

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR, FELICE



My name is Felice Clyne-Davis. I have been a New York City public school educator for the past 19 years and am about to enter my eighth year of teaching a self-contained fifth grade gifted and talented class in the Alpha program at P.S. 165 in Flushing, Queens. In addition to teaching, I have authored several sports, human interest, and entertainment articles that have appeared in various national and local publications. My own writing background helps me to guide and mentor student authors.

Students in my class flourish as readers, writers, and observers of the world around us. We frequently use strategies like the Independent Investigation Method to promote critical and high-order thinking while fostering independence and personal ownership in reading, writing and social studies.

I selected “heroes” as our IIM unit during the 2008-09 school year since we were in the midst of an exciting election season and October was character study month at our school. IIM was not taught in isolation. We were already studying the election process in depth as well as conducting a shared reading of the political satire, The Kid Who Ran for President by Dan Gutman. My students kept election scrapbooks for about a month. (Of course, the heroes unit could be used at any time, especially as an exciting alternative to those boring biography book reports!)

We did a shared interactive reading of Barack Obama: Son of Promise, Child of Hope by Nikki Grimes & My Dad, John McCain by Megan McCain to help us launch this unit and compare and contrast the two presidential candidates, as well as help us identify qualities of heroes and see how both men are heroes.

We first compared and contrasted character traits and background information for the two presidential candidates. We then proceeded to brainstorm “What defines a hero?” and reasons why both McCain and Obama were heroes. Students were then given a IIM hero packet (complete with a rubric). They had two days to chose a hero—given two websites to help in their selection so I would not get 27 reports on Helen Keller and Martin Luther King Jr. I set the essential questions which were:

- What is a hero?
- Why is my selected figure a hero?
- How was my hero impacted by the zeitgeist or the context of the times in which he or she was living?
- What lasting impact did your hero leave on society?

I modeled for students using the Obama book—taking notes under each question.

Students had a little over a week to conduct research—using at least three resources—only two of which could be online, submit at least fifteen notefacts, complete a hero worksheet and glossary. All work had to be geared towards answering the essential questions. Their finished products had to somehow answer and reflect the essential questions.

After a museum showcase featuring the students’ hero products, we planned to do IIM for westward expansion and immigration. By the end of the school year, it was my hope that students could choose their own unit of study using a personal interest and begin to set their own essential questions.

IN SEARCH OF A HERO

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Step 1: Topic Selection Select a person you deem worthy of hero status. Remember heroes come from all walks of life. They can be current day heroes or an important figure from history. Please use classroom resources for ideas along with the following websites to help you get ideas:

http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=251#SUGGEST
<http://myhero.com/myhero/go/directory/>

You must submit the name of your hero along with two reasons why you chose this figure.

Step 2: Goal Setting Begin asking yourself the following essential questions:

- What is a hero? (You may refer to the notes from our class discussion or return to websites like www.quotegarden.com or www.brainyquote.com for assistance).
- Why is my selected figure a hero?
- How was my hero impacted by the *zeitgeist* or the context of the times in which he or she was living? In other words, what historical events and how did what was going on in society affect the person's struggles/achievements?
- What lasting impact did your hero leave on society?

Step 3: Research Begin investigating these questions by taking notefacts and completing the *In Search of a Hero* activity sheet. You must submit at least fifteen notefacts taken from at least three different sources. No more than two sources can be from the internet. You must follow the MLA format. Here is link to MLA format online: <http://www.liu.edu/cwis/cwp/library/workshop/citmla.htm> (or use the handout I gave you in class). In addition, when handing in your final product, it must show that you answered each of the four essential questions.

Step 4: Organizing Make sure you have collected all of your information and incorporated all the necessary facts needed in order to answer the four essential questions.

Step 5: Goal Evaluation Look back and make sure you gathered enough facts to answer the essential questions as well as all facts needed in order to complete the *In Search of a Hero* sheet.

Step 6: Product Choose one from the attached sheet. Keep in mind your product should somehow incorporate the essential questions and questions you answered on the *In Search of a Hero* Information Outline Worksheet. You DO NOT have to answer the essential questions separately. They should be reflected upon and evident in both your *In Search of a Hero* Information Outline Worksheet and finished product.

Step 7: Presentation You will be presenting your products in class. You will hand in all of the following:

- *In Search of a Hero* Information Outline Worksheet.
- At least fifteen notefacts along with completed MLA bibliography
- Your chosen product!

IN SEARCH OF A HERO



PART ONE

Use the “In Search of a Hero” Information Outline Worksheet to record information you find out about the person (Hero) you choose to research. If you need additional room, use an extra piece of paper. It would be great if you would type the information. If not, write clearly with a pen.

