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HEROES

OBJECTIVES

Theme:

people we admire

Language functions:

giving reasons and offering explanations;
defining a concept

» WARM UP

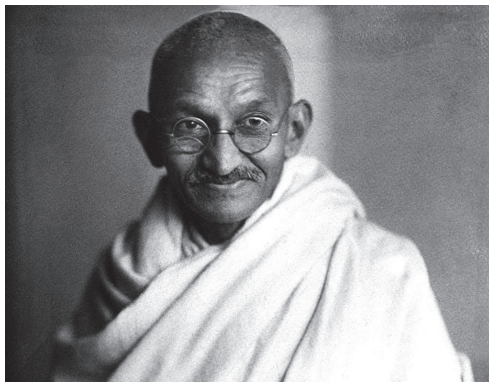
- 1) Listen to the song “Hero” by Mariah Carey. (The lyrics are at the end of this unit.) Enjoy and hum it if you like. Do you like the song? Why or why not? 🎧
- 2) Who is your hero? Is he/she your hero all the time or does your hero change from time to time? If your answer is the former, why has he/she been your hero? If your answer is the latter, who have they been? And why have there been such changes?



» **ACTIVITY 1**

1. Who is he?

Look at the following picture. Who is he? What do you know about him? What do you think of him?



2. Peacemaker hero: Mohandas K. Gandhi 🎧

In the early 1600s, sailors from Great Britain made their way to India. At that time, India was a country rich in traditions and culture thousands of years old. The British Empire took control of the government of India and forever changed the face of that country. Ancient traditions and religions were thrown out, made illegal by ruthless British generals eager to make India another England. As you can well imagine, the native people of India suffered greatly, seeing their way of life trampled under the British desire to “civilize” their country.

For the longest time, nobody in India successfully fought back against the British and the oppression they brought with them. This all changed when a small man, born in the ancient city of Porbandar in 1869, stood up and said “Enough!” This man became known the world over as Gandhi, the mahatma or “Great Soul” of India.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi’s early years showed little sign of the great life he would go on to live. Everything changed, however, one fateful day when Gandhi was denied a seat in first-class compartments in South Africa simply because he wasn’t white. Gandhi, until now too shy to even speak in front of a judge, sued the railroad company and won. From that point on, Gandhi became the number one spokesman for all powerless non-whites the world over.

After 20 years of aiding his fellow Indians in South Africa, Gandhi returned to India and picked up the fight against British oppression. Instead of encouraging native-born Indians to take up arms and force the British colonists out of their country, Gandhi

created a policy of non-violent protest. “Non-violence,” he said, “is a weapon for the brave.”

For 20 years, non-violent protests, marches and strikes by the Indians wore down British resistance. Confronted by a slight man wearing only a plain loincloth and accompanied by millions of followers armed not with weapons but love and truth, the British government in 1946 finally gave India its long-held dream of independence. The fight for India’s freedom had been won without a battle having ever been fought.

Sadly, two years after his great victory, Gandhi was shot and killed by an assassin’s bullet. But Gandhi’s legacy lives on after his death, showing the world that one can be a hero and accomplish great things without guns or swords or hatred.

3. Discussion

- 1) Do you agree that Gandhi is a great hero? Why or why not? What heroic deeds or admirable qualities do you know about him?
- 2) Is there anyone else you regard as a hero of similar stature? Who is he/she?
- 3) What makes a hero?
- 4) If you are asked to give the top five names as the greatest heroes/heroines, what would be your list? Give your reasons.



4. Group work

Here are some quotes from some well-known people. What views do they reflect about hero and heroism? Do you agree with them?

In short, whoever you may be,
To this conclusion you'll agree,
When everyone is somebody,
Then no one's anybody.

—W. S. Gilbert (English dramatist, poet and illustrator)

Greatness lies not in being strong, but in the right use of strength.

—Henry Ward Beecher (American clergyman)

Show me a hero and I'll write you a tragedy.

—F. Scott Fitzgerald (American writer)

One murder makes a villain, millions a hero.

—Beilby Porteus (Bishop, religious reformer)

Hero-worship is strongest where there is least regard for human freedom.

—Herbert Spencer (English philosopher)

A great man is made up of qualities that meet or make great occasions.

—James Russell Lowell (American poet)

A hero is no braver than an ordinary man, but he is brave five minutes longer.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson (American poet, philosopher)

>> ACTIVITY 2**1. Who is a hero?** 

The word *hero* means different things to different people. For some, it's the firefighter who enters a burning building to save lives. For others, it's the baseball player who clears the bases with a game-winning home run. The following is a survey conducted on people's ideas of heroes by a TV station.

Interviewer: Who do you think are heroes?

