



Grade Level: 9-12**Time Needed:** Two to 10 class periods

Lesson Plan:

Three Cups of Tea “Failure”

SUMMARY

Central Asia Institute was started when Greg Mortenson, in a failed attempt to reach the summit of K2, found himself in a remote village in Pakistan. Upon seeing that the village children had very little access to education, Mortenson set out to raise money to build a school. The first donation for the school was from a group of elementary students in Wisconsin who collected pennies—and Pennies for Peace was born! Although Mortenson failed to reach the mountain’s summit, Central Asia Institute and Pennies for Peace have had a tremendous impact on thousands of children, their families, and their villages in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Tajikistan, as well as here in the United States.

Throughout our lives, we will all be confronted with barriers. We will fail more times than we succeed. We will feel defeat more times than we feel triumph. But it is *how* we deal with our challenges—with our “failures”—that makes us who we are and sets the path for a life of confidence, dignity, integrity, respect, courage, and optimism.

In this lesson, students will examine the theme of “failure,” exploring how failure can lead to success of a different sort, as it did for Mortenson and many others throughout history. Students will be encouraged to self-reflect and think of the challenges that they face in their lives, or will face—and about how they are responding to those challenges.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will read the text *Three Cups of Tea*.
 - Students will research and synthesize information.
 - Students will use critical thinking skills to draw conclusions and form opinions.
 - Students will research historical figures.
 - Students will demonstrate understanding and apply learning by writing an essay, or creating a song, poem, or piece of art to display their thoughts and feelings.
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SUBJECTS

- Language Arts
- Economics
- Social Studies (History, Politics)
- Speech (Oral Presentation Skills)



THREE CUPS OF TEA "FAILURE" continued

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What is failure?
 - Can failure ever be a good thing? If so, when and how?
 - What historical or present-day figures have "failed" in their attempt to accomplish something?
 - How have these people turned their failure into success?
 - Have you had an experience where you thought you may have failed at something that you were trying to accomplish, just to realize later that you were on a different path—one that led you to a different sort of success?
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RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

- *Three Cups of Tea* by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin
 - Research tools such as newspapers, news magazines, and the Internet
 - Central Asia Institute blog, which can be found at <http://centralasiainstitute.org/field-notes/>
 - Central Asia Institute & Pennies for Peace Story (located in the Pennies for Peace Toolkit section)
 - Art supplies
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LESSON

1. Read the text *Three Cups of Tea* by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin. The first chapter is entitled "Failure." Is that an appropriate title for chapter 1? Why?
2. Do you think Mortenson continues to think of his attempt to reach the summit of K2 as a failure? Why or why not?
3. Discuss the essential questions with your students.
4. Facilitate a whole-class discussion on the theme of "failure," using the Essential Questions as a guide. Allow students plenty of time to reflect on their own lives, and insist that students are respectful of their peers' remarks. You may opt to allow students to journal about their own experiences with "failure," especially if you think that their responses may be too personal to share with the class.

**THREE CUPS OF TEA "FAILURE" continued**

5. Have students research historical and present-day figures who have "failed," only to achieve success in another way. Examples:
- Soichiro Honda: Today Honda is a billion-dollar business, but it began with a series of failures or "fortunate turns of luck." Soichiro Honda was turned down by Toyota Motor Corporation after interviewing for a job as an engineer, leaving him jobless for quite some time. He started making scooters at home, and after being encouraged by his neighbors, finally started his own business. (Source: <http://www.onlinecollege.org/2010/02/16/50-famously-successful-people-who-failed-at-first/>)
 - Sir Alexander Fleming: Fleming was searching for a "wonder drug" that could cure diseases. However, it wasn't until he threw away his experiments that Fleming found what he was looking for. He noticed that a contaminated Petri dish he had discarded contained a mold that was dissolving all the bacteria around it. When he grew the mold by itself, he learned that it contained a powerful antibiotic: penicillin. (Source: <http://history1900s.about.com/od/medicaladvancesissues/a/penicillin.htm>)
 - Henry Ford: While today Ford is known for his innovative assembly line and American-made cars, he wasn't an instant success. In fact, his early business failed and left him bankrupt before he founded the successful Ford Motor Company. (Source: <http://www.hfmgv.org/exhibits/hf>)
 - Theodore Seuss Geisel: Today, nearly every child has read *The Cat in the Hat* or *Green Eggs and Ham*, yet 27 different publishers rejected Dr. Seuss's first book *To Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street*. (Source: <http://www.catinthehat.org>)
 - Michael Jordan: Most people wouldn't believe that a man often lauded as the best basketball player of all time was actually cut from his high school basketball team! Luckily, Jordan didn't let this setback stop him from playing the game; and he has stated, "I have missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I have lost almost 300 games. On 26 occasions I have been entrusted to take the game-winning shot, and I missed. I have failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed." (Source: http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/16823.Michael_Jordan)
 - Vera Wang: Vera Wang's path to becoming the successful designer she is today was hardly conventional. Wang, who was a competitive figure skater in her youth, failed to make the 1968 U.S. Olympic Figure Skating Team. Thankfully for fashion fans, this "failure" prompted Wang to take a job as an assistant at *Vogue* magazine in 1971, where she was promoted to senior fashion editor. After 15 years with the magazine, Wang was ultimately passed over for the editor-in-chief position. But she ended up exactly where she needed to be, and is now a successful and iconic fashion designer. (Source: <http://www.businessinsider.com/successful-people-who-failed-at-first-2014-3?op=1>)
6. Explain to students that they will write an essay or create a poem, song, or piece of art that reflects their thoughts and feelings on the theme of "failure," and how we choose to respond when something doesn't go exactly as we had planned. Encourage students to think about the

