



# Heroes Lesson Plan

## 8 Values and Virtues

**Recommended Age Group:** Secondary 4-6

**Duration:** 3 hours

**Equipment required:** large sheets of paper, e.g. lining wallpaper

Samuel Smiles identified values and virtues which he believed everyone was capable of achieving. For Smiles these values and virtues were based on common human characteristics. Smiles suggested that individuals had a contribution to make to society – it is not institutions that make the state but the individuals who act within them. Smiles saw the values and virtues he identified as factors which contribute to individual development and our society.

This lesson plan explores the terms 'values' and 'virtues' in contemporary society and encourages pupils to consider their own values. It encourages them to be independent thinkers who can design their own values and virtues to improve their life and positively affect the lives of others.

### Warm Up

#### Snapshot (30mins)

- Ask the pupils to move around the room, continually changing, varying direction and speed to ensure they're alert as you read out the list of values and virtues below.

The values and virtues Smiles admired in the heroes or role models he wrote about might not be what we immediately associate with the term hero today. These were:

#### Values

- Believing in hard work
- Doing your duty
- Loyalty in friendship
- Believing hardships and difficulties can be overcome

#### Virtues

- Energy and courage
- Good character
- Selflessness
- Application and perseverance

- As a class, choose one value. Get pupils to break out into groups of five or six, with each group devising a physical representation that helps define this value. Use facial expressions, level of eye contact, reaction to each other and physical movement to get the pupils to guess what they are communicating with each other.
- Use the same process for the list of 'virtues'.

## Core Activity

### Understanding values ( 50 mins)

Use the following statements to prompt a discussion with your class:

1. Values can be personal or cultural
  2. Personal values shape and change as we continue living our lives and we become affected or disaffected by other factors in our lives. For example, think about this statement: *We may always buy clothes in a particular high street shop to save money. However, over time and through learning more about this company we may decide not to buy their clothes due to the poor working conditions for the people making these clothes.*
  3. Values are related to the norms of a culture. Norms are rules for behavior in specific situations, while values identify what should be judged as good or bad. Wearing dark clothing and appearing solemn are normal behaviors at a funeral. They reflect the values of respect and support of friends and family.
- **Question for pupils:** If you, as an individual, had to identify a value that is important to the way you live and interact with the world, something that you considered to be the most important values in life, what would it be?
  - Get pupils to write down their answers on a card e.g. 'I value loyalty and disagree with unfairly talking about people behind their backs', or, 'I value equality and human rights', 'I value learning because it will help me get where I want to be'.
  - To prompt discussion you might wish to get pupils to look at the values Smiles admired which are listed on the Heroes website. What actions might you take as a result of this value? For example:
    - 'I refuse to buy celebrity gossip magazines.'
    - 'I refuse to buy non-fairly traded clothes.'
    - 'I am applying to university courses which will help me become...'
  - Collect all the cards and choose a few values pupils have written and discuss further.
  - Now, split the class into groups. Each group must create an imagined two-minute video to try to explain the value written on a card and why other people should agree with them. In the two minutes, they must use all of the pupils in their group.
  - Discuss the 'videos' with the class. This should be quite a hot potato of discussion as values are personal and each person's individuality and background will help form a classroom of diverse values.

### Understanding Virtues (40mins)

- Use the following statement to open up discussion with the class:  
'A virtue is a characteristic quality which an individual has and is deemed as good'
- Still in groups, ask each to create a character of a new pupil at your school. When

creating this new pupil, get the groups to make up the name, age, where they live, what their dreams, hopes and hates are.

- This character should be considered to have many virtues admired by others. Get the groups to provide examples of how these virtues are lived out in this person's everyday life.
- Get each group to draw a life-sized silhouette to illustrate the new pupil using large sheets of paper. On the inside of the body pupils should write the virtues of this person and on the outside, a descriptions of their appearance and general info on age, life and family. Examples of virtues may include: Charity, Courage, Patience, Perseverance.
- Create an improvisation in which a group of pupils is discussing the new pupil. Is this person liked or disliked? What have their experiences with this pupil been?
- Ask groups to perform their sketch and give feedback.

### **Make a change (40 mins)**

- Ask students to create a new political party or campaign group that they believe would make a positive change in the world and identify a current issue to campaign for, e.g. 'I am against this country having soldiers in Afganistan and Iraq', 'I believe we should provide more support for homeless people'. Ask them to give their new political party or group a name.
- Thinking back to the previous activities, get pupils to discuss what the values of their group are and discuss the virtues their campaigners would need.
- Discuss the ways in which they would make their group heard, via argument and loud campaigning or quiet discussion? Prompt them to think what their campaign and manifesto would be.
- Ask students to create an imaginary two-minute film explaining why they hold their beliefs. Get them to detail specific elements of their policies and why people should join them.
- Prompt pupils to view this as a serious opportunity to proclaim what changes they believe are needed in today's society and indeed what changes would have a positive impact on them, their friends and family life.
- Present group work

## **Endings**

### **What change would you make? (5 mins)**

Ask pupils to think of the wider impact on society if all individuals had solid values and were virtuous characters.

- In groups, get pupils to sit in a circle and respond to the following question one at a time:  
"What one change do you think you could make to have a direct positive impact on your local community?"
- Write the responses on a card and pin them up on a wall.

## Potential Development

- **Then and now:** Write the dialogue for a scene between two people and use the following lines as a starting point:
  - 'I remember in my days, the world was a nicer place'
  - 'The fast-changing world we live in today is a great place to be'
- **Changing values:** Smiles believed that the values and virtues of a previous generation could teach the next generation to live better. Have you encountered similar attitudes today? Discuss why people may have these beliefs, are they true or is it nostalgia?
- **Virtues:** Discuss the following:
  - Are your virtues something you are born with or can you learn new ones throughout your life?
  - Smiles recognised that a hero or role-model can have good and bad personal characteristics or virtues. However, he believed that if the achievements outweighed the bad characteristics they could still be seen as role models. Here are some examples of Smiles' way of thinking:
    - Smiles included David Livingstone as a role model, despite the fact Livingstone could be short and critical of people and, having set aside money for his children's future, Livingstone sacrificed their inheritance for his exploration in Africa.
    - Smiles did not include Robert Burns in his books. Even though Burns achieved great things, Smiles did not approve of his lifestyle.
  - What do you think? Discuss.
- **Make a change:** Identify some of the campaign groups/political issues from this activity. Create an imagined hustings or debate in the classroom and nominate people to take opposite views in it – recreate a debate!