

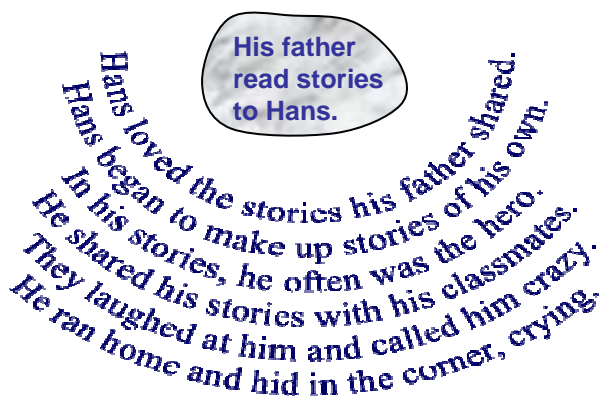
The Ripple Effect

What happens when you toss a pebble into the middle of a smooth pond? What makes the ripples form? How do the ripples look? Where do they go? How are those ripples like events in a life? How can they help to tell a story? The answer involves energy, and energy causes change.



A pebble on the ground has no energy, but you do. You can transfer your energy into the pebble by making it move. As it flies through the air, the rock gains the energy of movement called *kinetic energy*. When the pebble hits the surface of the water, the kinetic energy is transferred into the water molecules to make them move. The ripples that are created are really the movement of the energy itself. As the energy moves water molecules away from the splash, ripples form a circular pattern away from the center. The kinetic energy of the moving pebble has caused changes in the pond's surface.

Now, think of this pond as a reflection of a life. It was calm and smooth when a baby named Hans was born. Soon, a small pebble ... a story that his father read ... plopped into his placid pond. The energy from that pebble and many that followed, moved Hans to love books and stories. The energy began to ripple across his pond, each time changing the surface:

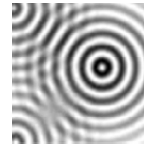


Did the ripples stop there? No, they continued, each one causing a new ripple to form.

If you watch the ripples closely, you will see that their circles get wider and wider. As they widen, the energy pushing them spreads out. Soon, it becomes more difficult to see the ripple lines, but the energy continues to spread even after you can no longer see its effects.

And so it was in the life of Hans. His love of books and stories continued for the rest of his life.

What if you drop another pebble into the pond? What happens when the ripples meet? The ripples **change** where they meet!



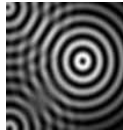
In Hans's life, some pebbles were people who called him names, discouraged him, and called him ugly. Their ripples continued throughout his life. Other pebbles were people who thought he was a genius. Fortunately, they encouraged him. Their ripples, too, continued across his pond. Where the ripples met, Hans found new energy, the energy that moved him to write "The Ugly Duckling," now one of the most famous stories in the world. Hans's story is in a book called **The Perfect Wizard: Hans Christian Andersen** by Jane Yolen.

We see ripple effects in every book we read. **In Pompeii: Lost and Found** by Mary Pope Osborne, it was a volcanic eruption that was the pebble ... or in this case, the boulder ... that caused the ripples to begin, ripples that became a gigantic wave that buried an entire city in ash. In **Firegirl** by Tony Abbott, the rumors of a burned girl named Jessica coming to a class began ripples of concern. Jessica's presence in the class caused ripples that



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made Tom look more carefully at what was important to him. In **Roxie and the Hooligans** by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor, it was her Uncle Dangerfoot who dropped a pebble into her pond by telling her about his dangerous adventures and how he escaped them. Each ripple carried with it a survival plan. Those ripples were still moving when the hooligans attacked Roxie and dropped a rock into Roxie's pond. Each ripple from the hooligans' rock sent Roxie farther and farther from home and deeper and deeper into trouble. Fortunately, where her uncle's ripples met the hooligans' ripples, Roxie found energy to survive each new problem.



Without a ripple effect, your life would be boring. Without being able to *understand* the ripple effect, your life would be disastrous. For example, telling one lie makes you tell another lie, and another, and another (ripples) to cover up the first lie. You finally get caught anyway and the punishment (or guilt) is greater than if you had told the truth in the first place. You understand not to drop that pebble (a lie) into your pond!

Even emails cause ripples. You receive a funny one, and the first thing you do is send it on to your friends. They send it to their friends, and soon the ripples have traveled around the world, and end up coming back to you!

Smiling at a new classmate can start the ripple effect, too. Your smile makes your classmate smile. Your classmate then smiles at someone else, and they smile back. Soon, the smile ripples by your teacher, and she thinks you are a good kid. This makes her let you go on a special errand where you are spotted smiling as you work. The ripples continue. They never stop, but they do change when they meet new ripples from new pebbles that have been dropped into your life.

1. Kinetic energy is~

- A. a reflection in a pond.
- B. the energy of moving objects.
- C. a dangerous adventure.
- D. the energy stored in a pebble.

2. The ripple effect, ~

- A. always hurts people.
- B. never changes.
- C. is like a train going 100 miles per hour.
- D. is like a cause-and-effect chain reaction.

3. The best way to control the ripple effect in your life is by~

- A. being careful not to get caught lying.
- B. choosing friends with good character.
- C. sending lots of funny email.
- D. paying someone to keep your secret.

4. Ripples in a mystery book are usually started by~

- A. a crime being committed.
- B. clues being found.
- C. finding out who was guilty.
- D. asking witnesses questions.

5. A bad grade on your report card can start a ripple effect. What can change the negative energy of that ripple effect?

- A. Get a job after school.
- B. Start studying with a smart friend.
- C. Beg the teacher to change your grade.
- D. Make excuses to your parents.

