



Ordinary Seaman Edward Sheean, *HMAS Armidale* AWM ART 28160

TOPIC 8

What makes a hero?

Courage in extreme situations

Recommended levels

UPPER PRIMARY

LOWER SECONDARY

MIDDLE SECONDARY

ESTABLISHING THE CONTEXT

Background information

Heroism can be found in many walks of life, whenever someone risks their own safety for the benefit of others. Each year civilians who have shown outstanding courage receive awards such as the Cross of Valour, the Star of Courage, the Bravery Medal and the Commendation for Brave Conduct.

In wartime, heroism is also recognised by a number of awards. The Victoria Cross (VC), the British and Commonwealth's highest award for bravery in the face of the enemy, has been awarded to 96 Australian servicemen from the Boer War to the Vietnam War. Australians have received many other awards for bravery in wartime. In civilian and military life, such people are acknowledged as heroes.

In order to receive an award, a person has to be nominated and, usually, a committee decides if that person's actions fulfil the requirements for an award. If the nomination is successful, a ceremony is held to present the award. If the nominated person dies, the award is made posthumously.

Some acts of heroism are not recorded or reported, which means that many heroes have never been publicly recognised. For example, sometimes a person is rescued from extreme danger but they don't know who their rescuer was. In combat, sometimes officers will not single out an individual person for an award when outstanding courage was shown by everyone involved in the action. Countless acts of heroism have never been publicly acknowledged; they are remembered only by the people involved.

Teacher briefing

These activities encourage students to explore and reflect on concepts of heroism. Students will consider what heroism is and how heroes are given recognition. Students will learn about some of Australia's publicly acknowledged wartime heroes and they will research 'unsung' heroes of Gallipoli and World War II. They will also consider the role heroes play in our nation's history. Teachers may select activities to focus on either World War I or World War II or a combination.

Focus questions

- What is a hero?
- What qualities do heroes display?
- How is heroism commemorated?
- Is it important to have heroes?

ICT skills check list

- Locate and retrieve information from a website
- Copy and paste text and images

Key terms for Topic 8

hero	gallantry
heroine	altruism
heroism	noble
heroic	tribute
courage	posthumous

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Activity 8.1 ■■■

Who are our heroes?

Think pair share

Each student lists people they consider to be heroes. They then share their list with a partner and explain *why* they consider these people to be heroes. Each pair shares with another pair. The teacher lists the people mentioned, then asks students to identify the qualities and actions of their heroes. On the board the teacher compiles a list or mind map of these qualities and actions.



At Gallipoli on 19 May 1915, Lance Corporal Albert Jacka earned the Victoria Cross. On the same day stretcher-bearer Private John Simpson Kirkpatrick was killed. Both men became known as heroes, one received the Victoria Cross and the other was Mentioned in Despatches. The heroism of both men was used by the authorities to boost morale and encourage enlistment.

AWM ART V00026 *Enlist in the Sportsmen's Thousand* Recruiting Poster 1917

(A photo of Private John Simpson Kirkpatrick appears in Topic 3.)

Activity 8.2 ■■■

Construct a heroism check list

LEARNING CONTEXT AND PURPOSE

The teacher explains that there are different meanings of the word 'hero', that word meanings change over time and that there can be more than one meaning for the same word. Parts of Definition 1 and all of Definition 5, for example, will not be useful for the heroism check list.

- The class discusses some definitions of the word 'hero'.
- Working in pairs or groups, students construct a check list of the essential qualities of a hero.
- There should be four or five essential qualities in the check list.
- Students then go back to the people they identified as heroes in *Activity 8.1* and test them against the check list.

Definition 1

In ancient Greece, heroes were people of superhuman strength, courage and ability who performed outstanding feats, often with the help of the gods, eg Hercules and Achilles.

Definition 2

A hero is someone who is admired for doing brave or noble deeds. A hero does not expect reward or recognition for their actions.

Definition 3

A hero is someone who shows initiative and courage in extreme circumstances, who risks their own safety to help others.