Tim: One of my heroes was the man who owned the grocery store where I worked as a teenager. He was honest, hardworking, and treated people with dignity. Another was my lieutenant at Army basic training, because he believed in me. These men didn't focus on themselves, but encouraged others to believe in themselves. Heroes conduct themselves with honor and make the right choices day after day.

Interviewer: Thank you. What does the word *hero* mean to you?

Maura: I don't like the term *hero*. It implies that some people are perfect and have no weaknesses, but we all have shortcomings. Heroes are people who fail but stand back up again. We all have the material of heroes inside us. By following the example of others you look up to, you can fan the flames of inspiration and find the hero in yourself. Heroes are those who recognize their weaknesses and do something about them.

Interviewer: Very good. Thank you very much. Who are heroes to you?



Jessica: To me, heroes are those who sacrifice, take risks, or do the extraordinary for the benefit of others. Firefighters do not set out to be heroes. When they take the oath of office, they realize they may be placing themselves in danger, but it is part of the job. A person does not have to rush into a burning building to be a hero, though. Author Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, “Each man is a hero to somebody.”

Interviewer: Thanks a lot. What about you Sue? What does hero mean to you?

Sue: Heroes come in all shapes and sizes. When I was growing up, there were very few female athletes to look up to, so I copied my sister, Jen. She excelled because she gave it her best at all times. It is important to realize that both males and females can inspire and lead the way for others.

Interviewer: Thank you Sue. Dan, who are your heroes?

Dan: My heroes were my parents. They worked with determination and heart to make sure my brothers, sisters and I had what we needed. They impressed upon us that we were a family, a team, not just a collection of people who lived under the same roof. Having the biggest car, the most money, or the nicest house does not make one a hero. Heroism comes from within. There are heroes all around us—you just have to know how to look for them.

Interviewer: Right. Thanks a lot. Now Derek, what is heroism to you?

Derek: A hero is someone like my parents, who give something to others and ask for nothing in return. Right from the start, my parents told my sister and me that we could be successful, and then they showed us how. After my Little League games my dad would take me to the high school field and hit me extra grounders and then pitch to me. My mom and sister would patiently field the balls I hit. My parents taught me that there may be people with more talent but there is never an excuse for anyone to work harder than I do.

2. Group discussion

Based on the interview above and your own experiences, sum up some common features of heroes and share your list with the whole class.

Common features of heroes

3. Role-play

You may choose either of the following two situations.

Situation I

A TV station is conducting a survey on people's views on "heroes" and "heroism." Act as the host. Interview four of your classmates to find out their ideas of "heroes" and "heroism." Ask them to back up their views with examples. Summarize your findings and write a news report. Broadcast it on radio.

Situation II

Simulate a panel discussion on a TV talk show. The topic of the show is "Heroes and Heroism."

» ACTIVITY 3

1. What kind of people do we admire?

It's interesting how people's views change about what kind of people deserve our admiration.

The other day I asked a young girl I know what she would like to be after she finishes university, and she replied, "To be the boss of a company." "And if you fail?" I asked again. "Then," she answered, "to be the boss' wife." "And if you should fail again?" I persisted. "Then, to be the boss' mother."

I know that she said it in jest. But in my day, we wouldn't even joke about such things. It would've been considered bad taste. At that time, money was considered dirty and evil (bosses are rich people).

It is true that people's idols change with the time. In American history, the people the early settlers admired were clergymen and tough, strong frontiersmen. Then the Revolution came, and people became admirers of the revolutionary leaders—Washington, Jefferson, and Patrick Henry, who made that famous "Give me liberty, or give me death" speech. Then, lawyers and social reformers took over for some time. But during the Civil War, war heroes became the center of attention. After the Civil War, the heroes became the industrialists, bankers, and business tycoons. Today if you ask people who they admire, they might quite likely give you the names of some pop musicians, movie stars, or famous athletes.



Our idols sometimes change drastically. Years ago, a man who killed a tiger barehanded was admired as a great hero. Today, the same person might be thrown into prison for killing an endangered species.

And different people have different idols. What is considered admirable by some may not be regarded as such by others.

No wonder people say that the best way to get to know a person or get to know our times is to find out what kind of people he/she admires or what kind of people are admired generally.

2. Project

Heroes can be people from all walks of life. Many work behind the scenes to get the job done, while others are public figures; some affect the lives of many, while others affect the lives of just a few. But they all work hard, and all make a difference. They can be great scientists, athletes, peacemakers, lifesavers, ordinary workers, etc. Work in groups of four or six. Each group researches one category to find at least two examples. Then present your findings in class.

3. Group work

Do you agree that people's views change with time about what kind of people deserve our admiration? If your answer is "yes," think about the heroes in China in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s...If your answer is "no," give examples to support your views. Exchange your views with a partner first, then with other people in your group.

