



## *Heroes Lesson Plans*

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*The Parthenon created and used the following materials for teacher workshops at the Frist Center for the Visual Arts in conjunction with their *Heroes* exhibit.*

Over the coming months, students and teachers will have an opportunity to explore the concept of heroes and heroism in the shaping of cultures and individuals through a variety of exhibits. In addition to the *Heroes* exhibit at the Frist, we encourage exploration of “We Shall Not Be Moved,” an exhibit at the Tennessee State Museum (through May 16<sup>th</sup>) commemorating the Civil Rights Movement and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Nashville Sit-ins. The Nashville Public Library will sponsor additional exhibits and programming honoring the efforts of Nashville’s Civil Rights heroes. This summer (June 25-September 25), the Parthenon hosts an exhibit of paintings by Rachel McCampbell entitled *Women in Mythology*. We hope these materials will serve as a valuable teaching tool for you and an inspiration for your students throughout the spring and summer as you visit these exciting exhibits and explore the subject of heroes. **These materials will also be available through links with the websites of the Frist Center for the Visual Arts and the Tennessee State Museum.**

## Learning Standards:

(We are using 6<sup>th</sup> grade and 9<sup>th</sup> grade standards for this list).

### Language Arts

#### *Conceptual Strand 8* (Grade 6)

GLE. 0601.8.1

GLE. 0601.8.4

#### Grade 9:

CLE.3001.8.1

CLE.3001.8.4

### Visual Arts:

*Culture/History Connections:* Understand how culture and context influence the functions, meaning and creation of works of art.

- Explores specific works of art and artists in terms of history, aesthetics, and culture.
- Investigates specific works of art and artists belonging to ancient cultures.
- Identifies how visual arts reflect cultural history.

#### *Applications to Life:*

- Explores art as a communications tool
- Explores visual arts skills relevant to personal interests

### Social Studies

#### *Culture:* (Grade 6)

- 6.1.01 Nature/complexity of culture
- 6.1.02 Recognize the role of major religions
- 6.1.04 How cultural/individual perception affects places (art, music, etc.)
- 6.1.05 The role of diverse cultures on development of the world

#### *World History:* (Grade 6)

Era 3: Classical Tradition

### World History (High School)

#### *Standard 1: Culture*

- 1.1 Multi-cultural component of world culture
- 1.2 Understand development & migration of art, architecture, language, religion, music and theatre.

#### *Standard 5: History*

- 5.3 Understand the maturation of Africa, Asia, Europe, Australia, the Middle East, Oceanic, and the Americas and their continuing impact on the modern world.
- 5.4 Understand the historical impact of world religions.



## *Symbolism in Art and Heroic Depiction*

### **Works imbued with meaning**

- Evaluate subject matter, symbols, and ideas
- Visual language to convey meaning
- Symbols creating a narrative

### **What is a symbol?**

**One definition: A form, image or subject representing a meaning other than the one with which it is associated.**

**Symbolism:** Using symbols to communicate ideas.

Name some common symbols and discuss their meaning. For example:



Explore the ancient Greek gods and goddesses, their symbols and their meanings.

**Allegory:** When the literal content of a work stands for abstract ideas, suggesting a deeper, symbolic meaning.



*Cycles in Heroic Lives*

- *The Formative Years*  
Education, Influences, Environment
- *The Spark/ The Vision*
- *Challenges/ The Wilderness Years*
- *The Critical Point*
- *Rebirth/ Transformation*
- *Triumph/Celebration*
- *Reflection*
- *Mentoring/Teaching/Leading*



### *Activities: Heroes of Myth*

Select and compare mythical deities or heroes from other cultures. (Suggestions include Egyptian, Persian, Babylonian, Celtic, Norse, Mayan, Cherokee, etc.). Find parallels in:

- Characteristics
- Challenges
- Story lines
- Lessons learned from the tales

What do these stories tell us about the particular culture of origin and about human needs and aspirations?

How are these heroes/deities depicted in the art from that culture and how does that art compare to the artifacts seen during your visit to the *Heroes* exhibit at the Frist Center or the *Women in Mythology* paintings at the Parthenon (summer 2010)?



