

Lesson 10: Heroes

PURPOSE

To motivate students to pursue heroism in their daily lives.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

1. Identify heroes as persons who developed excellent habits.
2. Recognize Louis Zamperini as an example of a heroic person who strived to achieve excellence.
3. Make a commitment to pursue heroism in their lives.

VOCABULARY

- Hero: a person who develops excellent habits

MATERIALS & RESOURCES

- The Story of Louis Zamperini
- Hero Preparation worksheet
- The Hero's Charter worksheet
- Interim Quiz 2

PROCEDURE

Step 1: Review the previous lesson. Recall the definition of habits and how habits are developed. Stress the importance of developing excellent habits and especially the habit of fairness. Check if the students have implemented the fairness actions that they wrote down in the last class.

Step 2: Explain that today's topic is heroism and that during the class, students will explore what heroism is and how they can act heroically. In the lesson, the class will try to recognize some people from our surroundings, history, and culture who embody heroic traits. Highlight that the class will not discuss imaginary heroes such as Batman or Superman, but real people who embody heroism.

Ask the students to share what they think are characteristics of a heroic person. Write the students' responses on the board.

After listening to students' comments, highlight some important traits of heroism:

Heroes are not born, heroism is developed through the everyday practice of excellent choices.

Heroism is about possessing *different* habits of excellence.

Heroism involves sacrificing for others.

Heroism is not about never making mistakes, but rather, always trying to get on the right track after making them.

Heroism is enhanced by excellent friendships.

Write the definition of the hero on the board:

Hero: a person who develops excellent habits

The basis for developing heroism is our powers to think and choose, as well as our dignity. For someone to be a true hero, it is not just enough that he makes a single excellent choice, but he needs to consistently make them and thus develop excellent habits.

Heroes also often face challenges, but this does not stop them from pursuing excellence. They have a firm resolve to respect human dignity in each situation and make excellent choices no matter what.

Step 3: Emphasize that the world is full of everyday heroes and that everyone has the capacity to become a hero. In this lesson, students will learn about an example of a hero who embodied several excellent habits, but also some non-excellent ones. That person is Louis Zamperini.

Hand out [The Story of Louis Zamperini](#) and read it together as a class. Ask the students to think about three questions:

- What are Louis' excellent choices?
- What are his non-excellent choices?
- How does Louis live the life of a hero?

After hearing the student's comments, explain that it is important to notice the way that Louis changes over the course of his life. By the time he is in high school, he has developed the habits of smoking, drinking, and getting into fights. It takes an incredible amount of effort and patience to overcome these habits and translate that same energy into running daily and training hard. His effort pays off with great success as Louis runs high school races, sets records, qualifies for a college scholarship, and competes in the Olympics. It is also this great effort that sets the foundation for his later ability to choose to live, over and over again, under the most trying and dehumanizing circumstances.

Later in life, after achieving excellence in many different fields, Luis again develops some non-excellent habits, like drinking. This shows us that the path to heroism is never over, but one needs to constantly strive anew to make excellent choices and develop excellent habits throughout life. Those who constantly strive for excellence and try again and again even when they fail, act heroically. Ask students if heroes become heroes by themselves? Did Luis become an olympic runner all by himself? No, he needed a friend. Friendships of excellence help us to become the people we want to be. Luis's brother Pete pushed him to pursue excellence. Later in life, his wife gave him the push he needed to pursue excellence.

Step 4: Expand the discussion by asking the students to share some examples of heroic people they know personally, from their surroundings or from history. Ask students to explain what makes these persons heroic and what inspired them to choose this person. Write some examples on the board.

Step 5: Motivate the students to reflect on their own path towards excellence and heroism and write it down in the [Hero Preparation](#) worksheet. The worksheet should serve as a basis for their resolve to strive towards excellence in life.

After students finish filling in their worksheets, hand each student a copy of [The Hero's Charter](#) worksheet, and give them the remainder of the class time to write and design their own charter, drawing on the brainstorming they did with the Hero Preparation worksheet.

Step 6: Summarize. Recall the characteristics of heroism and heroes as persons who developed excellent habits. Also note the fact that heroism requires sacrifice and hard work. Recall different examples of heroic personalities and highlight the example of Louis Zamperini. Congratulate the students on reaching the end of the curriculum and motivate them to pursue the path of heroism in the future.

FOLLOW-UP & HOMEWORK

Ask the students to complete [Interim Quiz 2](#) for homework and bring it to the next class. Let them know that solving the interim quiz will help them in the Final quiz, which will be administered during the final class.

THE STORY OF LOUIS ZAMPERINI⁶

The year is 1932, and the place is Torrance, California.

Louis Zamperini is a teenager – and a hopeless delinquent – in trouble over and over again, addicted to beating up the bullies at his high school, to alcohol and to smoking. To channel Louis’ fiery nature, his older brother Pete challenges him to run on the track team, even taking him on training runs and pushing him when he slacks off. Day by day over the course of a summer, Louis builds a habit of practicing and prioritizing his training over other activities, then begins to run races: and wins, with an undefeated pattern in high school, even setting an interscholastic record for the mile-long run. He qualified for the 1936 Berlin Olympics, and placed 8th in the 5,000-meter run.

