

A Student Essay

Read the student essay and answer the questions that follow.

Heroes

by *Diego Pelaez*

1 The word "hero" comes from the Greek word *heros*, which means a person of superhuman ability. *Webster's Dictionary* defines a hero as a person "admired for courage, fortitude, prowess, nobility, etc." Certainly, heroes come in many forms throughout a person's life. Somewhere out there, there is always a model, real or fictional, that drives people to better themselves and gives them the dream of being heroic. The three general ideas of a hero that most people embrace are the fictional superhero, the sports or media hero and, finally, the practical hero.

2 The dominant heroes of childhood are fictional superheroes. Action figures represent these titans and are the absolute blueprint for the average young person. Be they on television, in comic books, or in children's movies, characters such as Batman, Superman, and Spiderman usually dominate the imaginations of youngsters. It is common to see children blazing down the street wearing the capes of their idols. Thankfully, the female crowd has gotten away from Barbie; female action heroes such as Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Sydney Bristow from *Alias* are models of strength for young girls. These heroes defy the laws of physics and are capable of superhuman feats that any child dreams of.

3 However, as time wears on, children outgrow the superhero phase and idolize another form of superior humans: celebrities. With the information age, celebrities are ubiquitous. The internet, television, newspapers, and magazines feature images of athletes, singers, and movie stars, providing them with more exposure than they could have ever possibly wanted. Thus, the superhero stage is followed by the "I want to be famous" stage, where adolescents start trying to shoot like Steve Nash, act like Paul Gross, or sing like Sarah McLachlan. A good example is the unbelievable amount of worldwide acclaim for soccer player David Beckham; some nations have even erected statues in his image. These people are superheroes who make the game-winning shot on a basketball court, kill the bad guy on film, or perform on stage in front of thousands of screaming fans.

4 Alas, for the vast majority of people, there will come a day when fantasies of fame must give way to more realistic goals. Along with these goals come more practical, real-life heroes. Teachers, although they sometimes get a bad reputation, are heroes to far more people than they realize. Many teachers become mentors to their pupils, providing guidance and inspiration. Young adults also look to inspirational figures in their field; thus, an aspiring journalist might idolize a writer from the local paper. Of course, most people, as they grow older, realize that the most potent figures in their lives are those family members—parents, grandparents, siblings, aunts, or uncles—who have guided them and been compelling role models.

ubiquitous:
everywhere

5 Heroes fill people with a sense of their own possibilities. Children think they are indestructible, and this attitude is reflected in larger-than-life heroes who always seem to achieve the impossible. However, with the passage of time, goals become more realistic and so do definitions of heroes. Heroes drive children to dream of the impossible, and heroes encourage young adults to strive toward an ideal.

PRACTICE I

1. Highlight the thesis statement.
2. Highlight the topic sentence in each body paragraph.
3. State the three categories that the writer discusses and list some details about each category.

a. _____

Details: _____

b. _____

Details: _____

c. _____

Details: _____

4. Which introductory style does this essay use? Circle your answer.

a. anecdote

c. historical

b. definition

d. opposing position