Definition 4

A hero is someone who overcomes hardship or difficulties to achieve outstanding personal success in their field.

Definition 5

A hero is the main male person in a poem, play or story.

Activity 8.3

Websearch for heroes

- Students read the descriptions of the Australian Bravery Decorations.
- They then go online to find one recipient of each award. They record the name of the recipient, the date of their award and a brief description of the action which earned the award.

OR

- **If online facilities are not available to the class,** teachers might provide information about recipients either as written or spoken text – including at least one female recipient. Students could then complete the work sheet.



CLICK AND FIND

Relevant information and images can be found in

www.ww2australia.gov.au/asfaras
www.ww2australia.gov.au/pushingback



GO TO CD-ROM

Work Sheet 8A:
Websearch for Civilian Heroes
(8A_WS_brav.pdf)



Maigura, a local mission nurse, was decorated for her bravery in saving the life of Leading Aircraftsman JF Donegan, at considerable risk to herself and her fellow villagers. AWM 014649

Activity 8.4

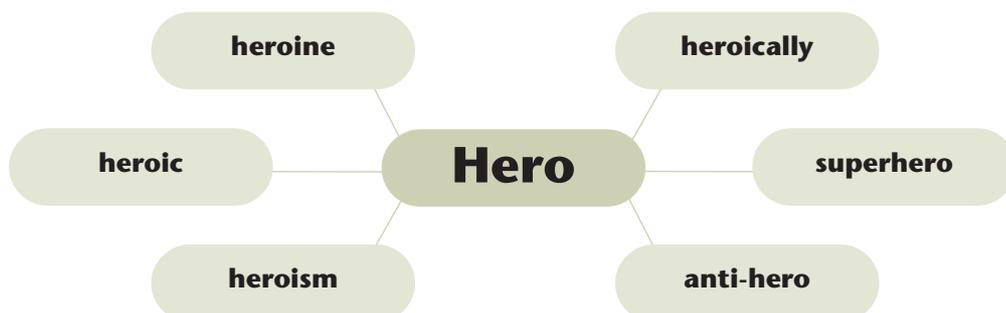
Vocabulary building

- The teacher explains the Greek origins of the word and asks students for other forms of the word 'hero'.
- The teacher also identifies words often associated with heroism: courage, bravery, gallantry, nobility.
- Students use a dictionary to complete the mix and match table on the work sheet, then construct sentences about heroes or heroism using five of the key terms.



GO TO CD-ROM

Work Sheet 8B:
Vocabulary Building
(8B_WS_vocab.pdf)



BUILDING KNOWLEDGE

Activity 8.5 ■ ■ ■

- The teacher explains that the main bravery awards given to Australians in World Wars I and II were Imperial awards. In 1988 a new schedule of Australian Defence Force Awards replaced them. The current awards can be found on the Australian War Memorial website www.awm.gov.au.
- Students read about the Imperial awards on the work sheet, then complete comprehension questions.



GO TO CD-ROM

Work Sheet 8C: Imperial Awards for Bravery (8C_WS_awards.pdf)

Activity 8.6 ■ ■ ■

Victoria Crosses at Gallipoli

- Students read information about Victoria Cross (VC) recipients at Gallipoli, then complete 'VC gallery' entries on the work sheet.



GO TO CD-ROM

Work Sheet 8D: VC Recipients at Gallipoli (8D_WS_VCANzac.pdf)

For an extension activity, students could conduct an online search for other Australian VC recipients in World War I.

Activity 8.7 ■ ■ ■

World War II heroes

Websearch

Students click on the URLs listed to complete the table of World War II bravery award recipients, noting the name of their awards and the actions which earned them the award.



