

Zainab Firdaus

Respect Essay Competition

14 February 2026

The Power Respect Holds

Respect is about actively listening to those around and having inequality with dignity. It's about being interested and present when someone is speaking about something. You might not agree with their side, but you still have an open mind, with no lingering prejudice. Respect is about realizing that perhaps we are not always right, and we must challenge ourselves by listening to other's views. Respect is realizing that every human deserves to be treated with dignity, and that they deserve to feel heard and valued. Respect is about creating a community where differing opinions and people of different cultures can coexist in peace. Respect is about standing with those who need us most.

Respect in the past affected our community by creating tangible change when a display of self-respect occurred. In the past, at a state level, Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat in 1955, which led to the Montgomery Bus Boycott. This wasn't just an act of self-respect, but also her showing respect for the humanity of all Black Americans. In the face of oppression, her decision started a non-violent protest that eventually reached the national level, and strengthened the civil rights movement. At a local level, the community stayed together by walking for 381 days in the Montgomery Bus Boycott despite being relentlessly harassed and arrested. Their dignified approach was successful when it reached the Supreme Court, who deemed the bus segregation was unconstitutional, and changed the law. At a world level, the civil rights movement not only challenged inequality, but created real changes. This shows that even one person can be a catalyst for real change, and that you must respect yourself enough, so that you won't let

someone treat you as less than. Real self-respect is when someone faces challenges head on and doesn't submit to unfair rules. An individual challenged injustice and discrimination through an act of self-respect, and it forced a community to change the way they thought about minorities.

Martin Luther King Jr. is another individual who exuded substantial amounts of humility and respect. He spoke up for the idea that every person deserves equal rights. Even when people threatened him with violence, he had respect for the lives of others and he kept his protests peaceful and encouraged those around him to do the same.

Despite Abraham Lincoln being in a position of great power, he was known to be a person who still admitted to his mistakes. He didn't let his ego get in the way of his dreams for a more equal world. He surrounded himself with people who had different political views than him. He didn't allow the country to be divided, but rather united. He sympathized with the common people and allowed them to speak up. Abraham Lincoln shook hands with each individual person and took time speaking with them individually.

Respect in the present affects our community by creating a space where everyone feels valued and confident enough to actively join when we make the sincere effort to listen. At a local level, when the local government respects the city by inviting them to town hall meetings, it increases the trust between them. At school, when we respect each other's cultures and differences by learning more about each other, it creates this sense of community where every single person feels heard and seen. At a state level, when people respectfully hear each other's differing opinions, it allows for society to function in a peaceful manner. At a national level, when public figures participate in respectful conversations, the public will begin to feel a strong sense of trust in the government, and that their voices are represented. At a world level, when countries respect each other, it allows them to negotiate and prevent war. When people are

respectfully and actively listening to one another, communities see more participation and a sense of fostered trust.

Respect in the future would affect our communities by reducing the amount of hate and violence when it comes to our differences. In the future, at a local level, if we respected the people around us by managing our emotions and reactions, it would lead to a local community that would have less conflict. At a state level, if they actively involved the community in decision making it would allow for more diverse voices to be heard. At a national level, if we had respectful conversations with evidence it would lead to being able to find the most productive solution to real world problems. At a world level, if we made respectful conversations and interactions more prevalent, we'd see a reduction in violence around us. If we made an effort to have productive conversations, hear both sides of the discussion, we could have a future that respected each others' differences and opinions.

Right now, respect affects me by strengthening the relationships I have with people I care about. If someone were to show respect to me by understanding my boundaries, and being present when I spoke, I would feel more heard and valued. Now, I show self-respect by setting boundaries and this allows my confidence to grow. In the future, respect will continue to affect me by maintaining the relationships with my family and friends. It will also allow me to grow as a person while still staying true to myself and my values.

Respect begins from within ourselves. We must have enough self-respect not to tolerate mistreatment, but also actively speak-up and resist during trials and tribulations. We must have enough self-respect to stay true to our values and selves. Respect is about fostering a community where everyone feels comfortable enough speaking up. Respect is not just about words, it's about actions. Respect is about true sincerity and consistency, not just showing up for others when it's

convenient for ourselves. Respect is also about taking ownership for the mistakes that you inevitably will make. Respect affects us by making us more confident in ourselves and abilities, but also makes us people who are open to differing opinions.