

Lesson Plan: What is a Hero?

Activity 1. Do Kids Have Heroes?

Discuss with students the controversy about young people and heroes. Is it true that kids these days have no heroes or that the heroes they do have are not good role models? Do young people today have heroes? Who are they? What makes them heroes? Are they all contemporary figures? Are there any historical figures whom students recognize as heroes? What makes them heroes? What traits must someone have to be considered a hero? Are female heroes different from male heroes? (Note: Make sure to take notes during your discussion for review and revision at the end of this unit.)

Ask students to write down the name of up to five personal heroes; they can also choose to record no names if they have no heroes. Students should not be required to include their name on their paper. Collect the sheets and type up the list. Note how many students had no heroes at all.

Activity 2. Are All Heroes Created Equal?

Share the list of student heroes with the entire class. Allow some open discussion. Then, begin the first draft of a class list of what makes a hero. Continue to refine this list as you proceed through the unit.

Next, ask the students into what groups they would classify the people on the list (for example, freedom fighters, entertainers, parents, and so on). Do heroic qualities differ depending on the category? Is there a category for sports heroes? Continue by focusing on some of the sports figures who made the list. Why were they included? Is a player with excellent skills automatically a hero?

If practical, access the hero search of [My Hero](#) where you can search the site's featured archive of heroes. (The MY HERO Project celebrates the best of humanity through media and technology). Search for Charles Lindbergh and Amelia Earhart. What is exciting about aviation and heroism?

Try searching the Guestbook at MyHero.

Most people would agree that we look for qualities beyond ability when determining a hero. But, what are those qualities? Revise the class list at this point, if desired.

Activity 3. Can a Kid Be a Hero?

Now students will attempt to identify kid heroes. Give students a few days to find examples of heroic kids from their own experience or from the media (Internet, TV, newspapers, magazines, and radio). Ask everyone to come up with at least one heroic kid.

Continue to clarify what the students believe makes a hero.

Activity 4. Do Adults Have Heroes? Did They Have Heroes When They Were Kids?

Did any students in your class include parents or other important adults in their lives on the class list of heroes? Do those parent heroes have heroes? Give students an assignment

Lesson Plan: What is a Hero?

to learn about the heroes of at least one of the important adults in their lives. Students should ask questions such as the following and record the answers:

- Who are your heroes now?
- What makes them heroes to you?
- Did you have any heroes when you were my age?
- What made them heroes to you at the time?
- Has your idea about what makes a hero changed?

Students should analyze and then share the results. Do parents have any of the same heroes as the students? Do parents have similar criteria for choosing a hero? Were parents able to remember who their early heroes were? Did their heroes change over the years?

Take another look at the class criteria for a hero. Revise as necessary.

Activity 5. Looking for a Hero

To prepare your students to begin researching historical figures, allow them to explore the categories used to classify heroes on the right column of [Library of My Hero](#). Read about a few heroes, historical and contemporary. If students have insufficient access to technology to review the site on their own, download the main page and biographies of some heroes from a few categories.

Do students feel that [My Hero](#) has good categories? How would the class's list of categories differ? Are there different criteria for a hero depending on the category? Should the class list of criteria be divided into categories?

Activity 6. Heroes from History

In this Activity, students will research historical figures. Customize the assignment as needed for your students and your curriculum. Select appropriate criteria for student research, such as people living at the time of the World War II, heroes of the West, immigrants, people from your home state, heroes of technology and so on. Depending on your students, you may wish to assign specific historical figures to specific students or allow students to discover their own.

Finally, explore the role immigrants to the United States have played in creating heroes. Some topics to explore include:

- how democratic values came to be, and how they have been exemplified by people, events, and symbols
- the causes and nature of movements of large groups of people into and within the United States, now and long ago
- the folklore and other cultural contributions from various regions of the United States and how they helped to form a national heritage

Lesson Plan: What is a Hero?

Ask students to investigate the primary documents and other media at www.alexanderkartveli.com that offer clues as to why Alexander Kartveli is an American hero.