

“Unlock My Fortunes Here”*

“Listen to me!” They were all calling out to me as I wondered through the vast library containing all the literature human authors ever penned. Each volume echoed the same entreaty, promising, “I can answer you. I can show you what a complete education contains.” To many of them, I closed my ears, knowing I only had the keys to three books. I was on a mission to define a complete education. As I figured it would consist of those things an educated man knew, my current quest was to define an educated person. I strode past the shelves full of books explaining chemistry, astronomy, ancient government, psychology, architecture, and the countless other subjects I considered important but not fundamental to a person’s education.

Finally, I reached a book whose lock fit my first key. Timidly reaching for it, I discovered to my surprise that it was entitled, “The Constitution of the United States of America.” The other books’ voices fell silent as I skeptically asked, “How would you describe a well-educated person?” Responding with the voices of many founding fathers, it replied, “One aspect of a well-educated person is their ability to function as a good citizen of their country which requires a proper understanding of their government. As the central document to your current government, I am necessary to your education if it will be complete, making you into a citizen fully able to function in your community.” After carefully packing the wise document in my bag, I continued on my search for the books matching the remaining two keys.

After a few steps, the many voices rose again but faded as I stared at the large volume fitting my second key. The *Bible*? How could this affect education? No more daunting was its size than its reputation as I slipped my key into its lock and opened it.

“How would you describe a well-educated person?” I asked with anticipation yet reverence. In quiet dignity, the *Bible* spoke, “To be an educated person, one must have an understanding of right and wrong, good and evil. Who but God could teach this? And without a basic knowledge of morality, how could one continue on to study philosophy, religion, psychology, or others requiring that foundation? I am necessary to teach you morality and justice.” While meditating over the book’s words, I stowed it away in my bag and set my face toward the final book of my quest.

Morality, government, what could be next? Though I walked carefully and searchingly through history and science, none fit my last key, so I continued into literature where I was surprised to locate my final book, entitled *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*. I posed my final question, “How would you describe a well-educated person?” In an old-English accent, it answered, “I can teach a well-educated person two things: an understanding of humanity and the soul as well as an ability to communicate effectively with his fellow man. In me, you can find great depths of insight into human character. Also, I can show you how to use words to express either cares of the day or desires of the soul. Study me, and I will teach you to master language, without which all the education in the world serves you little.” Thrilled by such promises, I gathered the volume in my arms, grabbed my bag, and ran for the library’s entrance.

Flying past what sounded like a million voices calling out to me to hear their wisdom, I thought of the treasures in my bag. When I began my quest to define a well-educated person, I assumed the essential knowledge would come from math textbooks or history novels, which are important. However, the keys given me led to more important resources. From these, I discovered that educated people essentially needed to

understand their government to function as citizens, to discern right from wrong to lead decent lives, and to understand the English language to know how to communicate effectively. These I learned from the *Constitution of the United States of America*, the *Bible*, and Shakespeare's writings, three pieces of literature I now consider to be essential to a complete education. Mission accomplished!

*Title from William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, Act II Scene 9