GO TO CD-ROM

Work Sheet 8E: Websearch for World War II Heroes (8E_WS_vww2hero.pdf)

THINKING ANALYTICALLY

Activity 8.8 ■ ■ ■

Stretcher bearers at Gallipoli

- The teacher shows pictures and/or describes the terrain at Gallipoli and explains how this affected the fighting.
- The teacher asks students to consider the difficulties of providing medical treatment to sick and wounded soldiers under these conditions. The teacher outlines what was involved, from collecting the wounded from the battlefield and taking them down to the beaches to their evacuation to the hospital ships which waited offshore.
- Students then use the sources and activities on *Work Sheet 8F* to consider whether or not stretcher bearers were heroes.



CLICK AND FIND

Images and extracts from Bean's and Ashmead-Bartlett's descriptions can be found in *The Landing: A 'duty clear before us'*: www.anzacsite.gov.au/1landing/nbeachc.html



GO TO CD-ROM

Work Sheet 8F: Stretcher Bearers at Gallipoli (8F_WS_stretch.pdf)



Maxwell Reece, son of Stoker Petty Officer William Reece, of HMAS *Perth*, receives the Distinguished Service Medal (DSM) from Rear Admiral Muirhead Gould on 2 April 1943. Petty Officer Reece was killed when the *Perth* was sunk during the Battle of Sunda Strait on 28 February–1 March 1942 and his DSM was awarded for his bravery during the evacuation of Crete, May 1941. AWM 014577

Activity 8.9 ■ ■

Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels



CLICK AND FIND

Web pages for this activity.

www.ww2australia.gov.au/asfaras

www.ww2australia.gov.au/pushingback

www.ww2australia.gov.au/coastwatcher

www.anzacsite.gov.au/5environment/bravery.html

www.anzacsite.gov.au/5environment/nurses.html

- The teacher shows pictures and/or describes the climate and terrain of New Guinea and explains how this affected the fighting.
- Students then examine the sources provided on the work sheet and complete the activities.



GO TO CD-ROM

Source Sheet 8G:

Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels (8G_SS_fuzzy.pdf)

Work Sheet 8H: Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels

(8H_WS_fuzzy.pdf)



Private A Baldwin receives a drink of water from his Papuan stretcher-bearers, October 1942.

AWM 026856

The people who lived in the villages along the Kokoda Track knew little about the war until it came to them. They had lived a traditional life, with only occasional contact with Australian patrol officers. Then Australian troops began moving over the tracks. As the fighting came closer, most villagers 'went bush' to camps away from the main tracks.

Many of the villagers also worked in support of the battle, carrying supplies forward for the troops. Teams carried seriously wounded and sick Australian soldiers all the way back to Owers' Corner. Their compassion and care of the casualties earned them admiration and respect from the Australians, who dubbed these men their 'fuzzy wuzzy angels'.



A native carrier line carrying supplies to Australian troops near Wau, New Guinea, April 1942.

AWM 1279561

RESPONDING CREATIVELY

Activity 8.10 ■

Heroes' Gallery

Students create a gallery of 'unsung heroes' of wartime for an online encyclopedia.

They might like to consider those in non-combat roles who nevertheless risked their lives to help others, or those who were on the battlefield to record and report events.

nurses

prisoners of war

coastwatchers

the Salvation Army

doctors

war photographers and artists

war correspondents

other religious bodies



Coastwatcher Captain Martin Clemens, a member of the Solomon Islands Defence Force who remained on Guadalcanal throughout the Japanese occupation, pictured with local policemen. AWM 043648



A nurse treats wounded soldiers in the open on Lemnos Island.

AW Savage, photo album, Lemnos 1915. PXE 698, Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW

Teacher resources

www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/vic_cross.htm

Australian War Memorial – Victoria Cross

Summary of CD-ROM items for Topic 8

Work Sheet 8A:	Websearch for Civilian Heroes
Work Sheet 8B:	Vocabulary Building
Work Sheet 8C:	Imperial Awards for Bravery
Work Sheet 8D:	VC Recipients at Gallipoli
Work Sheet 8E:	Websearch for World War II Heroes
Work Sheet 8F:	Stretcher Bearers at Gallipoli
Source Sheet 8G:	Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels
Work Sheet 8H:	Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels