

Before Reading

Robert Fulghum believes that we learn some important lessons about life when we are very young. Make a list of **three** life lessons you learned as a child.

As you read, compare your life lessons to Robert Fulghum's. Put a **star** (*) beside any lesson that you think really makes sense.

All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten

PERSONAL ESSAY by Robert Fulghum From *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*

All I really need to know about how to live and what to do and how to be I learned in kindergarten. Wisdom was not at the top of the graduate-school mountain, but there in the sand pile at Sunday school. These are the things I learned:

Share everything.

Play fair.

Don't hit people.

Put things back where you found them.

Clean up your own mess.

Don't take things that aren't yours.

Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody.

Wash your hands before you eat.

Flush.

GOALS

making connections • writing a spoof

VOCABULARY

Golden Rule: a rule of conduct that people should treat others as they themselves would want to be treated

sanitation: the disposal of sewage and garbage from homes and businesses

extrapolate: to guess something by thinking about, and beyond, the known facts

Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you.

Live a balanced life — learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work every day some.

Take a nap every afternoon.

When you go out into the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands, and stick together.

Be aware of wonder. Remember the little seed in the Styrofoam cup: The roots go down and the plant goes up and nobody really knows how or why, but we are all like that.

Goldfish and hamsters and white mice and even the little seed in the Styrofoam cup — they all die. So do we.

And then remember the Dick-and-Jane books and the first word you learned — the biggest word of all — **LOOK**.

Everything you need to know is in there somewhere. The Golden Rule and love and basic sanitation. Ecology and politics and equality and sane living.

Take any one of those items and extrapolate it into sophisticated adult terms and apply it to your family life or your work or your government or your world and it holds true and clear and firm. Think what a better world it would be if we all — the whole world — had cookies and milk about three o'clock every afternoon and then lay down with our blankies for a nap. Or if all governments had as a basic policy to always put things back where they found them and to clean up their own mess.

And it is still true, no matter how old you are — when you go out into the world, it is best to hold hands and stick together.

FURTHER READING

Robert Fulghum is a well-known author of humorous essays about life. If you liked this personal essay, you can read other essays by Robert Fulghum in his books *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten* or *It Was on Fire When I Lay Down on It*.

Complete a Reading Tracking Sheet entry (see page 7) expressing an opinion of his work or ideas.



CRITICAL THINKING *Making Connections*

Write a brief statement about your thoughts and feelings as you read this essay.

2. Underline the **one** life lesson in the essay that you think is the most useful. Write a brief note explaining how you could apply that lesson in your own life.

3. Think about how Robert Fulghum's advice could be used to create a pleasant classroom environment. Circle the **one** life lesson that you think would be the most important in the classroom. Explain why it would be important.

4. If you have seen a conflict in a workplace, describe how any of the life lessons might have helped resolve it.

5. With a small group, take ten minutes to discuss this selection and the connections you have made. Think about how making connections has changed your response to the essay.



Making Connections

- To make connections with a selection, begin by thinking about your response. Ask yourself: What do I agree with in the essay? How do I feel about the essay?
- Think about how the selection reminds you of your own life. Ask yourself: Have I ever been in a situation where these life lessons would have been useful?
- Think about how the selection connects to the world beyond your school or home. Ask yourself: What can I learn from this selection that will help me in the future?
- Finally, reflect on how your thoughts about the selection have been changed by this process of making connections.

B**WRITING A Spoof**

Following the format of the selection, write a **spoof** of "All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten." Follow these steps.

A **spoof** is a piece of writing that mimics the organization or general topic of another piece of writing to create humour.

1. Choose a location or situation as a starting point for your spoof. (For example, "All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Gym Class" or "All I Really Need to Know I Learned on the Internet.")

2. Think about different events that might happen in the location or situation you've chosen. Try to come up with at least **five** items. If you can't think of five items, you may want to choose another location or situation.

3. Think about a life lesson that might come about from each item on your list.
4. Write your spoof, using the organization of "All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten" as a model. You'll need to write an introduction and a conclusion, too.
5. Use the tips below to decide whether or not your spoof should become part of your portfolio.

PORTFOLIO CHECKLIST**Preparing a Final Copy for Your Portfolio**

If you can check off each point below, then a final copy of your spoof should become part of your portfolio.

- I have a clear introduction that explains my topic.
- I have modelled the organization of the original essay.
- I have presented each point clearly to support my introduction.
- I have a clear concluding paragraph.
- I have asked a peer editor to read my work and he/she has suggested changes that I have made.

If you weren't able to check off each point, think about how you can revise your work to make it suitable.

MEDIA *Making Connections to Media Texts*

1. Think of a TV show you watch. What problem do the characters have? Which of Robert's life lessons could help? Complete the following chart for that show.

TV Show	
Characters	
Problem	
Life Lesson That Would Help	
Why That Life Lesson Would Help	

2. Think of a movie you've seen recently. What was the main problem that the characters had to solve? Complete the following chart for that movie.

Movie	
Characters	
Problem	
Life Lesson That Would Help	
Why That Life Lesson Would Help	

3. Assess your ability to make connections between texts.

