



Heroes Lesson Plan

5 History Lives On

Recommended Age Group: can be adapted to suit S1 - 6

Duration: 3 hours

Equipment required: none

Smiles believed anyone can achieve their aims if they were dedicated to their work, and that heroes could be found in every walk of life. For Smiles it was a person's characteristics and values that make them a hero or a role model. 'Self-Help' presents stories and quotes from a wide range of people who displayed the qualities Smiles wanted to inspire in readers; you can find examples on this website. For Smiles, two important personal characteristics were doing your duty and self-sacrifice. His message was that success in life depended not on individual intellect but on good character and hard work.

In this workshop your pupils will explore the examples of duty and self-sacrifice and consider why these characteristics are important.

Warm Up

Shake hands discovery(15 mins)

- Get pupils to move around the room, continually changing pace and direction to ensure everyone is awake and alert. Ask the group to stop and go at various points to test the speed of their reactions.
- Now get them to spend two minutes shaking hands with as many pupils as possible introducing themselves and finding answers to the question:
What do you think you can achieve by working really hard?
Get them to try to get personal responses and not general ones. For example, being offered a place at university to study Law, earn enough money to buy a first car etc.
- Bring the pupils back as a group and discuss which pupils they met and what they learnt about each other.

Core Activity

The Birkenhead Drill (1 hour 30 mins)

The story of troopship Birkenhead which sank in 1852 tells the tale of the men on board sacrificing themselves to save the women and children. You can view a graphic novel version of the story in the interactive section of the website. From this incident, the tradition



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Scotland's national theatre 'for and by' young people

of 'women and children first' began.

- In groups, give pupils the following text taken from Smiles 'Self-Help' and ask them to bring it to life in whichever way they want to present it e.g. they could re-enact the event, do a news report, history programme, a survivor's tale etc.

'At two o'clock in the morning...all were asleep below...ship struck a hidden rock'

'It was at once felt she must go down...the men mustered as if on parade...the word was passed to save the women and children'

'brought from below...handed silently into boats'

'Commander of the vessel shouted 'jump overboard and make for the boats'...Captain Wright of the 91st Highlanders shouted 'no, the boats will be swamped''

'brave men stood motionless...no one flinched from duty in that trying moment'

'the vessel made her final plunge...firing a feu de joie as it sank beneath the waves'.

- You can also view the story of the Birkenhead on the website.
- When the groups are in rehearsal phase, offer directorial advice to each before they perform to the other groups.
- Get the groups to perform their piece and discuss.

Dr Livingstone lives on (1 hour)

- In pairs, get the pupils to read the facts on the life of Dr Livingstone below.
- One person will be a documentary reporter who is directing a programme on 'the impact of Dr David Livingstone on the youth of today' and the other will be playing a character who has been greatly inspired by his life story, e.g. a school pupil who has two weekend jobs to save for studying medicine at university, a student taking a gap year to help build a hospital in a developing nation.
- The plan is to create and perform a short interview with a character of their own or similar age who has to sacrifice things in their life and work hard to improve their life.
- Perform and evaluate.

David Livingstone facts

- David Livingstone (1813 – 1873) was a missionary and explorer in Africa who argued against slavery. He became a national hero through his own travel writings.
- From the age of ten he worked 12 hours a day in a cotton mill and after work he went to school for two hours.
- He gained a place in university to study medicine and whilst studying joined a missionary society which sent him to Africa.
- In 1851, Livingstone set off on the journey which would rank him among the greatest explorers in history. Almost four years after leaving Cape Town for the Zambezi, he arrived at Quelimane (in modern day Mozambique), in May 1856. He had travelled 5,000 miles and had included the first authenticated crossing of sub-Saharan Africa by a European. He also became the first European to see Victoria Falls in modern day Zimbabwe. It remains one of the greatest feats of land exploration in history and Livingstone returned to England to great fame. On later travels he explored the Zambezi river discovering the Zambezi Rapids and Lake Nyassa (now Lake Malawi).
- Livingstone travelled Africa as a missionary. However, he had only one short-lived



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success! He managed to convert Sechele, chief of the Kwena tribe, to Christianity. However, it was only a matter of time before Sechele reverted back to his 'pagan' ways, in particular over the issue of how many wives he could have!

- He faced many dangers from being attacked by a lion to suffering and dying from illness in Africa.
- He explored the Zambezi River in his steamship 'Ma-Robert'. The boat was damaged and he had to pay £6000 for repairs. This money was intended for his children's inheritance but he said "the children must make it up themselves".
- When speaking about his life he said "I should like to begin life again in the same lowly style, and to pass through the same hardy training."

Endings

Dreams (15 mins)

- Working individually, get the pupils to write down on a piece of paper what their dream is (whether to work in a specific a job, an amazing journey they want to make, or something they want to invent etc) and pin it up on the wall.
- Ask each person to go and choose someone else's dream from the wall and on the opposite side of the paper write down a practical step or advice they can give to achieve that dream.
- Now get them to find their own dream with the advice on the back and keep it.

Potential Development

- Ask pupils to research the life of David Livingstone or the Birkenhead wreck using the Heroes website, other websites and local resources, if available. They could be asked to write up their research as a report, newspaper article from the period or an eyewitness account from different perspectives.
- Discuss what the terms 'self-sacrifice', 'duty' and 'hard work' mean for them today.
- Ask pupils to imagine they have achieved their dream from the 'Endings' section, ask them to write an account of where they would be in 10 years, how did they achieve their dream? What were the steps in achieving it? Did they have to utilise self-sacrifice, duty and hard work? Were there setbacks and if so how did they feel when this happened and how did they overcome them? How do they feel now that they have achieved their dream? What will they do next?