
JUDGING HEROES

In a moderated panel discussion eight students representing distinct frontier groups debate their rightful place as the “True Hero of the West” during nineteenth century American westward expansion. Prior to beginning the debate, students examine and refine their definition of a hero.

Materials

- JUDGING HEROES — *class set + transparency (optional)*

Procedure

1. Distribute JUDGING HEROES and read with students. Lead a class discussion on the critical difference between heroes and idols.
2. Help students clarify their understanding of how a hero differs from an idolized celebrity.

JUDGING HEROES

What is a Hero?

Webster's dictionary defines *hero* as "...a person who is admired for *brave deeds* or *noble qualities*; one who... is regarded as a model or ideal." What does that mean?

What is Not a Hero?

The same dictionary defines an *idol* as one who is "...an object of intense admiration or devotion, often admired blindly or excessively." Entertainers, sports celebrities, or movie stars fit in this category of idols. Today we often confuse notoriety or fame with heroism. How do we learn to tell the difference?

Brave Deeds

We usually equate *brave deeds* with heroism. Soldiers, police officers, and firefighters often accomplish heroic, brave deeds as part of their daily work. Heroes who accomplish brave deeds are relatively rare.

Noble Qualities

We often forget that *noble qualities* also fit the definition of heroism. How can we learn to recognize this type of heroism? Noble qualities are useful, valuable, and honorable. It is quite possible, though not always glamorous, to live up to noble qualities in our everyday lives.

Integrity

A hero acts with *integrity*, living up to moral and ethical principles. Sometimes the hero will suffer physical, economic, or social harm while following these ethical principles. Integrity enables the hero to act in spite of opposition or criticism.

Legacy

The deeds and examples of a hero comprise a *legacy* or *tradition* that is handed down from one generation to another. These traditions inspire others to live better, more productive lives.

Summarizing the Heroic Character

- True heroes accomplish brave deeds or live according to noble qualities.
- True heroes act with integrity, selflessness, and moral strength.
- True heroes leave a permanent and positive impact on history and on people who come after them. They leave a *legacy*. This legacy is important.



List below six contemporary persons you consider heroes and why.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

List below six contemporary persons you consider idols and why.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Did you find it easier to list heroes or idols? Why do you think this is true?