### *Activities: Heroes of Cult*

**Heroes of cult are marked by transformation after death to a level of veneration/worship. Sites associated with these heroes may be associated with ritual or become places of pilgrimage. Familiar examples may include monuments (such as the Lincoln Memorial), burial sites (battlefields, the USS Arizona or the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier), event sites (the Alamo, or the Loraine Motel in Memphis), and places associated with the hero's life (Mt. Vernon, or Jackson's *Neverland*)**

**What ceremonies/rituals surround these sites/people?**

**What makes veneration controversial?**

- **For example, after the Civil War many Americans in the North questioned the creation of monuments or the veneration of cemeteries for those who had seceded from the Union. Even popular ideas such as creation of a Washington Monument or the Viet Nam Veterans Memorial became steeped in controversy. Allow students to select a site and look at the controversies surrounding the memorials.**
- **Controversial heroes. Explore the complexity of heroes: Do we require perfection in our heroes? What happens when heroes fall (drug use, affairs, etc.)? Do we require consistency or is there room for growth/transformation in our heroes as well as in society? Can students identify examples in which society revised its views of figures who took controversial or unpopular stands?**
- **“One Man's Hero is Another Man's Villain.” Revolution, politics, war, civil disobedience and sporting events are all examples of this notion. Students may examine an event and how both sides of the issue use word choice, documents, video, photos, cartoons, and humor to create an advantage for their own views/heroes while demonizing their opponent?**



### *Activities: Emulation*

Finally, lead students in analysis and discussion. Some areas to explore include:

**Who is worthy of emulation? Why?**

- What is the difference between *hero* and *celebrity*?
- What are the defining characteristics of a hero?
- Acknowledging human faults and frailties in all of the people we admire, select a personal hero and define that person by the *bigger* characteristics they represent (work ethic, energy, the pursuit of excellence, devotion to family/friends, recovery from failure, triumph over impossible odds, loyalty, bravery, willingness to learn and to grow, etc).

While we often think of heroes as those gifted with excess in wealth, talent or beauty, we repeatedly discover throughout history, as well as in myth and religious texts, the elevation of the *most unlikely* person to the level of hero. Find some examples in history or literature and tell why the *least* likely to achieve greatness often has the most profound impact.

The current “We Shall Not Be Moved” exhibit at the Tennessee State Museum, the photography exhibit at the Nashville Public Library, and David Halberstam’s 1998 book, *The Children*, highlight the courage and vision of Nashville’s young people during the historic lunch counter sit-ins fifty years ago. Both show how these unlikely heroes became powerful symbols of injustice and were propelled to leadership roles in the Civil Rights Movement. Create a collage using photos, words, music, etc, to highlight their heroic efforts. Remember, symbols need not be elaborate. A simple item can have tremendous visual impact.



### *Activities: The Heroes behind the Heroes*

There is another, forgotten dimension of heroism: *The heroes behind the heroes.*

We hear their names mentioned by award-winning athletes who cite the sacrifices of a single-mom who held two jobs so that they could pursue their dreams. We see it in the loving gestures of a father (pictured above) who attends every practice and travels to every game so that his son (Patrick Henry Hughes) can participate in the band for the University of Louisville. The quiet heroes are the enthusiastic supporters of the dreams of others. Their names are seldom known, but they are the strong ones that *our* heroes lean upon and learn from.

They may or may not be family members. They are often strangers who appear during the darkest hours or the wilderness year, in the lifetime of a future hero, to guide and encourage and help in molding the character of a leader. History is filled and shaped by these people.

A famous example:

- The political career of President Franklin Roosevelt was rescued and shaped by the efforts of his wife, Eleanor, and a little man named Louis Howe who promoted FDR's name and national vision during the dark years after polio struck and crippled the young politician.

Ask students to look at other examples or to use their own lives and the people who inspire and influence the vision for their own lives. Can they describe the sacrifice, efforts, word of encouragement, or opportunities provided for them that mold their own sense of worth? Ask students to write note of thanks to those who support their dreams and work for their future. Remind students that sometimes the people, who have the greatest impact on our life, have no idea we see them as *our heroes*, too.

