Lesson 1: Can Anyone Be A Hero?

Overview: Students will learn that heroism is not something reserved for those rare individuals who achieve something extraordinary, but is a mindset or behavior possible for anyone, human or animal.

Procedure:
Introduction
Explain to the students that the lesson’s topic is heroes and write the word “hero” on the board.

Defining the Word Hero
1. Divide the students into small groups. Explain that they are to think about what makes someone a hero and write down all the qualities or characteristics of a hero.

2. As a whole class, discuss their lists of qualities or characteristics. Write down these responses on the board.

Important points for the discussion:
- Heroes act voluntarily and without the expectation of material gain.
- Heroes provide a service to someone in need, or the community as a whole.
- Being a hero involves potential risk/cost to physical comfort, social stature, or quality of life.
- Heroes act as role models for others and can inspire other people to be heroes.

Who is a Hero?
1. Now that students have explained what makes someone a hero, ask them if they think Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is a hero. Referring to the list of qualities and characteristics written on the board, ask students how he demonstrated these qualities and characteristics.

2. Ask students if a person has to be famous or well-known to be a hero. Then pass out the “Heroic Tales” handout and instruct them to read the first story about Kailash Satyarthi.
Lesson 1: Can Anyone Be A Hero? (continued)

3. Referring to the list on the board, ask if this person demonstrated these qualities and characteristics. Then point out how this person is not as well-known or admired as celebrities (such as movie or music stars). Ask students why that is the case.

4. Ask students if an animal can be a hero. Then instruct the students to read the second story from the “Heroic Tales” handout. Referring to the list on the board, ask if this animal demonstrated these qualities and characteristics.

5. Ask students if ordinary people (like themselves or people they know) can be heroes. Give an example of a person you (the instructor) know who fits the definition of a hero. Ask students if they can think of anyone from their own lives who they think is heroic. Allow students to share some of their stories.

What Prevents Someone from Acting Heroically?

1. Show the students a picture of a person on a busy street, injured, seeking help. Ask the students what an ordinary person should do in this situation.

2. Explain that scientists used this scenario as an experiment. They hired actors to lie on the ground and pretend to be in pain. However, it took a long time for anyone to stop and help. Ask the students why they think it took so long.

3. Explain the concept that everyone has the ability to be a hero, but that sometimes we are faced with negative influences like “conformity” and “the bystander effect.” Ask students if they think the man who helped the person on the floor was a hero. Point out how his actions influenced other people in that situation to stop and help as well.

Wrap Up:

Ask students if they have any examples where they resisted conforming or were not bystanders and chose to help a person or animal.

Insider Tips

- As an extension activity, have the students complete the “‘Ordinary Hero’ Newspaper” worksheet.
- If there are ordinary heroes, either human or animal, that you would like to highlight instead of those on the “Heroic Tales” handout, create your own handout with passages for the students to read.

Classroom Teachers

- When showing the picture of the person on a busy street, consider using poster board or a PowerPoint or Keynote presentation.
- As an extension activity, have students research a lesser known hero (either human or animal), write a report on that individual, and present their findings to the class.
- This activity aligns to Common Core Reading Standards 1, 4, and 7; Speaking and Listening Standard 1; and Writing Standard 7.

Outside Humane Educators

- If your setting does not have a chalkboard/whiteboard, create sets of index cards with a large variety of qualities and characteristics on them so the student groups can choose from the index cards.
- If you see your students for more than 60 minutes, consider including the “‘Ordinary Hero’ Newspaper” worksheet into the regular lesson.

Resource Links

Hero Stories

- http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/completelist/0,29569,2059858,00.html
- http://myhero.com

The Bystander Effect

- http://psychology.about.com/od/socialpsychology/a/bystandereffect.htm
- http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/we_are_all_bystanders
Ordinary Hero Worksheet

Name: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

Meet Ordinary Hero

__________________________________

By: ___________________________

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Here is a picture of the ordinary hero who is making the world a better place.
Heroic Tales

Kailash Satyarthi

Kailash has devoted his life to ending child slavery. When he was 26 years old, he gave up a high-paying job to focus on freeing children who are illegally forced to work as slaves. He would organize raids on factories that used child slaves in India. Many business people who used child slaves threatened to kill him, but that did not stop him. After many successful raids, Kailash started an organization called the Global March Against Child Labor. This organization works all over the world to stop child slavery and child labor.

Lulu the Pig

JoAnn suffered a major heart attack while taking care of her daughter’s pig, Lulu. JoAnn was alone and no one could hear her cries for help. Lulu knew that JoAnn was in trouble and ran out of the house. Lulu tried relentlessly to get help. She even laid down in the middle of the street while trying to get cars to stop. Lulu would return to the house to check on JoAnn and then return to the street searching for someone to help. Finally, someone noticed Lulu and followed her to the door. JoAnn was rushed to the hospital and she survived. Without Lulu’s help, JoAnn might not be here today.

Vocabulary

**Bystander effect:** A phenomenon where people in an emergency situation do not offer any help to a victim in need of assistance when other people are present but not helping either.

**Conformity:** The act of matching a person’s attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors to be the same as those of a group of people.