

THEMES FOR DISCUSSION: THE VALUE OF AN EDUCATION

Questions to Discuss

1. How does Robert C. Byrd's life illustrate the value he places on education?
2. Do you think young people today are as committed to getting an education? Why or why not?
3. As a youngster, Byrd received educational materials, like books and watercolors, rather than toys. What educational materials did you receive as a child?
4. What are some things that can be done to promote education in the home?
5. Should education be a responsibility of citizenship?

In Their Own Words

1. When Robert C. Byrd accepted the award as West Virginian of the 20th Century, he said, *"I also hope that increased numbers of children will rediscover the joys of reading, that more and more students will find unfathomed challenges in mathematics and the sciences and in history, and that a new generation of well-educated, keenly interested, and highly dedicated and industrious students will emerge from our schools to assure our state's preeminence in every field of learning, business, industry and endeavor known to man, and many fields yet unknown but waiting for some blade-sharp West Virginia intellects to invent and open doors to them."*

What can you do to meet Byrd's challenge? What are some fields that might be important in the future?

2. Sen. Hilary Rodham Clinton, D-N.Y., has said of Byrd, *"He is always curious. He wants to know about new ideas. . . . He always is trying to expand his understanding, to just drink in the wisdom of the past so that he can apply it today and tomorrow."*

What does Clinton's analysis of Byrd tell you about him?

What are some things that Byrd has done to illustrate he is always learning?

Individual and/or Group Activities

Follow education bills that are introduced in the state or national legislature. Decide which are the most important. Then write a letter to your legislator showing your support for the bill.

Research to find some education bills that Byrd has supported.

To broaden your own education as well as accept one of Byrd's challenges, read one of the literary classics.

Byrd has said his Doctor of Jurisprudence degree is one of his proudest possessions. He views it as a symbol of fulfillment of the dream of a poor boy from the coalfields who had determination to reach a goal. Interview someone in your family or community who has reached a goal through education. Share what you find with your class.

In 1985, Byrd created the only national, merit-based scholarship program funded through the United States Department of Education. In 1993, the program expanded to provide college scholarships of up to \$6,000 over a four-year period. Go to <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/HEP/dues/byrd.htm> to find out more about the Robert C. Byrd Scholarship program.

In 1969, Byrd began his Scholastic Recognition Award, presenting a savings bond to valedictorians from West Virginia's public and private schools. Go to http://byrd.senate.gov/byrd_issues/byrd_education/byrd_education.htm to learn more about this program.

WV STANDARDS and OBJECTIVES

- SS.9.1.3 make informed decisions as to what government should and should not do
- SS.10.1.3 analyze the nature of civic responsibility in various cultures
- SS.11.1.3 analyze the changing nature of civic responsibility
- SS.11.1.4 develop positions and formulate actions on problems of today and predict challenges of the future (e.g., terrorism, religious conflict, weapons of mass destruction, population growth).