

Tuesdays with Morrie by Mitch Albom

Suggested Classroom Activities in conjunction with the College Book Program

Note: Please look over the entire list, not just your discipline. There are many activities that could be used in other disciplines. Those teaching a foreign language other than Spanish can use the activities listed under Spanish.

Note : Morrie suffered from ALS or amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, also known as Lou Gehrig's Disease.

Administration of Justice:

Role play a situation in which a police officer is called to the scene of an accident caused by a driver who has had a stroke or, like Morrie, suddenly has no control over his feet.

Anthropology:

Choose another culture, past or present, and research how they view death.

Art:

Create a picture or a sculpture depicting a scene from your "perfect day".

Biology:

What happens to the body during the progression of a terminal disease such as ALS?

Child Development:

Imagine that a child in your care has a grandparent with ALS or some other terminal disease. How would you explain it to the child? How would you suggest the child act around the grandparent?

Morrie lost a parent at an early age. Imagine that a child in your care has come back to you after his/her parent died. How would you expect the child to act? How would you handle the situation?

CIS:

Find at least one web site for ALS and evaluate it.

Dance:

Morrie loved to dance the lindy and the tango. When were these dances first popular? Demonstrate one or both.

Dental Hygiene:

Discuss why dental hygiene is so important among elderly patients.

EMT:

Role play a situation in which you respond to an emergency call for someone who cannot speak (because of ALS or another condition). What if the person lives alone or the only other person in the home doesn't speak English?

English:

Write a paragraph about a favorite teacher you have had and tell what made him/her special.

If you knew you had only a year to live and that toward the end you would be greatly incapacitated, how would you spend that year, month by month? What would you do the same? What would you do differently?

English:

If you were to have a living funeral for yourself as Morrie did, what would it be like?

For extra credit, watch the movie "Pride of the Yankees" (about Lou Gehrig) and write a one-page paper about it.

Mitch's hero from childhood was his uncle. Who was your childhood hero and why?

Pick one of Morrie's quotes below and write a one-page paper telling what it means and whether you agree with it.

- "Accept what you are able to do and what you are not able to do."
- "Accept the past as past, without denying it or discarding it."
- "Learn to forgive yourself and to forgive others."
- "Don't assume it's too late to get involved."

For extra credit, watch the movie "Tuesdays with Morrie" and write a short paper comparing it to the book.

What do you think Morrie would have said about the events of September 11?

Would you rather die suddenly or, like Morrie, have a long time to prepare for it?

In the book there is a quote from Henry Adams, "A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops." Do you agree? Can you give examples?

Morrie said, "Everyone knows they're going to die, but nobody believes it. If we did, we would do things differently." What would you do differently?

One of the women who wrote to Morrie described him as a "prophet". Do you agree? Why or why not?

When Mitch asked Morrie what he would come back as if reincarnated, Morrie replied, "A gazelle." What would you come back as if it were possible?

This was Morrie's formula for a meaningful life: "Devote yourself to loving others, devote yourself to your community around you, and devote yourself to creating something that gives you purpose and meaning." Using this formula, how would you rate yourself? What can you do to change things?

Morrie's choice for his tombstone was "A Teacher To The Last". What would you choose for yourself?

Fire Science:

What steps must be taken if there is a person like Morrie in a burning building, someone who cannot walk and cannot respond vocally when you try to locate him?

Geography:

On a city map of Boston, find the Charles River and Brandeis University.

History:

Write a short paper on a famous teacher from another time, such as Annie Sullivan or Socrates.

Morrie's father came from Russia. Using [The Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups](#), research when the Russians came and why, where they settled, and what problems they faced. If you wish, you may choose another immigrant group instead.

Mathematics:

Using [Barron's Profiles of American Colleges](#) in the Reference section of the Library, find some of the colleges and universities in the Boston metropolitan area and make graphs comparing them as to student/faculty ratio, undergraduate/graduate ratio, tuition and fees, percentage of applicants accepted, etc.

Music:

Morrie liked to do the lindy to Jimi Hendrix. Find out how to do the dance and try it to Jimi's music.

Choose two pieces of music to share with the class, one evoking Morrie's momentary self-pity upon awakening and the other, his feeling lucky to be alive.

Nursing:

Morrie described his disease this way: "ALS is like a lit candle – it melts your nerves and leaves your body a pile of wax." Comment on this.

