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Introduction

Social norms and moral values are part and parcel of every successfully functioning society and culture. Therefore it is essential to convey these values to all members of society, especially to the young ones. However, imparting ethical virtues to children and teenagers is not only the task of their parents but also of their teachers.

This thesis will focus on introducing one specific moral value, namely heroism, to young learners of English. The original notion of heroism as it is portrayed in movies and legends can actually rarely be found nowadays. In fact, heroism has evolved into a concept which combines different virtues such as self-sacrifice, the readiness to help others and courage. The challenge in teaching heroism is to explain a moral category to twelve-year-olds who are not yet able to grasp abstract concepts fully. Moreover, students at the beginners' level of English acquisition are likely to face language difficulties in expressing their ideas and thoughts. The resulting questions are whether it is possible to teach the abstract concept of heroism to young learners of English and how this might be done with success.

To begin, the reader will be introduced to different concepts of heroism. A general, a psychological, and a literary notion of being a hero or heroine will be given. Subsequently, this paper will discuss why it is important to impart values and why especially children need heroes and heroines. Heroism will be shown to have a special function for and an impact on children.

Secondly, the major challenges when teaching the concept of heroism to young learners of English will be depicted. Initially, the cognitive and moral development of twelve-year-olds will be analysed according to what extent they are able to understand and implement virtues and abstract concepts. Moreover, second language learning will be looked at with respect to language barriers at the beginners' level.

After describing several challenges that accompany teaching heroism to twelve-year-olds in a second language, I will prove that it is nevertheless possible to do so. The suggested method for overcoming the difficulties that accompany this endeavour is to teach the abstract concept of heroism through literature. A general discussion on why and how to teach literature, as well as on why to teach a moral concept such as heroism through literature will be introduced. Additionally, there will be a brief analysis of two folk tales, namely *Robin Hood* and 'King Arthur', which will be used in the practical part.

The final, but main component of my thesis will be to put the theory into practice. I will compose lesson plans for teaching heroism to young learners of English at the beginners' level and describe in detail the difficulties in planning and realising the lessons.

In short, the focus of my thesis is the question "How is it possible to teach the abstract moral concept of heroism to twelve-year-old learners of English at the beginners' level?".

2. What is Heroism?

2.1. Defining Heroism

Everyone can name at least one famous hero or heroine, no matter if it is a superhero like Spiderman or a historic figure such as Martin Luther King. There have always been outstanding people who have been considered heroic and whose names are universally known. Hero worship is something present in all cultures and an integral part of our culture and daily lives (Kegler, Simmons 409). Children, in particular, look up to heroes¹ of all sorts, including those they know from television programmes or their parents (Kegler, Simmons 409). But what makes these people become heroes? What characterises heroism?

In various dictionary entries² heroism is defined as bravery and courage. Moreover, heroes are associated with doing something good and, consequently, with being admired. These characteristics seem to be a good starting point in finding a definition for heroism, but they give a rather broad and imprecise characterisation, as artists like Siegfried and Roy are also brave, are admired and do something good when they donate money to charities. However, this does not make them heroic. Thus, there must be more to heroism than only courage, admiration and doing something good.

2.1.1. Dilenschneider's Notion of Heroism

Robert L. Dilenschneider has concerned himself with the notion of heroism. He is of the opinion that there are too few heroes nowadays. Although there are plenty of small heroic acts done by ordinary people every day, we lack great heroes who become icons to emulate (Dilenschneider xi). Sidney Hook, a twentieth century philosopher, referred to these heroic icons as 'event-making heroes' (Dilenschneider xii-xiii). Of course, not everyone has the potential to be an event-making hero, but we all inevitably find ourselves in situations where we have the chance to act heroically (Dilenschneider xiii). It is important to seize these opportunities and emulate our great heroes. This is the reason why event-

¹ In the following, I will use the generic term 'hero' for both sexes.

² e.g. *Cambridge Advanced Learner Dictionary*, 2010; *Collins Cobuild English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, 2001

making heroes are essential – we need them in order to learn how to become heroes ourselves (Dilenschneider xi). The ability to act heroically is inherent in us all (Dilenschneider xxi).

