

Disney HERCULES

MAKING A HERO

Activities for Drama and PSHE



The hero Hercules surrounded by the Muses

TEACHER NOTES

This sequence of 5 learning activities uses the production of Hercules to inspire students' own work on the theme of heroes and heroism. The activities are designed to be used by teachers of Drama, English and/or PSHE and we invite you to adapt the tasks to your own setting and learners. The tasks are written for an audience of students, but we've

included teaching notes and prompts for each task. For Key Stage 3 and 4 students.

- 1. WHAT IS A HERO?** (p2)
- 2. WHAT DO WE EXPECT FROM A HERO?** (p3)
- 3. HEROES IN SOCIETY: CREATIVE RESPONSES** (p4-5)
- 4. DEVISING AND DEBATING FROM A STIMULUS** (p6-7)
- 5. SPOKEN LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT** (p8)

1. WHAT IS A HERO?

ACTIVITY

Discuss in pairs how you would define a hero.
Identify three examples of heroes in

- ✦ literature and drama
- ✦ in your own lives
- ✦ in news and current affairs

What are the similarities and differences between the way we apply the term 'hero' to each of those examples?

The Meriam-Webster dictionary defines a hero as:

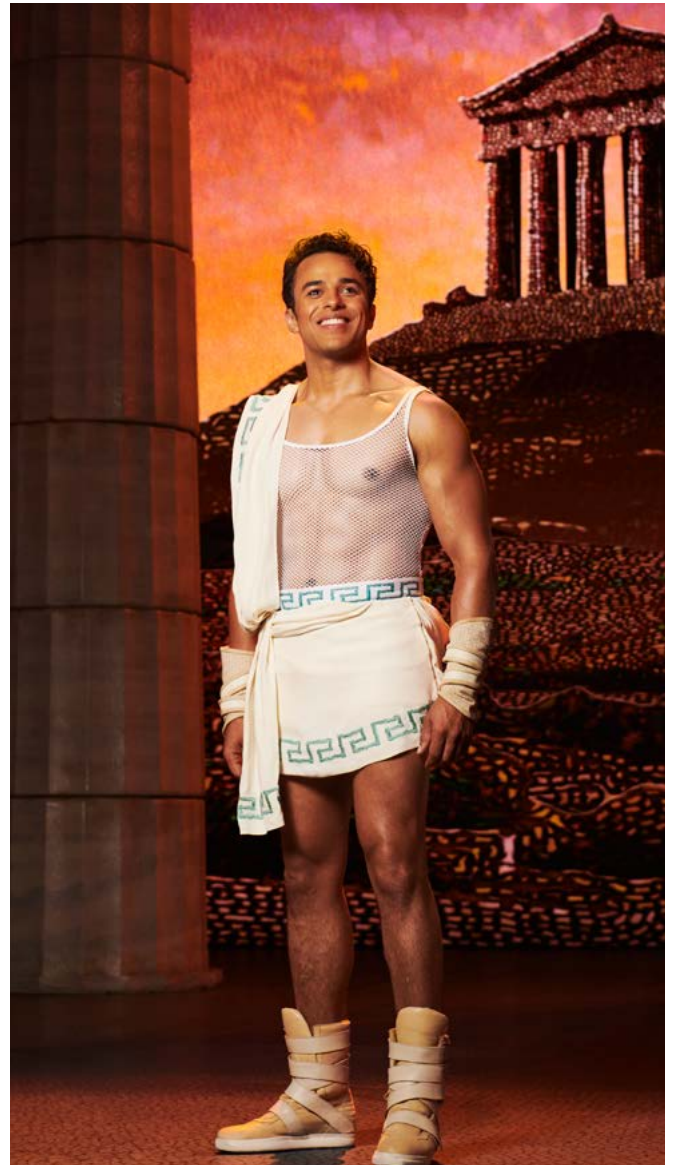
- ✦ an illustrious warrior
 - ✦ a person admired for achievements and noble qualities
 - ✦ one who shows great courage
- or
- ✦ the principal character in a literary or dramatic work – used specifically of a principal male character, especially when contrasted with *heroine*

EXTENSION

This task offers the opportunity to discuss how heroes are presented in the media.

Tabloid newspaper headlines often use the idea of heroism as it is a very emotive concept.

Find examples of these headlines and discuss their impact on the reader. What other adjectives are used in the report which emphasise the perceived heroism of a person or group of people.



TEACHER NOTES

In Greek mythology, a hero can be male or female and is identified by their superhuman abilities. Greek myths are full of examples of heroes who defeat other forces or creatures, sometimes against all odds! Greek heroes are often born from immortal gods.

The purpose of this task is to prompt discussion about the different definitions of hero. Literature and drama are full of examples of heroes – whether they are romantic, chivalric or tragic heroes for example. We might also consider role models to be a form of hero.

The extension task invites students to consider printed media and the use of newspaper headlines to create emotional responses. When asking students to research headlines, expect responses to vary from sporting heroes, to people involved in rescuing people from dangerous accidents or incidents. You might like to refer to how heroism was discussed during the COVID-19 pandemic, or heroes in your own community or setting.



