

HEROES FOR 2020

A free resource for teachers and families

If you're a teacher doing remote lessons with your students or a parent figuring out how to be with your children 24/7, we've got an idea for you.

Heroes. All kids have heroes. And they're probably of the mask-and-cape category, thanks to pop culture. But right now...



...there are *real* heroes stepping forth everywhere, making sure we all get through this difficult time.

It's a moment for helping kids understand what being a hero means in real life. Along the way, you'll bring out their own natural caring for others. Here's what you can do...

STEP 1

Ask them who their heroes are. Write down what they say, and don't say anything about their choices beyond responses like, "OK" and "Got that" and "Who else?"

"All right, we have a list. Now I'm going to go find some stories about heroes that you might like."

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Go to <http://giraffeheroes.org/find-giraffe/> and find some heroes you think they'll enjoy. Consider the children's level of experience and understanding—some of our stories are about

people who have done things that are too dangerous to be good examples for kids.

Make notes so you can tell the stories you choose, rather than reading them. (But you can read if you'd rather.)

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Tell them the stories you've found and then ask them some questions about what they heard, like—

“What do you think of what that person did?”

“How did that person help other people?”

Tell them they there may be people like this in books they've read, in the news they've seen, in their communities, and in their families.

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Make this an “assignment.” Ask them to find such a person and tell their story the next time you meet. In planning this, they should think about the problems their heroes worked on, the difficulties they faced, the good things they did despite the obstacles.

Urge them to be creative.

Kids who like to write might do a written profile, a pretend “missing person” announcement about the hero, a poem about the person, or a newspaper-style article reporting on what the person has done.

They might choose to dress up as the hero in question and act out being that person, telling the story in the first person.

If they're working on computers, they can do PowerPoint presentations about the heroes they choose.

The artists could choose to do drawings, collages, dioramas, murals, or cartoon strips.

They can take turns interviewing each other as if one were the hero in question and the other a reporter.

The musically inclined can write songs about their heroes—raps are definitely included in what’s possible here.

Inventive kids can create something that would be useful to their hero, explaining to the group how it could help the hero’s work.

REFLECTION

When the stories have all been told, ask some reflection questions like, “What do you like most about the hero you found?”

“I think that was pretty brave. What do you think?”

“Do those people have superpowers?”

“Are they beautiful or talented or great ballplayers?”

“Are they bullet-proof?”

This is where they’ll certainly notice that the people named as heroes back when they started talking about heroes are pretty different from the people they’ve presented. You can join them in noticing this, but don’t initiate that conversation—this isn’t about making kids wrong for buying into pop culture. Better to just join them in their discovery here. “Yes, that’s true, isn’t it? So this is a different way of looking at heroes than you were used to. It’s fine to admire someone’s skill or talent or even the way they look, but it looks like that’s not what it takes to be a real hero. Real heroes help other people, no matter how hard that is to do.

Some deeper questions you can ask:

“What do you think happens when people have compassion but not courage?”

“What might happen if they had courage but no compassion?”

“If everyone acted like these heroes, how would the world be different?”

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They’re full up with real heroes now and ready to talk about what *they* might do to be like those heroes. It’s time for...

“All those people saw something they could do to make life better for other people, and they did it. Do you see people who might need some help? Is there something you could do about that?”

Make sure any ideas they have are safe for them to do! They'll have to maintain physical distancing, of course.

Kids across the world are writing to lonely people, making phone calls, playing music for them. They're even helping their own stressed-out parents and teachers!

Kids who have skills they've learned or material they're familiar with can become tutors for students who don't have those skills and information yet. They can use online means if they have them, or figure out how to just use phones.

Finding ways to be of service is a great antidote to feeling helpless in a troubled time. Give the children in your life the gift of being of service, of knowing they are valuable members of the human family.

We will link this to our free online storybank, to our free online curricula, and to our free online stories for the very young, narrated by our twin spokesgiraffes, Stan Tall & Bea Tall.

