

Heroes vs. Celebrities in the Media What's the Difference? Who Decides?

ACTIVITIES

1. Look up definitions for the words: hero and celebrity. Write a paragraph explaining how these are the same and how these are different.
2. Examine different media presentations (for example: CNN, FOX News, PBS, news magazines, tabloids, etc.). Compare and contrast the way celebrities and heroes are depicted by each one.
3. List some advertisements that you have seen that use celebrity endorsements. How are your buying decisions influenced by these ads? (Think about clothing, sports equipment, shoes, cars, fast food, make-up, etc.)
4. Select a fictional hero and list or describe the characteristics that make this person a hero.
5. Write a scenario with you as a hero.
6. Create a comic strip that depicts a hero as a “difference maker” or a “problem solver”.
7. Invent a “super hero” who might make the front page of today’s newspaper. Write the newspaper article to show his or her qualities.
8. Research 3 heroes from the past and decide whether the qualities that made them heroes would still qualify them for hero status today. Support your decisions orally or in writing.

9. Interview 8 people – parents, friends, or local celebrities – to learn if each had a mentor, role model, or hero who influenced their lives. Summarize your findings.
10. Stage a debate about a controversial hero or celebrity and evaluate whether he or she should be considered a hero or a celebrity. Defend whether someone could fit into both categories.
11. Invite a local hero or celebrity to the classroom to be interviewed about the characteristics required for hero or celebrity status. Ask how this status has changed his or her life.
12. Define “martyr”. Research a well-known martyr (for example, Joan of Arc) and compile the findings. Decide whether this person is a hero or a celebrity and justify your answer.
13. Read 2 biographies about the same person. Compare and contrast the facts. Write an essay to defend whether that person should be considered a hero or a celebrity.
14. Select one famous woman from history (for example: Rosa Parks, Clara Barton, Harriet Tubman, etc.). Research information about her and write a paragraph summarizing her life. Write another paragraph about why she is still remembered and whether she should be considered a celebrity or a hero.
15. Create 2 bulletin boards or posters with titles “Heroes” and “Celebrities”. Add names as they come up in class discussions. Add the same names to both boards if appropriate.
16. Bring a magazine to school that has a famous person on the cover. Read and analyze the article about this person. Explain why you think this person was featured on the cover. Change the text on the cover to reflect whether you feel this person is a celebrity or a hero.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. How does media exposure affect the status or popularity of a celebrity or a hero?
2. Who in your school do you think of as a hero? Who in your school do you think of as a celebrity? Could one person be both a celebrity and a hero? Explain your answers.
3. Do the media use celebrities or heroes to their advantage? Give examples to explain your answers.
4. Discuss any differences between the roles of mentors, celebrities, heroes, and role models. Give examples for each category.
5. Discuss different types of heroes and their contributions (for example, sports figures, scientists, politicians, religious or inspirational leaders, people who have overcome handicaps or obstacles, etc.)
6. Make a list of fictional heroes. Make a list of cartoon heroes. Make a list of animal heroes. What qualities or characteristics do all of these heroes share?
7. Could one person's hero be someone who is unknown to others? Explain.
8. Is celebrity status always the result of positive actions? Think of examples of negative celebrities. Look up the definition of famous and infamous. What's the difference?
9. Discuss the role celebrities played in the recent elections. How does the involvement of celebrities in campaigns impact voters?

10. How does someone become a celebrity?

11. Is Oprah a hero or a celebrity? Give evidence to support your ideas.

GLOSSARY

| | |
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| celebrity endorsement | the use of a well-known person or character to support a product, cause, or idea |
| martyr | someone who makes sacrifices or suffers greatly in order to advance a cause or principle |
| media | the various means of communication thought of as a whole, including television, radio, magazines, and newspapers |
| medium | one means of mass communication, such as television or radio |
| mentor | somebody, usually older and more experienced, who provides advice and support to, and watches over and fosters the progress of, a younger, less experienced person |
| personality | somebody who is famous, especially an entertainer or an athlete |

role model

somebody who is regarded as a person to look up to and often as an example to emulate

superhero

a fictional character, often from a cartoon, who has superhuman powers and uses them to fight crime or evil

RESOURCES

Time for Kids resources

www.TimeforKids.com

Hall of Heroes Resources

www.homeofheroes.com/hallofheroes/4teachers/index.html

Heroes of History

www.heroesofhistory.com

Time : the world's most influential people

www.time.com/time/specials/packages/0,28757,1984685,00.html

Sports Heroes

www.sporting-heroes.net

Heroines

www.womeninworldhistory.com/heroine.html

Salute America's Heroes

<http://saluteheroes.org>

"Heroes for Today", a monthly feature, *Reader's Digest* magazine