The criteria according to which we choose our heroes usually correspond with our values and experiences (Dilenschneider xviii). Despite the fact that every hero is unique and different, there must be some features that all heroic individuals have in common. Dilenschneider has interviewed fifteen people about their personal heroes and the characteristics of heroism. The responses were never the same but some traits were consistently mentioned. The features repeatedly alluded to can be regarded as defining the concept of heroism. One of them is that heroes are not only courageous in daring to succeed but also in failing and persisting (Dilenschneider xiii). They are prepared to risk their lives (Dilenschneider xii) and overcome their fears, at least for one moment where “they put something – a cause, a principle, a value, the welfare of another person, the good of the community – ahead of their own well-being” (Dilenschneider xxi). The reason why heroes act selflessly is because they want to achieve something superior and more fulfilling (Dilenschneider 24). Heroism can boost improvement ranging from the transformation of an individual to the changing of a whole society (Dilenschneider 87). It is their ideal which allows heroes to overcome their fears (Dilenschneider xvi). Heroic people have a “moral or ethical compass” (Dilenschneider 82) which means that they act heroically for the right reason (Dilenschneider 135).

According to the interviewees who Dilenschneider has talked to, it can be summed up that heroism is characterised by helping others, selflessness, overcoming fears, the courage to dare and fail, acting according to moral and ethical motives and pursuing the vision of a better future.

2.1.2. A Socio-Psychological Study on Heroism

Lindsay E. Rankin and Alice H. Eagly have done a study on the characteristics of heroism and have categorised the different types of heroes. They have surveyed 43 male and 63 female U.S. citizens out of which eight people were excluded from the sample for various reasons. The participants were between

18 and 55 years old. The median age was 25 (Rankin, Eagly 415). Their task was to complete a five-minute questionnaire on “people’s beliefs about heroism or heroic things” (Rankin, Eagly 415).

The survey was evaluated according to a coding system which was designed by Rankin and Eagly. The coders analysed the results with respect to twelve different categories for the characteristics of heroism and fourteen categories for the roles of public and personal heroes (Rankin, Eagly 415-416).

Table 1 illustrates the components mentioned by the participants in the questionnaire. The categories of ‘Benefits others’, ‘Acts selflessly’ and ‘Confronts risk’ were stated significantly often. More than 70 percent of the interviewees defined helping others as a characteristic of heroic behaviour. Selflessness was rated with 66.7 percent. Furthermore, more than half of the people asked named ‘Confronts risk’ as a key aspect of heroism. These three categories were also named as major components in Dilenschneider’s interviews about heroism. Acting morally, also a component in Dilenschneider’s research, was considered to be a characteristic of heroic behaviour by 22.2 percent. Although heroism is differently characterised by various people, it seems as if some main components can be established.

Table 1. Components of Participants’ Definitions of Heroism (source: Rankin & Eagly 417)

<i>Component</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Benefits others	38	70.4
Acts selflessly	36	66.7
Confronts risk	28	51.9
Supports beliefs	16	29.6
Acts supernormally	12	22.2
Acts morally	12	22.2
Dissents	11	20.4
Acts for self	7	13.0
Serves as role model	6	11.1
Accepts other	4	7.4
Cultural relativism	4	7.4
Acts normally	2	3.7

The different roles of public and personal heroes are indicated in *Table 2*. In total, 157 public heroes, as well as 42 personal heroes, were named by the interviewees. Interestingly, only one person did not name any public hero, while twenty-three participants reported no personal hero (Rankin, Eagly 417).

Commonly listed public heroes were activists and political leaders, such as Martin Luther King, Gandhi and Abraham Lincoln. Also included were rescuers, such as firemen from 9/11, soldiers, specifically in Iraq, and caretakers like Mother Teresa. Personal heroes were most frequently family guardians and people who have met challenges (Rankin, Eagly 417).

Table 2. Roles of Individuals and Groups Named as Public and Personal Heroes (source: Rankin & Eagly 417)

<i>Roles</i>	<i>Public</i>	<i>Personal</i>
Activists	32	1
Political leaders	22	0
Rescuers	20	3
Soldiers	19	3
Caretakers	10	0
Volunteers	7	2
Explorers	5	0
People who met challenges	5	8
Religious people	5	2
Athletes	3	0
Family guardians	3	10
Teachers	3	1
People who succeeded	1	2
Other	22	10

