

Lesson 1 Journey to the Future

Who Is Your Role Model?

Choosing a career is one of the biggest life decisions young people face. Mapping out the right career path can be demanding. While some teenagers have a clear vision of their career goals, others struggle to define them. This is where role models can be useful. They help young people start to plan their careers by providing them with guidance and the sense of purpose they need to succeed. We asked our teenage readers about their role models and the qualities they admire most in them. After you read each student's story, you will get a better idea of the profound impact role models can have when it comes to shaping career goals.

Minji: My role model is Jacques Cousteau, a French ocean explorer, inventor, and filmmaker. He dedicated his life to exploring and documenting the wonders of the underwater world. As a young man, he dreamed of becoming a pilot, but then he broke both of his arms in a terrible car accident. As part of his physical therapy, Cousteau began swimming. He became intrigued by the mysteries of the ocean, and he wanted to explore further. However, the diving equipment available at that time was insufficient. Instead of giving up, Cousteau decided to create his own equipment. After a long series of failed attempts, he finally succeeded in developing a portable breathing device, which he called the "Aqua-Lung." Cousteau shared his underwater experiences with the world in a compelling documentary film released in 1956. It transformed people's perceptions of the ocean and promoted the need for marine conservation.

Cousteau's curiosity drove him to constantly challenge himself in new areas, and his passion enabled him to make the impossible a reality. Cousteau's life story inspired me to push the boundaries of what I can do. Because of him, I am not afraid to try different things in life. I will keep exploring until I find what suits me best.

Sunho: When people ask me about my role model, I always say that it is Joan Procter. You may not have heard of her, but she was a notable zoologist who specialized in reptiles in the early 20th century. She taught me that devotion to a particular field is important for shaping one's career. During her childhood, Procter immersed herself in the exploration of nature and animals. Although her father hated reptiles, she kept lizards, snakes, and even a baby crocodile as pets. They were special companions that she loved and took care of. She was a brilliant student, but health problems prevented her from attending university. However, her passion for zoology was so strong that it kept her moving forward, and she continued her studies on her own.

Procter accumulated extensive knowledge of zoology. She began exchanging letters with George Boulenger, a prominent expert on reptiles, in order to share ideas. He was so impressed that he hired her as his assistant at the British Museum. A few years later, she became the first female curator of reptiles at the London Zoo. There, she actively contributed to the design of the Reptile House by incorporating new technology that allowed for better care and breeding of wild animals. Like her, I want to dedicate myself to a field that I have a passion for. For this reason, I will take my time to think deeply about where my true interests lie. If I am fortunate, one of my passions might someday lead to a rewarding career.

Yubin: As someone who loves animation, my role model has always been Kim Sang-jin. He was the first Korean animator to work for Walt Disney Animation Studios. Beyond the fact that he worked for a world-famous company, I admire him for pursuing his dream despite the difficulties he faced. From a young age, Kim was enthusiastic about drawing. However, his dream of studying art in college was disrupted when he was diagnosed with color vision deficiency during high school. Surprisingly, he didn't allow this misfortune to discourage him. Instead, he simply viewed his condition as a minor issue that could happen to anyone.

Although he graduated with a degree in economics, he searched for a job related to art that wouldn't involve working with colors. He found out that some animators work only in pencil, so he sent his portfolio to all the animation studios in Korea. One of them gave him an opportunity, and he was finally able to start his career. It was his hard work and talent that eventually led him to a position at Disney at the age of 37. I give him a lot of credit for his persistence and his attitude toward the challenges in his life. I'll never give up on my dreams. If I encounter difficulties, I will simply find another way to pursue them, just as he did.

These stories shared by our readers emphasize the importance of role models in guiding teenagers toward their career goals. Role models, regardless of their field, inspire us because they possess qualities like persistence, commitment, and optimism. If you haven't found a role model yet, perhaps it's time to start searching for one. Try to find someone who can encourage you to take the first step in your career exploration.