In 1941, Louis enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps – and, in 1943, during World War II, he was sent on a bombing mission. His bomber crashes into the ocean, and eight of the eleven aboard die. Louis survives 47 days adrift, eating raw fish, fending off sharks, and avoiding capsizing during a storm. He is captured by the Japanese Navy, held in captivity, severely beaten, and mistreated. One guard, later listed among the most wanted war criminals in Japan, tortures him: first by having every prisoner in the camp “teach him a lesson” by punching him, then forcing him to hold a weight for an extended period of time at risk of being shot if he drops it. As his endurance is tested, he fights desperate circumstances with cleverness, hope, and humor. In the midst of brutality, he rebels because he recognizes that his captors can violate his dignity but cannot take it away. He chooses to try to survive.

He survived until the end of the war in 1945. In the United States, he had been declared KIA (killed in action) but received a hero’s welcome upon his return. He battles nightmares and begins to drink heavily, until, at his wife’s encouragement, he returns to his previous habits of working toward the good and spends the remainder of his life as a motivational speaker, even returning to Japan to extend forgiveness to the guards who tortured him. He died in 2014 at the age of 97.

QUESTIONS FOR A DISCUSSION:

- What are Louis’ excellent choices?
- What are his non-excellent choices?
- How does Louis live the life of a hero?

⁶ Lucky Louie Zamperini, America in WWII, available at <http://www.americainwwii.com/articles/lucky-louie/> (last visited Dec 7, 2022).

HERO PREPARATION

PART ONE: WHO I AM

My name: _____ Where I was born: _____

A list of my gifts and talents: _____

One way that I have used a gift or talent in an excellent way: _____

One thing I struggle to do well: _____

One dream I have for my life: _____

Some excellent things that I do with my friends: _____

Moments in which I struggle to respect others' human dignity: _____

Moments in which I struggle with non-excellent habits: _____

PART TWO: WHO I WANT TO BECOME

If I was to star as the hero of a novel or a movie, the novel or movie would be about:

I would demonstrate fairness by: __

I would respect human dignity by: .

I demonstrate striving for excellence these ways: __

I make an effort to develop these excellent habits: _

To develop excellent habits, I will make these steps:

1. ____

2. ____

3. ____

Two ways that I will contribute to excellence in my community and society:

1. ____

2. ____

The Hero's Charter

WHO AM I? _____

WHAT CAN I DO? _____

WHO CAN I BECOME? _____

I, _____, pledge on this day, _____,
(name) (date)

to commit to the daily practice of excellence in all of my choices and actions.

I pledge to: _____

I make this pledge with the desire to become a hero in my life, with the use of all my powers, in respect of my own human dignity and the human dignity of all those around me.

Signature



INTERIM QUIZ 2**Mark sentences as true or false**

1. T / F Art can help us see things from a different perspective.
2. T / F Habits of excellence can be developed through practice.
3. T / F Excellence can be pursued on a group level and it is called solidarity.
4. T / F Some people are born heroes, others are not.
5. T / F The Greensboro Four pursued excellence by fighting racial injustice.
6. T / F Bullying can be both respectful and disrespectful of human dignity.
7. T / F Heroism is enhanced by excellent friendships.

8. What are habits and what can you do to develop excellent habits?

9. Pair the concept with the appropriate definition:

A person who develops excellent habits	Friendship of Excellence	Treating persons as objects	Respecting persons and their dignity
Unity between people pursuing excellence together	Habits	Fairness	Using one's imagination and ideas to shape the world
Hero	Solidarity	Giving each person what is due to him or her	Something that we regularly do so it becomes easier for us
Not respecting a person's dignity	A friendship based on pursuing excellence for you and your friends	Creativity	Treating persons as subjects

Interim Quiz 2 – Answer Key for the Teacher

1. T
2. T
3. T
4. F – heroes are not born, but heroism is developed.
5. T
6. F – bullying always disrespects human dignity
7. T
8. Habits are behaviors that we repeatedly do, especially the ones that are hard to give up. They are developed through repeated practice of certain actions. For example, if one wants to become healthy, he needs to regularly exercise, eat healthy food and sleep enough hours each day. Habits can be both excellent and non-excellent. When we make excellent choices, we develop excellent habits. By making non-excellent choices, we develop non-excellent habits. The good news is that with time, practicing excellent habits becomes easier.
9. Pairing:

Hero: a person who develops excellent habits	Friendship of Excellence: A friendship based on pursuing excellence for you and your friends	Treating persons as objects: not respecting a person's dignity	Treating persons as subjects: respecting persons and their dignity
Solidarity: unity between people pursuing excellence together	Habits: something that we regularly do so it becomes easier for us	Fairness: giving each person what is due to him or her	Creativity: using one's imagination and ideas to shape the world