MAKING A HERO

English | PSHE | Drama

2. WHAT DO WE EXPECT FROM A HERO?

We often use 'hero' informally in conversation. You might even tell someone "you're my hero". Use the following qualities of being a hero and

prioritise them from 1 (the most important) to 14 (the least important). Be prepared to justify your proposed order!

BEING 'BORN LUCKY', OR HAVING AN EASY START IN LIFE

BECOMING A BETTER PERSON
THROUGH STRUGGLE AND HARD WORK

BEING A POSITIVE
ROLE MODEL

BEING PHYSICALLY STRONG

NEVER MAKING MISTAKES

OVERCOMING PERSONAL
CHALLENGES AND DIFFICULTIES

ALWAYS PUTTING OTHER
PEOPLE'S NEEDS FIRST

BEING TRUSTWORTHY

BECOMING RICH

DOING CHARITY WORK

SOMEONE WHO DOES NOT
NEED HELP FROM OTHERS

ALWAYS KNOWING THE
RIGHT THING TO DO

PROTECTING OTHERS FROM PHYSICAL HARM

FIGHTING INJUSTICE

TEACHER NOTES

You might like to draw attention to the idea that Hercules is not perfect! He experiences frustration, and sometimes doesn't know how to solve a problem without help.

We can also make distinctions between physical and mental strength or agility. For Hercules, his physical strength is, at first, a barrier to being accepted. Phil trains Hercules to use his physical strength in a purposeful way.

These qualities can also invite discussions about students' own heroes and role models, and examples in society or literature where heroes are particularly important. You do not have to present all 14 of the above options to students, depending on the desired outcome of the task.

3. HEROES IN SOCIETY: CREATIVE RESPONSES



Phil and the townspeople celebrate a hero's return

CREATE A COLLAGE OR POWERPOINT PRESENTATION OF HEROES IN THE NEWS

DISCUSS

- ✦ Do the stories have anything in common?
- ✦ What about the language that's used to talk about them?
- ✦ What do you notice?
- ✦ Are male and female heroes talked about in the same way, or is there any difference in the language or examples of heroism in their stories?

TEACHER NOTES

Any online search will provide you with examples of heroes in society. This [BBC page](#) gives examples of heroes from all walks of life, and from different spheres of society. This can be a helpful starting

point when asking students to research stories and examples of heroism, from a reliable source.



MAKING A HERO

PSHE | English

3. HEROES IN SOCIETY: CREATIVE RESPONSES

WRITE A STORY OF A HERO

Your task is to use one or both of the following structures to write the story of a hero's journey. Once you have looked closely at Campbell's work

on the hero, and Freytag's Pyramid about structuring a narrative, you will use what you've learnt to create your own story, starting to work towards a resolution.

In 1949, Joseph Campbell analysed the narrative arc of a hero's journey (<https://www.tedxmilehigh.com/heros-journey-archetype/>) He identified three main stages: Separation; Initiation; Return. In more detail, the three stages are broken down as follows:

✦ SEPARATION

A call to action, the introduction of a helper, finding a mentor.

✦ INITIATION

Trials and tribulations, major conflict.

✦ RETURN

The hero's return, followed by reflection.

We can also consider Freytag's Pyramid which outlines the structure of a narrative. It is most often applied to analysing the structure of a tragedy but it can be a useful guide for any narrative in which you are hoping to gain and sustain your audience.

✦ **EXPOSITION** The main setting, characters and themes are introduced.

✦ **INCITING INCIDENT** The catalyst for the action of the narrative takes place.

✦ **RISING ACTION** The hero or protagonist's life suffers some form of complication.

✦ **CLIMAX** The highest moment of suspense and/or tension.

✦ **FALLING ACTION** The aftermath of the climax, starting to work towards a resolution.

✦ **RESOLUTION** The conflict and complications are resolved.

✦ **DENOUEMENT** The last few points of the narrative are 'tidied up'. Denouement is the French word meaning 'to unknot', suggesting that it is the neat and clear ending of the story.

Considering one or both of these structures, create an 8-frame storyboard in which your hero takes a journey. For each frame, write a short caption underneath such as "Hercules meets Phil – his unlikely mentor" which demonstrates how you are applying the structure you've learnt to your own work.

As you decide on your narrative, consider the prompts from **ACTIVITY ONE** in which you prioritised which qualities we should most expect from a hero. You may wish to subvert some of the stereotypical aspects of being or becoming a hero or you might wish to stick closely to the accepted definition of being a hero. The choice is yours!

Once you have completed your storyboard (which should be detailed and in full colour to support your writing later on), ensure that each frame has a caption. You can then decide whether you are going to write in prose or as a short play. Make sure you know the difference between them and the different conventions that you will need to use when writing your piece of work.

Once you've had the go ahead from your teacher, you can start writing!