2.1.3. Heroism as a Moral Prototype

The concept of heroism has changed over the years and is therefore understood differently today. Heroic behaviour can no longer be defined as a value or virtue, but rather as moral behaviour. However, not everyone has the same notion of morality. The psychologists L.J. Walker and K.H. Hennig (2004) distinguish three moral prototypes, namely the caring, the just, and the brave exemplar. These prototypes are associated with different behaviours: the caring prototype with helping behaviour, the just prototype with moral courage, and the brave prototype with heroism (Osswald et al. 2010). The attributes ascribed to heroism are “[c]ourageous, heroic, [and] intrepid” (Osswald et al. 2010). Moreover, heroic behaviour is characterised by taking risk “on behalf of one or

more other people, despite the possibility of dying or suffering serious physical consequences” (Becker, Eagly 164 qtd. in Osswald et al. 2010). These characteristics differ from those of helping behaviour, i.e. being concerned and helpful, and moral courage, i.e. being fair and truthful (Osswald et al. 2010). Hence, it can be said that teaching heroism means teaching a moral prototype.

2.2. Evolutionary Approach to Heroism

When trying to define heroism, one has to ask what characterises a hero and why people act heroically at all. Human behaviour and its underlying mental processes have to be analysed. These are the specifics to which the study of psychology pertains.

A major component of a society or a culture is its members’ willingness to help each other (Zimbardo, Gerrig 797). As already mentioned in the introduction, the notion of heroism has changed over the centuries and is currently associated with what is called ‘prosocial behaviour’. It is contrary to antisocial behaviour and implies all “acts that are positively valued by society” (Hogg, Vaughan 538). As helpfulness, courage, and selflessness are assessed positively in our society, heroism definitely belongs into the category of prosocial behaviour. In the strict sense, acting heroically can be classified as ‘helping behaviour’, which is a subcategory of prosocial behaviour. It is defined as *intentionally* benefiting another human being. If you buy a homeless person something to eat, you perform a helping behaviour. However, if you simply drop some money, someone picks it up and buys himself something to drink, this is not helping behaviour. The aim to benefit others is the crucial factor (Hogg, Vaughan 538).

Staub stated that performing prosocial behaviour is sometimes associated with personal rewards, like feeling good (Hogg, Vaughan 539). However, this is excluded in a subcategory of helping behaviour, namely in altruism. This special form of helping behaviour implies the qualities which were listed as characteristics of heroism in 2.1. Altruism is the intention to help others regardless of your own safety and without expecting personal reward or gain

(Hogg, Vaughan 539). The modern concept of heroism is, therefore, closely linked with the notion of altruism.

Psychology also offers motives for why people act altruistically and heroically. One major perspective on motives is the biological approach. It claims that all human beings have an innate need to help others as much as to eat and drink (Hogg, Vaughan 540). The explanation of why helping others is a human desire derives from evolutionary social psychology, which is based on the assumption that genetic proliferation is the major aim in life. Consequently, altruism with respect to relatives is comprehensible, as the individual's own gene pool is protected. Studies (e.g. Burnstein et al., 1994) also support that there is greater readiness to help one's relatives and that the degree of relationship to the relative has a significant impact in readiness to offer help (Zimbardo, Gerrig 798). Acting altruistically or heroically towards friends and strangers is not caused by the drive to protect family genes, but can be explained by the desire for the survival of the human species in general (Hogg, Vaughan 540-541).

The second perspective on the reasons for altruistic behaviour is the social learning approach. This perspective suggests that altruistic behaviour is not innate, but instead the consequence of socialisation. The main focus of this theory is on acquiring prosocial behaviour in childhood. It claims that classical models of learning, such as conditioning or observational learning, play a role in acquiring altruistic behaviour. Setting a good example is as important as telling children to be helpful. Moreover, rewarding helping behaviour and deciding to be a helpful person have an impact on whether children act prosocially. Additionally, helping behaviour is a social norm in our society and people are expected to live according to their society's norms. If someone does not meet the standards, this is met with sanctions, whereas behaving according to the societal norms results in gaining social reward (Hogg, Vaughan 542-545). Another reason why people act altruistically is because they want others to support them as well when they need help. This is called the 'reciprocity principle'. Principalism, which means "upholding a moral principle" (Hogg, Vaughan 547), can be a motivation for prosocial behaviour and, thus for heroism (Hogg, Vaughan 545-547).

Another subject of interest is the connection between prosocial behaviour and personality traits. There is no study which has proved that helping others is directly linked to certain character traits (Hogg, Vaughan 562). However, people who feel good show more readiness to help others than people who feel bad (Hogg, Vaughan 560). Additionally, “positive relationships between helping behaviour have been noted with: the belief that our fate lies within our control; mature moral judgement; need for social approval or self-esteem; and the tendency to take responsibility for others’ welfare” ³ (Hogg, Vaughan 563).

