

Money's everything isn't it?

One of the most frustrating experiences as a teacher is asking a student what they want to achieve as an adult and getting the answer, 'I want to be rich. Just rich. I don't care about anything else.' In your heart you know that the student, however many zeroes he or she acquires in their bank account, is actually setting themselves up for a life of inner poverty. The simple equation money equals happiness is simply not true. Research has shown that beyond an ordinary standard of living, which probably represents the norm for the country you live in, happiness doesn't automatically increase. You do need to have the basics, such as housing and food and clothing.¹ But after that? One more luxury car will make you blissful? Only perhaps for half an hour.

Don't get me wrong – becoming rich is a good goal, there's nothing wrong with wealth, unless there's nothing else but wealth. Most people who attain wealth also have other goals, such as fulfilling their purpose, their creativity, and their ability to affect other peoples' lives for the better. Being rich isn't their total aim, they enjoy the process – and the rewards.

Showing young people this can be difficult, but I can recommend a book of wisdom tales, *Chronicles of King Argoz, Prince Ultan and Princess Maya* by Paolo F. Tiberi (which is part of the Legends of Altai Series) that may make your students or your children think a little more deeply about the subject of having riches as your only goal. One tale, in particular, demonstrates this point with a light touch. It's called 'The Merchant Learns A Life Lesson'.

All the stories in Paolo's Tiberi's book are original but when you read them, they seem like myths, events, which never actually happened, but are somehow always true. The merchant in this case is Lord Deverell, who has two sons, who are totally different in character. The elder one is like his father, a born businessman even though he is only twelve years old. You can imagine a modern-day version of him watching the stock market going up and down on his smart phone. The younger one, Arkin, isn't interested in money at all. He spends all his time trying to help other people. Lord Deverell gets frustrated with his younger son's attitude and takes him on a journey to try to get him to change his priorities.

The first stop is a farmer's house. The life is hard, there are always cows to be milked and crops to be attended to. But the farmer and his wife seem happy and contented. They have clean water to drink, and the companionship of each other. Looked at from the material point of view, they don't seem to have much in way of possessions or even leisure. Nevertheless they enjoy their life.

The next stop is a prison janitor's house. The janitor talks about his passion in life, which is helping prisoners to understand compassion. The way he does it is

by giving them a dog to take of. Many people who end up in prison have a history of psychiatric problems or have been emotionally or physically abused. That is not to deny that they have committed crimes. It is to understand what most of the people who commit them have been through. The dogs that they look after are scared and aggressive, just like some of the prisoners. Together they form a bond, which is unshakeable and potentially healing for both parties. Arkin again surprises his father by being excited by the janitor's vision for change.

Somewhat reluctantly the merchant, Lord Deverell, comes to understand that there is more to life than being comfortable. We all want to be happy. We believe the things we desire will bring us the happiness we long for, but gaining material possessions can only be a transient joy at best. More sustained and more sustaining are the activities of real value, such love, compassion and altruism.

Anita Roddick, the British millionaire and founder of The Body Shop, didn't want to die rich. Sadly, an early stroke deprived her of that fate. But in her life, she made a fortune and used that wealth to bless many others, as well as to raise global consciousness about the fate of our planet. Andrew Carnegie, the poor Scottish immigrant, who became an American millionaire over a hundred years ago, used his vast riches to fund social projects. Both of these people realised the true value of wealth. And so did Lord Deverell, helped by his son and the people he chose to visit, in the end.

Do read the story, it's refreshing in an age of materialism and will help you to connect back to the things that are really important.

Chronicles of King Argoz, Prince Ultan and Princess Maya is the first of a series of riveting books in the Legends of Altai series by renowned self-awareness expert, Paolo F. Tiberi. If you would like to get a FREE chapter showcasing the book narrative style and story telling, please visit:

http://www.legendsofaltai.com/pages/free_gifts.php

¹ http://www.edge.org/3rd_culture/story/86.html