

Hildegard Center for the Arts

“Heroes Among Us”

2012-2013

As teachers are introducing “Heroes” in their lesson plans and curriculum, students are often invited to enter into discussions or share their opinions about heroes and heroism. Following are some questions and statements that may be helpful in starting the dialogue and encouraging students to begin exploration of the subject of heroes. Teachers are encouraged to modify the following questions and statement to make them age-appropriate for their students in their classroom discussions.

Discussion Questions That Stir Debate

1. What characteristics must one possess to be considered a hero?—courage, strength, bravery, an adventurous spirit, fearlessness of death, determination, independence, self-reliance, selflessness, conscience, intelligence, initiative, dedication, endurance, perseverance, valor, sacrifice, humility?
2. Can someone be considered a hero if he/she does what’s unpopular or even against the law to challenge injustice or protect others?
3. Where do we draw the line to separate a normal person of good character from a hero?
4. Some people say that heroes are born and not made—that heroism is a matter of fate. Others say that heroes are made from their circumstances and experiences. If heroes are made, who or what “makes” them?
5. If heroes are born, do they have any choice but to be heroes sooner or later, one way or another?
6. Can heroes really be heroes if only a certain group in society calls them heroes?
7. Can people who are noble and admirable in one aspect of their lives, but contemptible or immoral in other areas still be called heroes?
8. Will a heroic person always behave as a hero?
9. Can being talented but having to struggle to express that talent qualify a person as a hero? Is it the talent or the struggle to express that talent that makes the individual a hero?
10. What is the role of media in the making of heroes?
11. Can a person be a hero to some and a villain to others (e.g. Hitler)?
12. What is the difference between being a hero and being a celebrity?
13. Can the notion of what makes a person a hero change over time as societal values change?
14. What historical figures do students consider to be heroes?
15. What contemporary or local figures do students consider to be heroes?

Statements That Spur Debate and Discussion

1. A hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself.
2. A hero must possess physical strength and be courageous and brave.
3. A hero stands up for justice and never lets evil prevail.
4. A hero faces but overcomes adversity.
5. A hero stands up for what he/she believes, confronts his/her fears and does the right thing regardless of the consequences.
6. A hero always puts others before himself.
7. A hero knows what is right and wrong.

8. While several of us may be in possession of admirable character traits, very few of us would come forward to display them under critical or dangerous circumstances—a person can have courage, intelligence, conscience and selflessness but if he or she is not willing to act, can they be called a hero?
9. A hero stands up for what is right and fights tooth and nail to achieve it, does not lie down in the face of injustice and stands up and achieves the greater good, irrespective of adversities.
10. A hero believes in actions rather than words.
11. Heroes have the fear of losing but they also have the courage to drive away that fear.
12. It is very difficult to make sacrifices but a true hero sacrifices without hesitation.
13. A hero focuses on the greater good at a cost of his or her own happiness, desire or safety.

Quotes about 10 Characteristics of a Hero

(Listed here are quotes about the ten most prominent hero characteristics)

1. **Bravery:** “You can’t be brave if you’ve had only wonderful things happen to you.”—*Mary Tyler Moore*
2. **Courage:** “Success is not final, failure is not fatal; it is the courage to continue that counts.”—*Winston Churchill*
3. **Determination:** “The difference between the impossible and possible lies in a man’s (person’s) determination.”—*Tommy Lasorda*
4. **Dedication:** “The only tyrant I accept in this world is the ‘still small voice’ within me.”—*Mahatma Gandhi*
5. **Endurance:** “Don’t pray for lighter burdens, but for stronger backs.”—*Unknown*
6. **Perseverance:** “When you come to the end of your rope, tie a knot and hang on.”—*Franklin D. Roosevelt*
7. **Valor:** “Where life is more terrible than death, it is then the truest valor to dare to live.”—*Thomas Brown Sr.*
8. **Selflessness:** “Without selfless service, no one ever receives the fruits of their rewards.”—*Sri Guru Granth Sahib*
9. **Sacrifice:** “Those things that are precious are saved only by sacrifice.”—*David Kenyon Webster*
10. **Humility:** “To become truly great, one has to stand with the people, not above them.”—*Charles de Montesquieu*