

OVERVIEW

Everyone has the potential to be a hero, and this lesson teaches students the heroic work of some members of the community in service positions through parallels with well-known superheroes. Students will look at comic book heroes, define what makes them heroes, and transfer those characteristics to community members who do heroic work. Part of being a good citizen is recognizing heroes in the community.

MATERIALS

- ▣ Pictures of superheroes cut from magazines/comics. You can bring these in or ask the students to bring them to class prior to the lesson.



A Letter to a Local Hero
Revising Checklist



Envelope template

Ethical people are good citizens. They go beyond their own interests, show a concern for the needs of others, and make it their job to make their home, school, neighborhood, country – and planet – the best they can be.

Good citizenship can be expressed in many ways: voting, protecting the environment, doing something about a political or social issue – even representing fellow citizens by running for office. To some people, however, one's citizenship just signifies where one resides, the country where one was born or has immigrated to. But that's not enough for ethical people. They neither take their membership in the community for granted nor deny their obligation to make the community better.

You don't have a choice about what family, community, or nation you're born into. But you do have a choice about whether to be a good family member or good citizen. Citizens have rights but also duties. My rights depend on you doing your duty. My duty is to see that you're free to exercise your rights.

Learn about your government. Learn about the rules and laws in your home community. Learn to work with people to get things done. But don't be satisfied with knowledge alone. Good citizenship is about *doing* for others.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this lesson, students will learn about citizenship by:

- ▣ Learning about the members of their community and how they contribute to society
- ▣ Learning about the characteristics of good citizens
- ▣ Creating a community superhero who exemplifies the qualities of a good citizen
- ▣ Apply what they've learned (in class, at school, in their community)

ACTIVITY

1. Show the class pictures of superheroes from comics or magazines. Tell them they're going to make a gallery of superheroes (confirm that the ones chosen are indeed superheroes).
2. Ask if they know the names of the superheroes. Write them on the board next to the pictures.
3. Have them suggest why these characters are superheroes. What makes them super? What makes them heroes? Suggestions may include:
 - Courage, bravery, honesty, truthfulness, strength, rightness
4. When a list of characteristics has been generated, ask if they know anyone with any/some/all of those traits.
5. Explain that you don't have to have superpowers to be a hero. People in their community can be heroes because of how they contribute to society.
6. Brainstorm a list of local heroes — people who share some of the characteristics from the superhero list. Ideas may include:
 - Police officers, firefighters, nurses, teachers, and other individuals who contribute to the community
7. Tell the students they're each going to interview a local hero and make a book about the people they select. Tell them to each choose a local hero they would like to interview. Ask them what kind of questions they would like to ask. Write the suggestions on the board.
8. Select five questions generated by the class. Tell them they are to each write a letter asking those questions to their chosen local hero. They can ask more questions if they wish (after you approve them), but they should ask at least five.
9. Distribute the A Letter to a Local Hero Revising Checklist and review the main points.
10. When the letters are finished, distribute envelopes to the group with the Envelope Template and the correct addresses for their letters. Have them follow the template to address the envelope.
11. When the responses are received, read them aloud to the class.

FOLLOW-UP IDEAS

- Invite one of the local heroes to talk about his or her accomplishment. Have a "Make a Difference Day" where the class completes a service project.
- Create a collage of responses and photographs from the recipients interspersed with comic-book hero pictures. Give it the title: Our Local Superheroes. Make a timeline of significant events in America's history or of significant contributions of citizens.
- Have the students use what they learn from the letter-writing activity to send letters to other active citizens. Create a class book of citizenry with the responses.
- Expand the class book project to include global citizens. Write letters to leaders of countries and display the responses next to a world map. Encourage students to learn something about other countries in the world.

OTHER CITIZENSHIP ACTIVITIES

- Host a "time-warp" party. Have the children dress as figures from America's heritage, your state's heritage, or local history. Have them dress up as outstanding global citizens. They can parade around the class and describe what their character did to make a difference.
- Ask parents to reinforce this activity with family discussions and praise for acts of good citizenship at home.
- Make cookies for the police or fire department. Send cards and notes to them. Sponsor a neighborhood "Police (or Fire Department) Appreciation Day."
- Cut T-shirt patterns from construction paper, and label each one with major individual contributions to our country's progress. Pin them to a "clothesline" and label the line "People who fit good citizenship to a tee." This would work for local good citizens as well.

LINKS TO USEFUL WEBSITES

<http://www.kellybear.com/TeacherArticles/TeacherTip27.html>

Twenty ideas for teaching citizenship to children from Kelly Bear.

<http://surfaquarium.com/newsletter/heroes.htm>

Great list of links and resources to sites that have information on all types of heroes. Good for expanding the main lesson.

<http://www.proteacher.com/090035.shtml>

Many links to citizenship lesson ideas from ProTeacher.

<http://charactercounts.org/>

Visit our website for free teaching resources, lesson plans, ideas, and much more to help you incorporate character education into your classroom and school.



STANDARDS

LANGUAGE ARTS

Grades K-2

Standard 1

Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process.

LEVEL I [Grades K-2]

Benchmark 4

Evaluates own and others' writing (e.g., asks questions and makes comments about writing, helps classmates apply grammatical and mechanical conventions).

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V O C A B U L A R Y T E R M S

citizenship
superhero
characteristics

traits
contributions
interview

participation
active
duty

A LETTER TO A LOCAL HERO

Revising Checklist

DATE

- ☐ I capitalize the month (April).
- ☐ I put a comma after the date number (April 14, 2008).

GREETING

- ☐ I write the greeting two lines below the date.
- ☐ The greeting begins at the left margin.
- ☐ The first letter of each word is capitalized (Dear Mr. Johnson).
- ☐ I put a comma after the name (Dear Mr. Johnson,).

BODY

- ☐ The body begins on the fifth line.
- ☐ I use two fingers to indent the first line of each new paragraph.
- ☐ I ask all my questions.
- ☐ I check spelling, punctuation, and cleanliness.

CLOSING

- ☐ I skip one line and start the closing below the body.
- ☐ I capitalize the first word (Best wishes).
- ☐ I put a comma after the closing (Kind regards,).

SIGNATURE

- ☐ I begin my signature on the line below the closing.
- ☐ I write my name using a capital letter for the first letters (Lisa Wick).

ENVELOPE

Your Address



Title, Name

Address

ZIP

Name: _____ Date: _____

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