

Heroes in Literature and Life

What constitutes a hero?

- What qualities do certain heroes have that make them exceptional?
- When have we seen a situation give rise to an unconventional hero or heroine?
- Do all heroes have something in common about their appearance?
- What are some of the lessons that heroes can teach us?
- What differences exist among cultures with regard to their concept of heroes?
- How can we compose an imaginative way to present our definition to the class (i.e., acting, monologues, visual aids)?

"A hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself."
 - Joseph Campbell

"One person can and does make a difference."
 -Albert Schweitzer

"Aspire rather to be a hero than merely appear one."
 - Baltasar Gracian

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Robin Hood, painting by Howard David Johnson



USMC Iwo Jima War Memorial at Night, World War II, Veteran Soldiers, American Flag



"Without heroes we're all plain people and don't know how far we can go."
 - Bernard Malamud

Mom and daughter



Spiderman vs. Venom



"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"
 - Wilfred A. Peterson

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Depictions of Heroes

"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

- What is/are the theme(s) depicted in these works of art?
- Can you identify a heroic deed or character in this work of art?
- What terms would you use to identify specific aspects of the work that illustrate heroic qualities of the subject?
- In what manner is the portrayal (medium/style) suitable to the hero illustrated?
- What characteristics does this hero display?
"Few of us will do the spectacular deeds of heroism that spread themselves across the pages of our newspapers in big black headlines. But we can all be heroic in the little things of everyday life. We can do the helpful things, say the kind words, meet our difficulties with courage and high hearts, stand up for the right when the cost is high, keep our word even though it means sacrifice, be a giver instead of a destroyer. Often this quiet, humble heroism is the greatest heroism of all."
- Wilferd A. Peterson
- Why do artists depict heroes?
- What aspects of this hero are specific to the culture from which it comes? Would people all over the world agree that this is a hero? Why or why not?

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