

# VOICES OF HEROISM

**GRADES:** 7-12 **SUBJECT:** American History, Civics, Language Arts

- OBJECTIVES:** Students will:
- Describe qualities of heroism
  - List the types of heroic acts the Medal of Honor awards
  - Assess the emotional impact of the award on honorees
  - Compare Medal of Honor citations to determine common elements associated with valor
  - Write and present first-person narratives based on awardees' Medal of Honor citations

- STANDARDS:** **Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)**
- **Civics**  
27: Understands how certain character traits enhance citizens' ability to fulfill personal and civic responsibilities
  - **United States History**  
13: Understands the causes of the Civil War  
14: Understands the course and character of the Civil War and its effects on the American people  
19: Understands federal Indian policy and United States foreign policy after the Civil War  
21: Understands the changing role of the United States in world affairs through World War I  
25: Understands the causes and course of World War II, the character of the war at home and abroad, and its reshaping of the U.S. role in world affairs  
27: Understands how the Cold War and conflicts in Korean and Vietnam influenced domestic and international politics
  - **Historical Understanding**  
2: Understands the historical perspective

- MATERIALS:**
- The film American Valor
  - Television and VCR
  - Chart paper and markers and/or chalkboard and chalk
  - Computers with Internet access
  - Background information on the Medal of Honor (refer to the lesson "Awarding Valor" and recommended Web sites)
  - Picture or drawing of actual Medal of Honor
  - Online and print materials that provide information on Medal of Honor awardees and their specific citations
  - Online and print resources on major wars in which the United States was involved

**ESTIMATED TIME:** 8-9 classroom periods (students can conduct some research outside of the classroom)

- PROCEDURES:** **1)** Invite students to share stories about acts of bravery. (Encourage students to share stories reflecting personal acts of heroism. Students may also focus on the heroes of 9/11.) Instruct the class to jot down key aspects of the stories that highlight heroic qualities. Ask students to share their thoughts. Chart their ideas and facilitate student discussion as they group qualities under umbrella headings. For example, "duty to humanity" might head a category of qualities that reflect reasons for helping others.

## VOICES OF HEROISM

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- 2) Based on their stories and associations with heroism, have students come up with a composite profile of someone who is heroic.
- 3) Ask students if they are familiar with the Medal of Honor. Build on student knowledge with appropriate background on the medal, being sure to note that it is also given for non-combat acts of valor.
- 4) Tell students they will have the opportunity to listen to actual stories from Medal of Honor recipients as they watch the film *American Valor*. Create a Voices of Valor study guide. Part A should be the names of persons awarded the medal, his act of valor and reaction about receiving the award. Part B should be at least five things the recipients' acts of valor have in common. Instruct students to complete Part A as they watch the film, and Part B, after they have viewed it.
- 5) Invite students to first share their thoughts about the film, particularly what stood out for them and one important thing that they learned. Then, have them discuss their study guide notes and responses, especially how those interviewed responded to receiving the medal and what the common characteristics (as they relate to their heroic deeds) are among the interviewees.
- 6) Divide students into small group representing one of the following:
- *Civil War*
  - *Indian War Campaigns*
  - *1871 Korean Campaign*
  - *War with Spain*
  - *Philippine Insurrection*
  - *China Relief Expedition (Boxer Rebellion)*
  - *Action against Outlaws—Philippines 1911*
  - *Mexican Campaign (Vera Cruz)*
  - *Haiti 1915*
  - *Dominican Campaign*
  - *World War I*
  - *Haiti Campaign 1919-1920*
  - *Second Nicaraguan Campaign*
  - *World War II*
  - *Korean War*
  - *Vietnam*
  - *Somalia*

(Source: U.S. Army Center of Military History-Full-text Listings of Medal of Honor Citations <http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/moh1.htm>)

Instruct each group to research its war, synthesizing key information that includes: dates it occurred; nations involved; reasons for the war; where it was fought; allies and enemies; the end result of the war; casualties; who won the war; and key military and political figures, etc. (Students can brainstorm additional categories.) would provide Groups can organize these data into formats of their choice (graphic organizers, charts).

7) Once the groups have completed their research on the wars, instruct them to research the war's Medal of Honor awardees. Their lists will include the honorees' names and specific citations. Have each student per group select one honoree whose heroic deed is of particular interest to them. (Encourage students to be diverse in their choices, selecting, where possible, people of color and women.)

8) Tell the students to assume the role of their honoree and create a first-person narrative that reflects the act of bravery he or she undertook. They can model these narratives after the stories presented by the *American Valor* interviewees. Built into their monologues should be direct references to the wars in which honorees fought and the range of emotions they might have had when given the medal.

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## VOICES OF HEROISM

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9) Invite the students to present their narratives. They can then create a compilation of narratives, each accompanied by the relevant background data on the war in which their honorees fought.

**ASSESSMENT:** Create a rubric that evaluates student involvement in class discussion and group involvement, as well as the level of creativity and imagination applied towards their individual monologues.

**EXTENDED ACTIVITIES:** **Students can:**

- Assume the roles of witnesses who reported a specific act of valor during battle and recount it in a monologue or essay.
- Create first-person (awardees) or third-person (witnesses) of non-combat acts of valor that occurred during interim periods between wars. Refer to U.S. Army Center of Military History Full-text Listings of Medal of Honor Citations <http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/moh1.htm>
- Take on the role of journalists reporting on Medal of Honor awardees in their local communities

**WEB SITES:** **Home of the Heroes**

<http://www.homeofheroes.com/>

**Official Site of the Congressional Medal of Honor Society**

<http://www.cmohs.org/>

**Medal of Honor Citations**

<http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/moh1.htm>

**The Medal of Honor: The Bravest of the Brave**

<http://www.medalofhonor.com/>

**Medal of Honor Breakdown**

<http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/mohstats.htm>

**Medal of Honor Master Resource Guide**

<http://members.aol.com/veterans/moh.htm>

**United States Department of Defense: Information about the Medal of Honor**

<http://www.defenselink.mil/faq/pis/14.html>

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** From classroom instructor to an executive director, Michele Israel has been an educator for nearly 20 years. She has developed and managed innovative educational initiatives, taught in nontraditional settings in the U.S. and overseas, developed curricula and educational materials, and designed and facilitated professional development for classroom and community educators. Currently operating Educational Consulting Group, Israel is involved with diverse projects, including strategic planning and product development.