

SPEAKING UP FOR OURSELVES AND OTHERS: THE HERO'S JOURNEY



Grades 4-7

Speaking Up For Ourselves and Others: The Hero's Journey English Language & Health Education

Purpose of the Lesson:

We all face calls to action. These can be big or small. This lesson helps students develop an understanding of various forms of calls to action and how we can respond to them. It informs their understanding of the importance of standing up for ourselves and others. Through the metaphor of The Hero's Journey, students are invited to write a story (can be fictional or based on a real-life experience) about a time where they have been or could be called to action and how they faced that difficult situation. This call to action could be about bullying or larger social causes such as racism, sexism, homophobia or other forms of discrimination. Following the activity, teachers are encouraged to discuss how these calls to action and standing up for ourselves and others connects to mental health and wellness.

Curriculum Competencies:

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English Language

- Use personal experience and knowledge to connect to text and deepen understanding of self, community, and world (Grade 4/5)
- Respond to text in personal and creative ways (Grade 4/5/6/7)
- Exchange ideas and perspectives to build shared understanding (Grade 4/5/6/7)
- Communicate in sentences and paragraphs, applying conventions of Canadian spelling, grammar, and punctuation (Grade 4/5)
- Transform ideas and information to create original texts (Grade 4/5/6/7)
- Recognize and identify the role of personal, social, and cultural contexts, values, and perspectives in texts (Grade 6/7)
- Construct meaningful personal connections between self, text and world (Grade 6/7)
- Think critically, creatively, and reflectively to explore ideas within, between, and beyond texts (Grade 6/7)
- Understand how literary elements, techniques, and devices enhance and shape meaning (Grade 6/7)
- Use an increasing repertoire of conventions of Canadian spelling, grammar, and punctuation (Grade 7)

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Health Education

- Describe and assess strategies for responding to discrimination, stereotyping, and bullying (Grade 4/5/6/7)
- Identify and describe strategies for avoiding and/or responding to potentially unsafe, abusive or exploitative situations (Grade 5/6/7)
- Describe and assess strategies for promoting mental well-being, for self and others (Grade 5/6/7)

First Peoples Principles of Learning:

- Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).
- Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one's actions.
- The importance of stories and oral history as it connects to indigenous tradition

Video

What Makes A Hero?- Matthew Winkler

Guiding Questions:

- How can you connect the Hero's Journey to your everyday life?
- What challenges does the Hero face?
- Have you experienced these challenges? If so, when?
- Where have you seen the Hero's Journey in your favourite books/TV shows/movies?
- Who are people from history that are heroes?
- Who are people in your life that you consider heroes? What makes them a hero?

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Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

Preparation: Queue up video/set up projector

1. Begin the lesson by watching the video "What Makes A Hero?." This can be found [HERE](#). This video explains the literary trope of the Hero's Journey and explains how this journey plays out in fiction while also connecting it to our lives

2. **Pause the video and use the Guiding Questions to spark discussion.**

3. Write down some of the students' responses on the board to the questions as you go along. **Create the visual aid of a mind-map** - one for heroes in literature/movies/TV shows, one for heroes in the students' lives and one for heroes throughout history. The students can also add to the mind map by including who helped the hero along their journey and what tools they used to overcome the obstacles they faced along the way. Also take this time to display [this graphic](#) of the arch of the Hero's Journey so they can refer back to it for the activity.

4. **Use this opportunity to connect the metaphor of a Hero's Journey to bullying and activism.** See where you can make connections between the heroes they highlighted in real life and fiction on the mind-maps. Facilitate a discussion with your class regarding how the Hero's Journey mirrors our lives in times when we are faced with calls to action. These can be moments where we are being bullied or teased and we stick up for ourselves, or speaking up for a friend experiencing bullying, or when we see injustice in the world and speak out against it at a protest or to someone who makes an offensive joke, etc.

5. **Explain the curriculum connections to your students.** Invite your students to either create a story based on the arch of the Hero's Journey or write about a real event in their life or a historical event that reflects this arch. This can be in any format they choose: a short comic book, a poem, a short story, a song, etc. Inform them that they can add illustrations or other visuals to support their narrative. **Accommodation/modification:**

- Students who require technological assistance can use a computer and type their stories
- Students who struggle with writing can dictate their story to the educator who can act as a scribe for them
- Students who's first language isn't English can write the story in their native language first and then have it translated to English with the help of the teacher

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6. Follow-up Activity: Invite the students to read their stories to each other in pairs or small groups. Pose these guiding questions for them to spark a dialogue with their small groups or partners about each other's stories:

- How does the hero in your story respond to their call to action?
- What made you choose this call to action?
- Why do you think action was important for your hero?
- How do these calls to action inform how we see ourselves and others?

Invite students who wish to share their story with the class to do so.

7. Lesson Closure: Facilitate a whole-class discussion about the activity. Allow the students to reflect on their experience writing these stories. You can also use this opportunity to connect these calls to action to mental health by discussing how standing up for ourselves and others shows bravery and strength and how these calls to action empower us to advocate for ourselves and one another. Discuss the concept of being an ally and how allyship affords us the opportunity to raise up the voices of those who are being silenced.