What can health professionals do to help their terminally ill patients preserve their dignity? Or do you believe that this is basically impossible?

Create a timeline for the usual progression of ALS.

Do a professional literature search to find what research is being done on ALS.

Are there ALS support groups in San Diego County?

Philosophy:

One year during the Vietnam War, Morrie gave all his male students A's to help them keep their student deferments. Do you think that this was this right or wrong?

Morrie said, "Everyone knows they're going to die, but nobody believes it. If we did, we would do things differently." What would you do differently?

Morrie quoted the poet Auden, "Love each other or perish." What do you think the poet meant?

Imagine that you have the chance to write your own obituary. What would you like it to say? What changes can you make in your life to achieve that?

Physical Education/Health:

Write a one-page paper about the value of massage in the care of the terminally ill.

Write a short paper about Lou Gehrig.

What are the names of the professional sports teams in Detroit (football, basketball, baseball, hockey)? How did you find that information?

Mitch's senior honors thesis was about how football has become almost a religion in America. Try your hand at the same topic.

Physics:

Stephen Hawking, physicist, also suffers from ALS. Learn about Hawking and his struggle with the disease.

Psychology:

Morrie would have agreed with the Barbra Streisand song, " People who need people are the luckiest people in the world." Do you agree? Why?

Dr. Norman Cousins believed that a patient's attitude determined to a great extent whether he would survive a devastating illness. Who was Dr. Cousins and how was he viewed by the medical community?

Working in pairs, take turns playing the ALS patient. Imagine that you cannot move anything below your chest and that the other person has to feed you with a spoon (try to have real food for this exercise). Describe your feelings as the patient and then as the caregiver.

Instructors: On page 53 in the book, there is a description of the time that Morrie spent the first fifteen minutes of class in complete silence while his students became increasingly agitated. Try this with your class as a means of initiating a discussion on silence. Why does silence embarrass us? What comfort do we find in noise?

Mitch said that his visits with Morrie were like a "cleansing rinse of human kindness." What is there in your life, if anything, that compares to this?

Do you agree or disagree that forgiveness serves the person who forgives more than the person who is forgiven?

Morrie's friend Maurice Stein was deaf, and Morrie was reaching the point where he could no longer speak. Two friends, one couldn't speak, the other couldn't hear. Role play how they might communicate their feelings.

Morrie said that we are brainwashed about materialism. Do you agree? Why or why not?

Morrie said, "People are only mean when they are threatened, and that's what our culture does. That's what our economy does." Do you agree? Can you think of any examples for which this is not true?

Sociology:

Does our society value older people? Why or why not? Compare our society with another country as to how we treat our elders.

What qualities do older people have that transcend the age barrier?

Visit a senior citizen center or an elderly person in your neighborhood and write a brief oral history on him/her.

Morrie said that our society has a shortage of compassion. Do you agree? Have things changed since Sept. 11?

Spanish:

In writing or orally, tell about a favorite teacher you have had and why he/she was special.

Working in pairs, take turns playing the ALS patient. Imagine that you cannot move anything below your chest and that the other person has to feed you with a spoon (try to have real food for this exercise). In Spanish, describe your feelings as the patient and then as the caregiver.

Write a short paper telling what you think Morrie would have said about the events of September 11. Alternatively, have a class discussion all in Spanish.

In the book there is a quote from Henry Adams, "A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops." Do you agree? Can you give examples? Speak in Spanish on this topic.

Morrie said, "Everyone knows they're going to die, but nobody believes it. If we did, we would do things differently." What would you do differently?

Morrie complained that everyone is in a hurry. Think about yourself. How much do you hurry? When? Why?

Speech:

Tell about a favorite teacher you have had and why he/she was special.

Would you rather die suddenly or, like Morrie, have a long time to prepare for it?

Mitch made a list of things he wanted to talk to Morrie about. Choose one from below and speak for 5 minutes.

- Death • Fear • Aging
- Greed • Marriage • Family
- Society • Forgiveness • A meaningful life

In the book there is a quote from Henry Adams, "A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops." Do you agree? Can you give examples?

Morrie said, "Everyone knows they're going to die, but nobody believes it. If we did, we would do things differently." What would you do differently?

Morrie complained that everyone is in a hurry. Think about yourself. How much did you hurry? When? Why?

Travel and Tourism:

What would be Mitch's options (airlines, times, fares) today in going from Detroit to Boston and back again?