**THREE CUPS OF TEA “FAILURE” continued**

challenges that they’ve faced in their lives, or may face, and how they might respond to these challenges to set the path for a life of confidence, dignity, integrity, respect, courage, and optimism.

7. Set aside one class period where students are given the opportunity to present their final projects.

IDEAS TO ENCOURAGE ALL LEARNERS

- English Language Learners
 - Ensure that students understand the Glossary of Terms (located in the Pennies for Peace Toolkit section).
 - Review vocabulary in the text’s index.
 - Ask students if the concept of “failure” has the same meaning or connotation in their native country as it does in the United States.
 - Are there any figures from the students’ native countries who have demonstrated success given enormous obstacles? Allow students to share these stories.
- Special Education
 - Allow students to work together in small groups to research and create their final project.
- Gifted and Talented
 - Encourage students to research additional/historical figures who have faced seemingly insurmountable odds to achieve their purpose, such as Mahatma Gandhi, Susan B. Anthony, Nelson Mandela, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Helen Keller, or Malala Yousafzai. What can be learned from their journeys?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

- Challenge students to think about their lives 20 or 30 years from now. What do they hope to accomplish in that time? Can they foresee obstacles that may inhibit their “success”? How might they decide to look at those obstacles to turn them from potential “failures” to opportunities for success of another kind? Have students write a letter to themselves 5, 10, 20, or 30 years from now in which they reflect on this idea of “failure.” Examples:
 - Do students play sports? What are their goals for the sport that they play? Do they hope to make a varsity team? What will happen if they try their best, but still don’t make the team?
 - Do students plan to attend college? What if they don’t get into the college that they want? What if they cannot afford to attend college as a full-time student? What if they decide to change their major half-way through college?
 - Have students thought about their career? What if they don’t get a job after the first, second, or even tenth interview?
 - Would your students like to get married and have a family? Do they foresee themselves taking care of their parents or siblings as they age? What challenges might present themselves, and how might they tackle those challenges?



THREE CUPS OF TEA "FAILURE" continued

DIGITAL ACTIVITIES

- Have students use digital publishing or imaging tools to design a series of posters unified around the theme of failure, adversity, perseverance, or success. Students might select several inspirational quotations to feature on each poster, or feature images of famous people who refused to let failure stop them. Be sure that none of the images selected are copyright protected. Finally, determine a way to share the finished collection. Perhaps your class will create a gallery somewhere on campus or in a local community space. Be creative and share your inspiration!
- Dory the Fish from the movie *Finding Nemo* coined a popular saying: "Just keep swimming." As a class, create a multimedia presentation with music, still photographs, and/or videos and burn it to a DVD; or compile a binder filled with inspirational images, quotations, and essays. Make sure to include quotations from the book *Three Cups of Tea*. Keep the finished product available for viewing in class, or present it as a gift to the counseling department at your school. Sometimes people need a little inspiration to "just keep swimming."

Tell us about your project! We'd love to see samples of your students' essays, letters, and artwork. Send photos and/or descriptions to info@penniesforpeace.org.