PART TWO

Using the information you find, create a finished product that gives tribute to the hero you choose. The product can be done in any way you wish, however, it should not be larger than a flat 11” x 14” paper. It must be able to be hung up on the wall. Here are some suggestions of products:

1. Create a poster of your hero on construction paper that has text and pictures that tell about your hero. For instance, if your hero is Helen Keller, you might include a picture of the Braille alphabet.
2. Have a quote from your hero surrounding text describing your hero. Perhaps include quotes of others regarding your hero.
3. Use lightweight textured materials that relate to the hero on a poster about him or her.
4. Draw a bridge on paper and put index cards to show the hero’s progress from before the heroic act(s), leading up to it, and then after it.
5. Make a brochure to tell about the hero. You can use geography concepts and features to make it more interesting. You may want to highlight “landmarks” to visit from the person’s life or place where the person lived.
6. Make a collage of pictures that tells the story of your hero. Have paragraphs of text that tell about the hero on the collage.
7. Write a poem about your hero telling us all about him or her.
8. Write a song to a familiar tune about your hero.
9. Write a letter to your hero describing him or her and the things he or she accomplished and how these heroic acts have impacted and affected your life.
10. Draw a mountain on paper and write in how the hero’s life made his or her ascent (climb-rise) to importance. Provide informational text in each change in elevation.
11. Create a book about your hero with text and pictures.
12. Create a cartoon, comic strip or comic book about your hero.

REMEMBER, WHICHEVER PRODUCT YOU SELECT, IT MUST REFLECT BOTH RESEARCH AND CRITICAL THINKING!!!

STUDENT CHECKLIST FOR HERO PRODUCT

1. Did I carefully answer all the questions in complete sentences from the Hero Outline Worksheet?
2. Did I include as much of the information as possible from my Hero Outline Worksheet for my finished product?
3. Is my product neat and attractive?
4. Am I proud of my product?
5. Did I proofread my work for spelling, punctuation, and grammar?
6. Did I speak to the teacher about the questions or concerns I had at least two days before my product was due?
7. Did I get my parent’s signature on my Hero Outline Worksheet and show them my finished product?

IN SEARCH OF A HERO



INFORMATION OUTLINE WORKSHEET

1. Your name: _____
2. Hero's name: Last name: _____ First name: _____
3. Male or Female: _____
4. Nationality: _____
5. Date of Birth: _____
6. What is or was their profession? _____
7. Describe one important event in history during your hero's lifetime.

8. List his/her major achievements:

9. Describe any obstacles this person had to overcome.

10. Describe an anecdote (short, interesting story) about this person.

11. List at least three character traits about this person, and tell why you chose them.

12. If you were to meet this person, what one question would you ask?

13. Describe one event in your hero's life that you want to share.

14. Why did you choose this event?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY:

Your hero has received an award, and you are going to present it. What will you say to convince the audience that this person is a hero?



Name:

IN SEARCH OF A HERO RUBRIC

4:

- I carefully answered all of the questions on the *In Search of a Hero* outline sheet in complete sentences.
- I made an outstanding effort to incorporate the four essential questions into all of my work.
- I used at least three sources (and possibly more). Only two were from the Internet. I followed the correct MLA format.
- I gathered more than fifteen notefacts where I paraphrased information.
- I included all important information about my hero that answers the essential questions and left out all non-essential/irrelevant information.
- I clearly introduced my hero along with excellent supporting evidence as to why he or she is a hero as well as answering other essential questions. I also addressed what is a hero in this presentation and made the connection to my hero.
- I carefully followed all the directions for this assignment and made a great attempt to complete it in a neat, error-free manner. My product grabs the audience's attention and looks great.

3:

- I carefully answered most questions on the *In Search of a Hero* outline sheet in complete sentences.
- I made a good effort to incorporate the four essential questions into all of my work.
- I used three sources. Only two were from the Internet. I followed the correct MLA format.
- I gathered fifteen notefacts where I paraphrased information.
- I included most important information about my hero that answers the essential questions. I may or may not have left out all non-essential/irrelevant information.
- I introduced my hero along with some good supporting evidence as to why he or she is a hero as well as attempting to answer other essential questions. I may or may not have addressed what is a hero in this presentation and made the connection to my hero.
- I carefully followed all the directions for this assignment and made some attempt to complete it in a neat, error-free manner. My product grabs the audience's attention and looks good.

2:

- I carefully answered some questions on the *In Search of a Hero* outline sheet in complete sentences.
- I may not have incorporated the four essential questions into all of my work.
- I used three or fewer sources. They may have all been from the Internet. They may or may not have followed the correct MLA format.
- I gathered fewer than fifteen notefacts
- I included some key information about my hero (but not enough). I included some irrelevant information.
- My supporting evidence as to why my figure is a hero is not strong. I may not have answered all of the essential questions. I did not address what is a hero and make the connection to my hero.
- I carefully followed some of the directions for this assignment and made a little attempt to complete it in a neat, error-free manner. My product may or may not grab the audience's attention. It could look better.

1:

- I did not carefully answer any questions on the *In Search of a Hero* outline sheet in complete sentences.
- I did not incorporate the four essential questions into any of my work.
- I used fewer than three sources and did not follow the correct MLA format.
- I gathered fewer than fifteen notefacts.
- I included little important information about my hero. I included a lot of irrelevant information.
- My supporting evidence as to why my figure is a hero is weak. I did not answer any of the essential questions. I do not address what is a hero and make the connection to my hero.
- I did not carefully follow some of the directions for this assignment and made little attempt to complete it in a neat, error-free manner. My product does not grab the audience's attention.