

# Hildegard Center for the Arts “Heroes Among Us”

## Nebraska “Heroes”

*For Grades 4-8 who are studying Nebraska History and Art*

**Purpose:** Students will learn about famous Nebraskans who have made contributions to our state and nation through exploration of the Nebraska State Capitol and identify those who may be considered “heroes”

### **Objectives:**

- 1) Students will identify prominent citizens who are included in Nebraska’s Hall of Fame at the State Capitol Building
- 2) Students will learn why these Honorees are featured in the hall
- 3) Students will discuss the importance and relevance of contributions made by these Honorees
- 4) Students will identify Honorees they would classify as “Nebraska Heroes”
- 5) Students will prepare a written and/or oral report

### **National Standards that may be met:**

- Students read to acquire new information
- Students read to build an understanding of the many dimensions of human experience.
- Students adjust their use of spoken, written and visual language to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
- Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
- Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions, media techniques, figurative language and genre to create, critique and discuss print and non-print texts.
- Students use spoken, written and visual language to accomplish their own purposes.

Students will be asked to visit the Nebraska State Capitol Building’s “Nebraska’s Hall of Fame” on a class tour, in small groups or individually. The Hall honors people who:

- 1) Were born in Nebraska or
- 2) Who gained prominence while living in Nebraska or
- 3) Who lived in Nebraska and whose residence was an important influence on their lives and contributed to their greatness

### **Process:**

- 1) Either through a class field trip or by asking students to visit the Capitol on their own or in small groups, students will explore Nebraska's Hall of Fame and view the artwork displayed there.
- 2) Each student will receive a hand out from their teacher with two separate listings of the names and accomplishments of the Honorees found in the in the Hall of Fame. By stopping at the likeness of each Honoree, the students will try to match the names of the "Heroes" with a description of the accomplishments of all the Honorees in the Hall.
- 3) After matching the Honorees with their accomplishments, the students will write a short description of why each individual was important or had made an impact in the State or Nation.
- 4) After the students have identified the accomplishments of the Honorees and taken their notes, the teacher will ask the students to sit on the floor in a circle and will then quietly assign the name of an Honoree to each student (if the entire class is meeting at the Capitol for a field trip). One at a time, the students will stand in the center of the circle and give a description of their Honoree one clue at a time. The goal for the students is to guess the name of the Honoree in as few clues as possible. (This activity can also take place in the classroom once all of the students have visited the Capitol on their own time.)
- 5) Prior to leaving the Capitol building, students are encouraged to view the following pieces of art and identify Nebraska Heroes (identified or unsung) depicted there: "Painting of Plowman at Sunset" by James Penney, "Painting of Homesteaders Building Cabin" by James Penney, "The Blizzard of 1888" by Jeanne Reynal. Teachers/students may also visit the following websites to view artwork featured at the Nebraska State Capitol: (found on YouTube) "Artwork in Nebraska State Capitol" and "Nebraska State Capitol Pictures by Travel Photo Base [www.travelphotobase.com/s/NEC.HTM](http://www.travelphotobase.com/s/NEC.HTM) .
- 6) After the class discussion in which any heroic behavior on the part of the Honorees is described, invite each student to select an Honoree from those listed in the Hall of Fame who they feel is a hero.
- 7) Ask students to research the life and accomplishments of the individual selected and prepare a written report (possibly with illustrations) about their "Nebraska Hero".
- 8) Students may be asked to give short oral reports about their findings.

Individuals Included In the Nebraska Hall of Fame (for teacher use in preparing student handouts) for above activity (source is [www.NebraskaLegisture.gov](http://www.NebraskaLegisture.gov) and [www.nebraska.history.org](http://www.nebraska.history.org) , [www.nebraskastudies.org](http://www.nebraskastudies.org) and Wikipedia) :

**Willa Cather** (1873 – 1947) One of Nebraska's best known novelist. Grew up in Nebraska; many of her stories and novels are about her hometown of Red Cloud and the people that

she knew while she was living there. Author of twelve published novels, a book of poetry, and many short stories and essays. Best known for her novels *My Antonia*, *O Pioneers!* and *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. Received the Pulitzer Prize in 1921. Lived in Red Cloud.

**Hartley Burr Alexander** (1873-1939) Anthropologist, poet, philosopher, educator, authority on North American Indian mythology and author of the symbolism and inscriptions on the Nebraska's State Capitol building. Born in Lincoln, raised in Syracuse and lived in Lincoln.

**George Norris** (1861 – 1944) One of America's greatest statesmen. Was a county attorney and a district judge before being elected to the United States House of Representatives 1903-1913 and U.S. Senate 1913-1943. Served ten years as a congressman and was elected to the United States Senate in 1912. Best known for his development of the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Rural Electrification Act which eventually brought electricity to rural areas across the United States. Initiator of reform of House rules, anti-injunction law for labor and 20<sup>th</sup> amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Considered the father of the Unicameral, Nebraska's unique one-house legislature. Lived in Beatrice, Beaver City and McCook.

**Nathan Roscoe Pound** (1870-1964) Botanist, pioneer ecologist, Dean of University of Nebraska Law College, Dean of Harvard Law School. Born and raised in Lincoln.

**Standing Bear** (1829 – 1908) Chief of the Ponca Indians. His tribe was moved to Indian Territory in Oklahoma in 1877, but he wanted to return to his homeland in Nebraska. The United States Army arrested him for returning to Nebraska, and he took his case to court. The judge ruled that "an Indian is a person within the meaning of the law." This judgment meant that Standing Bear and all Indians had rights under the Constitution, just as did non-Indians. Probably born in northeast Nebraska and lived near the mouth of the Niobrara River.

**J. Sterling Morton** (1832 – 1902) Newspaper editor, a legislator, an acting governor of Nebraska Territory, Nebraska Territorial Secretary and the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture from 1893 to 1897. Best known for founding Arbor Day in 1872. Spent much of his life promoting conservation practices and encouraging people to plant trees. Lived in Nebraska City; his home there is called Arbor Lodge.

**William "Buffalo Bill" Cody** (1846 – 1917) One of the most famous Nebraskans of his time; was a soldier, buffalo hunter, army scout, actor, rancher, irrigationist and showman of the west. In 1883 he organized the first of his famous Wild West Shows which entertained people all over the United States and Europe. In 1886 he built a home in North Platte and called it Scout's Rest. In 1872 the Medal of Honor was awarded to Cody, was revoked and later reinstated. Lived near North Platte.

**John J. Pershing** (1860-1925) Soldier, founder of Pershing Rifles. Service in Indian Wars, Cuba, Philippines, commander, Mexican Border. 1916, commander American Expeditionary Forces, France, 1917-1919; General Armies of the United States, 1919, and Army chief of staff, 1921-24. Lived in Lincoln.

**William Jennings Bryan** (1860 – 1925) One of Nebraska's most influential politicians and a famous speaker, religious leader and author. Moved to Lincoln from Illinois in 1887 to set up a law practice. Elected the first Democratic congressman from Nebraska in 1890. United States Secretary of State for President Woodrow Wilson and an editor of the Omaha World-Herald. Three-time Democratic candidate for President of the United States. Was known as the "Great Commoner" because of his concern for the working man and woman. His home in Lincoln is called "Fairview." It is operated by Bryan/LGH Medical Center, and you can visit it when it is open to the public. Lived in Lincoln.

**Bess Streeter Aldrich** (1881-1954) Author, narrator of Nebraska, gave literary life to Nebraska pioneer memories. One Aldrich novel, *A Lantern in Her Hand*, was translated into many languages. Lived in Elmwood and Lincoln.

**Dwight Palmer Griswold** (1896-1954) Banker, publisher, Nebraska governor 1941-1947, U.S. Senator 1953-1954, chief of the American mission for aid to Greece 1947-1948. Born in Harrison; raised in Gordon.

**Grace Abbott** (1873 – 1939) Social reformer who worked hard to protect children's rights. She was born in Grand Island and taught school there. In 1907 she went to Chicago to continue her education and to work with immigrants. She became a leader in the fight to protect the rights of children. She was especially concerned about children who were forced to work long hours in factories for very little pay. Grace Abbott became the head of the Children's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor. Internationally honored for her championship of children and mothers and for her promotion of pioneer social legislation. Born and raised in Grand Island.

**Gilbert M. Hitchcock** (1859-1934) Newspaperman, politician, founder of the "Omaha World-Herald" in 1889. Served in U.S. House of Representatives 1902-1904 and 1906-1911; U.S. Senate 1911-1922. Born and lived in Omaha.

