding tears would move on and not brood about miseries and problems in life. At times, I wonder where my indefatigable Mom gets all her strength and courage, though I know it is her faith that keeps her going.

Her courage to move on through life with all its joys and tears has been manifested in a variety of ways—the execution of her dual roles in the work place and at home; her returning back to school and studying in her 50s and taking subjects of her fancy; her moving on to the “greener pastures” (to the USA) in her 60s and working as a caregiver to senior citizens; her endless passion for writing that started from her high school days on to the present time and her standing tall after crying and surviving the trials and storms of life.

Struggling through life, she may be likened to a sturdy ship floating through the gigantic waves of the sea and being battered by strong winds as storms pass by. The voyage may be tough, indeed, yet she would not and never surrender. I can vividly recall her presence of mind and her tough yet calm character as she dealt with life problems during the trying times when sicknesses visited my family and when conflicts and trials seemed to test her relationship with my father.



Hers was a hard life from the beginning and even on through her present senior days, yet she has never lost that pep for life and even wants to live a century!

As I think about her and marvel at the courage she has displayed all through these 78 years, I ask myself in retrospect—would I want to live a hundred years? When (or if ever) I reach 78, my Mom’s age now, maybe that’s the time I’d be able to answer that question.

It’s not only me who’s intrigued with her courageous aura, even strangers and my friends too are awed. One time when we went to Mercury Drugstore, a security guard probably curious about her display of smartness asked her how old she was, to which her natural and spontaneous reply was always a question too—“What’s your guess?” The guard guessed she was much younger than her real age which was 78. She was elated of course; I can sense it as she took pride in sharing with me the interview that ensued between her and the security guard. The guard in his late 30s or early 40s even remarked, according to my Mom’s story, “My! I know of people just over 60 but already with a stooping posture and walking with a cane.”

My co-teacher Erminda, also fascinated by the way Mom carries herself, at such an age and still with the mysterious charm, poise and bearing, once remarked (to my annoyance and amusement!), “Carol’s mom is more beautiful than she.” I silently thought, “How could that happen when Mom is thirty years more senior than I?” as I dwelled on the thought for a few moments, I felt both amused and kind of annoyed. I thought, “Should I take that as a compliment or a criticism?”

Victor Hugo once said “Forty is the old age of youth, fifty is the youth of old age.” As I therefore approach the youth of old age, I reflect on aging and on old age the way I’ve seen my Mom growing and moving through the years. And I cannot agree more with Bishop Berkeley in his Can Love Be Controlled by Advice? when he said:

Our youth we can have but today,

We may always find time to grow old.

We must therefore find time to grow old, and grow with courage we must.

Deep inside me, I earnestly hope I’ll also be a woman of courage and grow old with courage too, like my Mom. She is brave as brave can be, not retreating, not surrendering. Vestigia nulla retrorsum—that’s my Mom.

Fascinating, indeed, as I look through the eyes of this brave woman, from my vantage point—the epitome of courage. Looking through her eyes is unraveling the mysteries of courage as one grows old, still standing tall amidst trials, falls, and tears, yet still full of hope and zest for life.

Growing old with courage, well, that’s my Mom and I’m very proud to say that!