
MAX

Author and Illustrator: Bob Graham
Publisher: Candlewick Press

THEME:

There are heroes all around us—doing ordinary things in extraordinary ways.

PROGRAM SUMMARY:

Max is the son of superhero parents whose soaring abilities are brought to life when an emergency arises. LeVar spends the day at a firehouse and learns what inspires firefighters. We also follow Wildlife Rescue Center of the Hamptons as they rescue, rehabilitate and release an injured goose. Finally, through an upbeat song, we celebrate the heroes that surround us every day.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

Prior to viewing the **Reading Rainbow** program, ask students what a “hero” is and if they know any heroes. Write heroes they name on the board or a chart. If they name fictional heroes along with people, or occupations, from everyday life, list them in a separate column and use the opportunity to discuss the difference between heroes on television or in movies (some of whom might be “superheroes”) and real-life heroes. Direct students to look for all kinds of heroes as they watch the video program. After viewing, add heroes or occupations they noticed in the program to their chart.

Before the students watch the program, ask them if it is possible for children to be heroes and under what types of circumstances that might happen.

People are fascinated by the amazing feats of superheroes. Refer to any superheroes mentioned on the above list and discuss why they are extraordinary. Pose the question: “If you could have superhero powers, what would they be?” Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of having super abilities.

Discuss with students why people might want to become firefighters or police officers.

CURRICULUM EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Work with the library media specialist and obtain some short biographies of heroes from American history, such as Harriet Tubman, Jackie Robinson, Frederick Douglass, Rosa Parks, Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Edison, Neil Armstrong, etc. Have students write a fact card containing “vital statistics” (name, dates she/he lived, and primary accomplishment) about one of the heroes. Work with the art teacher and have students draw portraits of their particular subject. Display the portraits along with the fact cards in a school corridor as a “Gallery of Heroes.”

Encourage parents to search the daily newspaper with their children and locate articles or pictures about heroic deeds, e.g., a famous athlete who donates a kidney to his sister, a dog who saves a drowning child, Red Cross workers who help flood or forest fire victims, a literacy volunteer, or a class that collected items for the local Food Bank. Have students bring these articles to school and post them on a bulletin board titled, “Our Heroes.”

Invite everyday heroes to school to discuss their occupations. Possibilities include a firefighter, police officer, park ranger, nurse, animal recovery worker, lifeguard, conservationist, and many others. Have them explain their daily activities, equipment, training, and why they enjoy their jobs.

Briefly review the everyday heroes list generated in the discussion. On a chart, introduce a sentence pattern for students to use to write a class poem about heroes:

A _____
Is a HERO,
Who _____.

Repeat this pattern, taking dictation from the group identifying a person or occupation and a contribution from that hero. (As an example:

A tree planter
Is a HERO,
Who makes a home for birds.)

Edit the poem together as a group. Type the lines of the poem on blank sheets of paper in such a manner that each student may have a page to illustrate. (For extra pages, consider the front cover, dedication page, and back cover.) Bind the completed pages into a book for the classroom library.

Many superheroes have identifiable logos or trademarks. Have students design a logo for one of their *everyday* heroes.

Discuss with students the idea that not all heroes are famous, nor do all heroic activities make the news. Sometimes our heroes are at home or in our classroom, and often the heroic deeds are acts of kindness, helpfulness, and generosity. Encourage students to look for heroes who are nearby and make a discussion of their activities a weekly event. Use the digital camera to record these “extra”-ordinary classroom heroes and post their pictures along with an explanation of why they are so recognized.

Make “You’re Our Hero” cards and send them to local firefighters, police officers, nurses, teachers, military personnel, and others on the “Heroes” list.

Have students draw an appropriate picture on the front and write a message on the inside that gives a reason why that person is a hero.

Have students search the classroom and school libraries for books in which a character performs a heroic deed (e.g., *Charlotte's Web*, *Swimmy*, *The Little Engine That Could*, etc.) and make a display of these books. Have a supply of blank bookmarks (paper cut 3" x 6") available for them to write the name of the book's hero and why the character is heroic. Keep the bookmarks on the display table for students to use.

RELATED THEMES:

communities
occupations
courage

RELATED READING RAINBOW PROGRAMS:

Program #20 A Chair for My Mother
Program #37 Keep the Lights Burning, Abbie
Program #79 Kate Shelley and the Midnight Express
Program #99 And Still the Turtle Watched

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Bob Graham was born in Sydney, Australia, and studied art at Julian Ashton Art School. Describing his career as an author and illustrator of children's books as something that "just happened," he is known all over the world for his warm, humorous stories about ordinary people—their families, friends, and pets. He primarily relies on anecdotes and memories from his own life for story ideas. Bob Graham makes his home in England.

BOOKS REVIEWED BY CHILDREN:

IF A BUS COULD TALK: THE STORY OF ROSA PARKS
by Faith Ringgold (Simon & Schuster)

THE MITTEN TREE
by Candace Christiansen, illus. by Elaine Greenstein (Fulcrum)

SOSU'S CALL
by Meshack Asare (Kane/Miller)

SUPPLEMENTARY BOOKLIST:

THE CHILDREN'S BOOK OF HEROES
edited by William J. Bennett, illus. by Michael Hague (Simon & Schuster)

FIREFIGHTERS A TO Z
by Chris Demarest (McElderry)

50 AMERICAN HEROES EVERY KID SHOULD MEET
by Dennis Denenberg and Lorraine Roscoe (Millbrook)

OFFICER BROWN KEEPS NEIGHBORHOODS SAFE
by Alice K. Flanagan, illus. by Christine Osinski (Childrens Press)

FIRE! FIRE!
by Gail Gibbons (HarperCollins)

TEAMMATES
by Peter Golenbock, illus. by Paul Bacon (Harcourt)

HE SAVES THE DAY
by Marsha Hayles, illus. by Lynne Woodcock Cravath (Putnam)

FIRE FIGHTERS
by Robert Maass (Scholastic)

SISTERS IN STRENGTH: AMERICAN WOMEN WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE
by Yona Zeldis McDonough, illus. by Malcah Zeldis (Henry Holt)

LET IT SHINE: STORIES OF BLACK WOMEN FREEDOM FIGHTERS
by Andrea Davis Pinkney, illus. by Stephen Alcorn (Gulliver/Harcourt)

BOYS WHO ROCKED THE WORLD: FROM KING TUT TO TIGER WOODS
by Mattie J.T. Stepanek, illus. by Lar Desouza (Beyond Words)

GIRLS WHO ROCKED THE WORLD!: HEROINES FROM SACAJAWEA TO SHERYL SWOOPES
by Amelie Welden (Beyond Words)

"Community Helpers" series (Child's World)
multiple titles, including DOCTORS HELP PEOPLE, FIREFIGHTERS FIGHT FIRES, and POLICE OFFICERS PROTECT PEOPLE