**John Gneisenau Neihardt** (1881-1973) Nebraska Poet Laureate 1921-1973. Epic poet of the West, historian, philosopher, author of *Black Elk Speaks*. Lived in Wayne and Bancroft.

**Father Edward Flanagan** (1886 – 1948) Founder of Boys Town, a home for boys and, more recently, girls who have no home or whose parents cannot care for them. Edward Flanagan was born in Ireland. He came to the United States in 1904 and became a priest. He started

Boys Town in Omaha in 1921. Boys Town became an official town with a mayor and town government in 1936, the same year that a movie entitled "*Boys Town*" was made. Father Flanagan became well known for his saying, "There's no such thing as a bad boy". Lived in Omaha and Boys Town.

**Loren Eiseley** (1907-1977) Anthropologist, poet and philosopher of science. Born and lived in Lincoln.

**Arthur Weimar Thompson** (1886-1970) Premier auctioneer. In a 46-year career, called more than 7,500 livestock sales from New York to California and from Canada to Mexico. Born in Bradshaw; lived in Lincoln.

**Edward Creighton** (1820-1874) Telegraph pioneer and banker. Funds from his estate established Creighton University. He was a member of the Cowboy Hall of Fame and lived in Omaha.

**Susette La Flesche Tibbles** (1854-1903) Speaker and writer for Indian rights. Omaha name: Inshata Theumba or "Bright Eyes." Born in Bellevue and raised on Omaha reservation in Thurston County near Macy. Was the translator for Standing Bear at his trial. Lived in Lincoln and died in Bancroft.

**Nathan J. Gold** (1894-1970) Businessman, civic leader, philanthropist and Nebraska booster. Lived in Lincoln.

**Mari Sandoz** (1896-1966) novelist, historian, teacher. Wrote *Old Jules*, *Slogam House*, *Crazy Horse: The Strange Man of the Ogallalas*, *Cheyenne Autumn*. Born in Sheridan County near Gordon and lived in Lincoln.

**Red Cloud** (1822-1909) Ogallala Lakota war leader, statesman. Opposed white westward expansion and led a successful conflict 1866-1868 (called Red Cloud's War) for control of Powder River country in Wyoming and Montana. Lakota name: Mahpiya Luta. After meeting with officials in Washington, DC, the Red Cloud Indian Agency was formed in an attempt to ease Native Americans' transition to reservation life. Born in Garden County area by Platte River, Nebraska.

**Robert W. Furnas** (1824-1905) Newspaperman, soldier, historian, Nebraska Governor 1873-1875. He was an agriculturist who lived in Brownville.

**Charles R. Bessey** (1845-1915) Botanist, Chancellor of the University of Nebraska from 1888-1891 and 1899-1900. Born in Milton, Ohio and lived in Lincoln.

## **Additional Activities Focusing on Nebraska History and the State Capitol:**

### **Activity one: Nebraska State Capitol Scavenger Hunt**

Invite students to participate in a scavenger hunt as they explore the Nebraska State Capitol Building. Either individually or as a group, ask students to answer as many of the questions as possible from the website: “Walk Through Scavenger Hunt” in PDF form with Teacher’s key found at [www.capitol.org/education](http://www.capitol.org/education) . This activity will help students learn more about their state and its history as well as the art and symbolism used in the construction and ornamentation of the Nebraska State Capitol.

### **Activity two: Honoring Famous Nebraskans**

Nebraskans have made important contributions to their communities, to their state, to the nation and to the world. Chief Red Cloud was an important spokesman and leader of his people. J. Sterling Morton and Susan LaFlesche Picotte helped us to better care for our world and the people who live here. Chief Standing Bear and George Norris changed our legal system and our form of government. Henry Fonda entertained us in films, Johnny Carson delighted us on television and Grover Cleveland Alexander amazed us on the baseball field. Willa Cather described our world in fiction. There are many ways in which we recognize people who have made our state and our world a better place. We honor some Nebraskans by naming counties or towns after them. Dawes County is named after James W. Dawes, the fifth governor of Nebraska. Boyd County is named for James E. Boyd, the seventh governor of Nebraska. The town of Red Cloud was named for Chief Red Cloud of the Ogallala Sioux. Was your town or county named for a famous Nebraskan? Does your town have any streets or buildings named for Nebraskans? Ask students to explore their community and find ways that famous and heroic Nebraskans have been honored.