TEACHER NOTES

Joseph Campbell's work on the hero can be found via the *TEDxMileHigh* website. You can also find his work such as *The Hero With A Thousand Faces* (2008) which is available via online and independent book stores.

This task invites students to write in prose or as a play text. Encourage students to use conventions for scripting such as stage directions, the clear identification of setting at the beginning of each scene, and the use of a script layout on the page.



MAKING A HERO

Drama | PSHE | English

4. DEVISING AND DEBATING FROM A STIMULUS

Below are various quotations from Hercules. Discuss each one in your group (of about 4-6 people) and choose one that you think has the most dramatic or debating potential to begin your own devising

work on the theme of heroes. You'll then find two versions of the activity depending on whether you are delivering a drama lesson, or using the extracts as a stimulus for debate.

HERA

You will have to exceed even your earthly potential, find a heroism unlike any known before.

HERCULES

Fine. Let's start with hero. Make me one and I'll take it from there.

PHIL

Let me tell you something. You have no idea who I was. Who trained Pilates to exercise? Phil! Who trained Atlas to shrug? Phil. Who came up with a night at the Apollo? Phil. Mortal men, and I helped them exceed their wildest potential. Made them into heroes. But make someone into a god? That's not something I know how to do.

MUSES

FROM ZERO TO HERO
HERC IS A HERO

HERCULES

I CAN GO THE DISTANCE
'TIL I FIND MY HERO'S WELCOME
RIGHT WHERE I BELONG!

PHIL

TO BE A TRUE HERO, KID,
IS A DYING ART
LIKE PAINTING
A MASTERPIECE,
IT'S A WORK OF HEART
IT TAKES MORE THAN SINEW
COMES DOWN TO WHAT'S IN YOU
YOU HAVE TO CONTINUE TO GROW!
AND GROW!

All quotations from Disney's *Hercules*

Book by Kwame Kwei-Armah & Robert Horn | Music by Alan Menken | Lyrics by David Zippel | Directed by Casey Nicholaw

4. DEVISING AND DEBATING FROM A STIMULUS



Meg resists the Muses' argument

DEVISING

- ✦ Once you have chosen your extract, discuss the content of the dialogue in more detail. For example, in extract 4 Hercules refers to a 'hero's welcome'. What is that welcome? Is it ok to expect formal recognition of being a hero? Should we expect to be rewarded for heroic actions?
- ✦ Consider the celebration at the end of Act One of Hercules with the marching band. Is this the only way heroism could or should be celebrated?
- ✦ Discuss your ideas for a narrative. Then (without needing to write anything down) create a short (3 minutes) trailer for your planned piece of drama inspired by the extract from Hercules. You should ensure that the following aspects of the drama are clear:
 - Setting
 - Key character(s)
 - The conflict experienced by the hero
 - Whether the story is tragic, comedic or romantic
 - Who assists and resists the hero's journey

DEBATING

- ✦ In your group or class, ensure that it's very clear why you have chosen this particular extract or quotation. Ensure that your chosen extract contains a point that can be debated. For example, Phil claims in extract 2 that he 'made' various people into heroes. Can a hero be made, or are some people born with the potential to be heroes within their personality?
- ✦ Within your group, create a statement that can be debated (for example, "Heroes are born, not made")
- ✦ Split into two teams, one arguing FOR the statement and the other AGAINST. Hold a debate which can be decided by a panel of students from your class, or you might like to invite someone else from the school community to hear and adjudicate your debate!

TEACHER NOTES

Depending on which subject you are teaching, it may be appropriate to choose either the devising or debating task. Alternatively, you may choose to offer both options so that all students feel comfortable and able to approach the theme of heroes using different skills and presentation styles. You are encouraged

to offer opportunities to perform either devised or debated responses to different audiences. This could be different classes within the same year group, a debating or drama club, or an invited audience of other teachers, leaders and support staff, depending on your setting.

5. SPOKEN LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT



The characters Bob and Charles debate what to do

The themes of *Hercules* can stimulate debate and discussion and form part of your work on the spoken language assessment for GCSE English Language. Using some of the events and themes in *Hercules*, you could create speeches based on:

- ✦ **Behind every great person is a great friend or supporter**
(use Phil and Hercules as your starting point).
- ✦ **Heroes are born, not made**
(consider how Hercules' parents imbue him with unknown powers).

- ✦ **The right way isn't always the easy way**
(Phil, Bob, Hercules and Meg all have to make difficult decisions about what is right).
- ✦ **Strength isn't always physical**
(Compare Meg and Hercules in the way that they deal with challenges, danger and their developing feelings for each other).
- ✦ **It's never too late to do the right thing**
(Bob and Charles change sides despite the danger of opposing Hades).

TEACHER NOTES

Students' speeches may eventually move away from discussing *Hercules* specifically. However, you might like to use this as a practice task, in which students can develop their skills in providing evidence,

connecting ideas and constructing a logical and convincing argument. You might also like to use the speech titles as statements for debate amongst Key Stage 3 learners.