

Celebrating the Heroes That Surround Us

Overview: There are many heroes in the world around us. In this lesson students will explore what it means to be a hero. They will write in journals, create hero symbols, conduct hero research, and create a hero quotations banner.

Grade Level:

Upper Elementary Grades 3-6

Subjects:

Language Arts

Learning Objectives:

Students will do the following:

- Respond to writing prompts
- Engage in small-group and whole-class discussions
- Create original art
- Summarize, interpret and synthesize information from a variety of resources
- Conduct Internet research

Learning Activities

Building Background

Activity One: A Musical Hero

The purpose of this activity is to activate students' background knowledge on the topic of heroes.

1. Share with your students the following story, which describes how cellist Vedran Smailovic reacted to the tragedy of the Sarajevo Breadline Massacre in 1992 by playing his violin for twenty-two consecutive days to commemorate his friends and neighbors who were killed.

On May 27, 1992, a group of civilians were standing in a breadline waiting for food. Their country was in a state of conflict, and a mortar shell killed twenty-two innocent people who were simply waiting for food. The very next day, Vendran Smailovic, who was a cello player in the Sarajevo Opera Orchestra, went to the crater left by the blast and began to play his instrument. He was surrounded by sniper gunfire as he played. He played for twenty-two consecutive days, one for each person who was killed.

In 1997, a boy living in the United States named Jason Crowe read this story. He decided that Vendran Smailovic was a hero. He said, "I realized all of a sudden that the only reasonable answer to war is harmony."

Jason commissioned a sculptor to create a statue to honor Vendran Smailovic's bravery and spirit. The statue is called the Children's International Peace and Harmony Statue.

This story can be found at
<http://myhero.com/myhero/heroprint.asp?hero=vedrans>.

2. Ask the students to share their responses to the story. You may wish to use the following questions to guide the discussion:

- Why do you think Vendran Smailovic did what he did?

- Why do you think Jason Crowe decided to try to create a sculpture?
- Do you think they are heroes? Why or why not?

Activity Two: Brainstorming Art

3. As a class, brainstorm answers to the following questions:

- How can an athlete be a hero?
- How can a teacher be a hero?
- How can a mother be a hero?
- How can a firefighter be a hero?
- How can a soldier be a hero?
- How can an artist be a hero?
- How can a child be a hero?
- How can an author be a hero?

Activity Two: Hero Symbols

The purpose of this activity is to encourage students to create imagery that furthers their understanding of the concept of heroes.

1. Divide the class into pairs and ask the students to choose a hero and create a symbol to represent their hero.
2. Allow time for students to share their work with the entire class. Post the students' symbols in the classroom.

Steps for Learning

Activity One: What Makes a Hero?

The purpose of this activity is for students to research the attributes of heroes.

1. Divide the class into seven groups and ask each group to visit the following Thinkquest site at <http://library.thinkquest.org/CR0212302/famousheroes.html> - [Heroes](#). This website contains short descriptions of heroes. Assign each group one of the following people to research:

Group One: Mother Theresa

Group Two: Charles Lindbergh

Group Three: Abraham Lincoln

Group Four: Mohammed Ali

Group Five: Anne Frank

Group Six: Martin Luther King

Group Seven: Joan of Arc

Teacher Note: You may also wish to invite students to conduct research on a hero of their choice.

2. After the students have read about their respective heroes, as a class, create a chart that highlights the characteristics of a hero. You may wish to use the chart below.

HERO NAME	CHARACTER TRAITS

3. Lead a class discussion comparing and contrasting what makes a hero. Ask each student to create a one-sentence definition of a hero. Have students share their thoughts with their classmates.

4. Ask each group to complete the following tasks:

- Write an imaginary letter asking for advice from your hero about a problem.

- Write an answer in response to the letter containing advice that you imagine your hero might give.

5. Create an audiotape of students' letters. If possible, share the tape with others in the school. You might also wish to share the audiotape on a website or as a podcast.

Activity Two: Hero Quotations Banner

The purpose of this activity is for students to examine the words of heroes.

1. Tell the students that they are going to collect quotations on heroes. These heroes might be people in their own lives, people they have read about in the media, or people from history. The quotations may be things the hero has said, or things that have been said about the hero.
2. Divide the class into pairs and have the students collect four quotations that they feel best define a hero.
3. Tell the students that they are going to create a Hero Quotation Banner that highlights their favorite hero quotation. Place a five-inch paper border that students can use to write their favorite hero quotations on around the classroom, cafeteria, or school. Tell the students that they may illustrate the Hero Quotation Banner.

Have your students visit the following resources for quotations:

- http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/2220/2220_heroes_quotes.pdf
- <http://www.quotationspage.com/subject>

[/heroes/](#)

The students may also use quotations from the list below in the Hero Quotation banner.

- "Explore your mind, discover yourself, then give the best that is in you to your age and to your world. There are heroic possibilities waiting to be discovered in every person" - Wilferd A. Peterson
- "A hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself." - Joseph Campbell
- "Without heroes we're all plain people and don't know how far we can go." - Bernard Malamud
- "Heroism is not just pulling a child from a burning house or a driver from an icy river or a kitten from a tall tree. Heroism is also holding the door for a frail elderly and driving courteously and cooperatively and listening with an attentive heart to a friend's words. Small daily acts of love are as heroic as big once-in-a-lifetime acts of rescue." - L. M. Heroux
- "How important it is for us to recognize and celebrate our heroes and she-heroes!" - Maya Angelou
- "Everyone is necessarily the hero of his own life story." - John Barth
- "A hero is no braver than an ordinary man, but he is braver five minutes longer." - Ralph Waldo Emerson

4. Host an event where students and community members have an opportunity to view the Hero Quotations Banner.

Extension Activities

Activity One: Jason and the Golden Fleece

1. As a class, read the myth of Jason and the Golden Fleece at the following website:

<http://www.mythweb.com/heroes/jason/jason01.html>. Ask the students compare Jason's heroic traits with modern day heroes.

Activity Two: Unsung Heroes

1. Have your students visit the following website to learn about unsung heroes at

<http://www.pbs.org/opb/thenewheroes/meet/zulu.html>

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Ask the students to share what they have learned with their classmates.

National Education Standards

www.mcrel.org

WRITING

Standard 1:

Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/Benchmark.asp?SubjectID=7&StandardID=1>

Level II (Grade 3-5)

1. Prewriting: Uses prewriting strategies to plan written work (e.g., uses graphic organizers, story maps, and webs; groups related ideas; takes notes; brainstorms ideas; organizes information according to type and purpose of writing)
5. Uses strategies (e.g., adapts focus, organization, point of view; determines knowledge and interests of audience) to write for different audiences (e.g., self, peers, teachers, adults)
6. Uses strategies (e.g., adapts focus, point of view, organization, form) to write for a variety of purposes (e.g., to inform, entertain, explain, describe, record ideas)

READING

Standard 7:

Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/Benchmark.asp?SubjectID=7&StandardID=7>

Level II (Grade 3-5)

1. Uses reading skills and strategies to understand a variety of informational texts (e.g., textbooks, biographical sketches, letters, diaries, directions, procedures, magazines)
5. Summarizes and paraphrases information in texts (e.g., includes the main idea and significant supporting details of a reading selection)
6. Uses prior knowledge and experience to understand and respond to new information

WORKING WITH OTHERS

Standard 1:

Contributes to the overall effort of a group

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/Benchmark.asp?SubjectID=22&StandardID=1>

Level IV (Grade K-12)