>> ACTIVITY 4**1. My hero** 

A hero can be a lot of things: someone who has saved another person's life, someone who has risked his life or safety for others, someone who has done something no one else could do. My hero, Mike Frasier, fills all these roles and more.

Mike Frasier has risked his life for others. Mike works in an environment where there is a constant threat of danger from chemical leaks. These rarely occur, but when one did, Mike was ready to act.

Common procedure is to have safety glasses and a respirator on at all times. One frightful day, a young man who neglected to put on safety equipment was sprayed in the face with acid during a chemical leak. The chemical compound released a thick cloud of poisonous gas all around him. He could not see, breathe, or get to the emergency shower. Mike was far enough away not to be affected by the gas, but he knew a man was in there. Without safety equipment of his own, Mike plunged into the thick cloud, and dragged the man into the shower just in time to save his life. Miraculously, the man only partially lost his sight in one eye, and Mike came out unscathed.

Mike Frasier has saved the lives of many people. One person is Ray Geis. Mike and Ray had gotten together with their families for a dinner party. The main dish had just been served when Ray started to choke. Mike realized that Ray couldn't breathe, and he jumped to his aid. Everyone else at the table froze, but Mike knew just what to do. He performed the Heimlich maneuver and saved Ray's life.

Mike's bravery and quick thinking also saved the life of a young boy. Mike and his daughter Tara were having a picnic at Five Mile Creek in Baxter Springs. A boy who was too young to be swimming alone had ventured out into the water. When Mike saw him go under, he swam out and brought the boy to shore, saving him from certain death.

2. Discussion

- 1) Why do you think the author of this article takes Mike as a hero?
- 2) Do you think people need to risk their lives in order to be a hero?

3. Pair work

Share with your partner some stories about the heroic deeds someone who seems just ordinary has performed.

» SUPPLEMENTARY ACTIVITY

1. Was he a hero?

The other day I bought the DVD of the Hong Kong movie *Genghis Khan*, in which Genghis Khan was described as a hero of the Chinese people.

I suppose most of us today still regard Genghis Khan as a hero, but I wonder whether people felt the same way about him at the time when his generals massacred everyone—men and women, old and young—in those cities which refused to surrender, and when his soldiers speared children just for fun. And all this was just to satisfy his greed for more land and more power.

I was born in the mid-1970s, and I was brought up to worship people like Genghis Khan. To me, he was no doubt a hero. So was Wu Song, the legendary tiger-killer. And so are the supermen in Hollywood movies. They are really cool, manly.

In recent years, however, I have started to have second thoughts. Can we really take as a hero a man who would kill several hundred people of a family simply to get even with one villain from that family? Why do we take such a special liking to people like Li Kui who simply took delight in killing people, or like that terrible woman in the same novel who would murder innocent people and use their flesh as fillings for the meat pies she sold for a profit?

To me, Prometheus who stole fire from God for men's benefit and suffered the consequences is a real hero; Bruno who was burned to death for upholding the truth is a real hero; people who fought and died for people's happiness and freedom are real heroes. Why can't we replace our traditional idols on the altar with those true heroes?

I think the problem is important because everyone wants to be a hero. If we take a robber for a hero, then everybody will want to be a robber. Only when we know what kind of people really deserve our worship can we find more and more of such heroes in our land.

2. Project

Historical figures may have very different images when people look at them from different perspectives, like the figures mentioned in the article above. Do some research and try to find some similar cases. Report what you have found to your classmates and tell them how the figures in your cases are regarded differently and the reasons for that.

Language Bank

Defining a concept

...means...

...is...

To me, heroes are those who...

Heroes come in all shapes and sizes.

A hero is someone like...

A hero can be a lot of things: someone who..., someone who...

My definition of...is...

...refers to...

Giving reasons and offering explanations

To start with...

The reason why...

That's why...

For this reason...

That's the reason why...

Many people think...

Considering...

Allowing for the fact that...

When you consider that...

Adjectives used to describe people

selfish	outgoing	courageous	adventurous	idealistic
aggressive	creative	passionate	cheerful	playful
sincere	reliable	talented	gifted	gutsy
spiteful	optimistic	ambitious	biased	self-centered
jealous	pessimistic	committed	dedicated	considerate
cowardly	firm	conscientious	generous	loyal

The lyrics of "Hero"

There's a hero
If you look inside your heart
You don't have to be afraid of what you are
There's an answer
If you reach into your soul
And the sorrow that you know will melt away

And then a hero comes along
With the strength to carry on
And you cast your fears aside
And you know you can survive
So when you feel like hope is gone
Look inside you and be strong
And you'll finally see the truth
That a hero lies in you

It's a long road
When you face the world alone
No one reaches out a hand for you to hold
You can find love if you search within yourself
And the emptiness you felt will disappear

Lord knows
Dreams are hard to follow
But don't let anyone tear them away
Hold on
There will be tomorrow
In time you'll find the way