In short, the 21st century concept of heroism correlates with the notion of prosocial behaviour, more precisely to altruism. Although there is no strong link between helping behaviour and personality traits, studies point to personal, social, and evolutionary factors that have an impact on acting prosocially.

2.3. Literary Approach to Heroism

Heroism and hero worship are popular themes in literature. In many novels, especially in the ones written in past centuries, the protagonist is portrayed as a heroic figure. The literary hero can serve different functions. For example, he can be analysed according to his personality traits or be taken as a role model. The focus may also be put on the hero’s development or on what he teaches us about life (Kegler, Simmons 409).

As I will use folk tales in the practical part to teach the concept of heroism, this subchapter will only deal with the folk hero. In folk literature, the hero is usually a historic person whose feats make him legendary. Mythical themes are usually embedded in the plot (Klapp, *The Folk Hero* 17). Apart from the general characteristics of all folk heroes, various types of legendary heroes can be distinguished. Examples of each type will be given in *Table 3*.

One type of folk hero is the hero who performs *feats*. This kind of hero has enormous power which is represented in his heroic deeds. His superhuman

³ see Eisenberg-Berg, 1979; Schwartz & Clausen, 1970; Staub, 1974

abilities make him appear miraculous. Although this hero accomplishes his feats on his own, he is usually surrounded by spectators who worship him for his deeds. He enjoys the status of being a hero and the fact that he is set apart from ordinary people. Examples for this kind of hero are Hercules and Samson (Klapp, *The Folk Hero* 19).

The contest is a situation which requires a special type of hero. In almost every heroic myth, there are contest situations in which the hero proves his power. He beats all his rivals in front of a crowd. The hero surpasses his opponents in bravery, skill and strength. As the winner of the contest, he is regarded as a champion (Klapp, *The Folk Hero* 19).

Biblical personages such as Christ or Abraham belong to the category of *the test*. In these situations, the hero does not necessarily compete with rivals. In fact, the hero has to complete an imposed task or ordeal. In order to succeed, the hero has to use his extraordinary power and skills. A successfully completed trial proves the hero's status (Klapp, *The Folk Hero* 19).

The quest is a more complex theme, in which the hero has to master various battles, contests and tasks so as to achieve the actual goal. His herculean efforts, his willpower, and his stamina indicate his heroic personality (Klapp, *The Folk Hero* 20).

Another type of folk hero is *the clever hero*. Robin Hood, Tyl Eulenspiegel or Reynard Fox fall into this category. This hero is characterised by the ability to outwit his rivals with a trick. Moreover, the clever hero, who is often a diminutive animal, is usually not as tall and not as strong as his opponents. Consequently, the victory of the clever hero symbolises the triumph of intelligence over muscular strength (Klapp, *The Folk Hero* 20). Interestingly, this type of hero "frequently verges upon being a rogue or villain" and is therefore also partly an immoral character (Klapp, *The Folk Hero* 20).

The unpromising hero or *Cinderella* is a person who is rather poor, pitiable and has bad luck. Before his sudden but resounding triumph, this reasonably

unpromising person is constantly mocked by others (Klapp 20). In contrast to the clever hero, the unpromising hero achieves his success by “luck, miraculous assistance, or modest toil” (Klapp, *The Folk Hero* 20).

The defender or *deliverer* is a rather altruistic type of hero. His main characteristic is that he rescues an individual or a group of people from danger. This danger can be of any sort, such as human enemies, evils or plagues. The defender always acts selflessly and is ready to be the knight in shining armour (Klapp, *The Folk Hero* 21).

The benefactor is a legendary, altruistic hero, too. This kind-hearted person is predominantly concerned with helping the poor (Klapp, *The Folk Hero* 21).

One more type of folk hero is *the martyr*. He sacrifices his own life for the welfare of his group. Gratitude and bereavement are usually expressed towards the dead hero (Klapp, *The Folk Hero* 22). The death of the martyr is typically the climax of the legend. It is often “predicted by omens” (Klapp, *The Folk Hero* 22). Although the hero’s death is certain, his rivals initially have great difficulties killing him. The martyr always dies nobly while fighting for a cause (Klapp, *The Folk Hero* 23).

There are many different types of folk heroes, but they all share the features that allow them to become a legend. A closer analysis of two folk heroes, namely Robin Hood and King Arthur, can be found in chapter six.

Table 3. Examples of European Folk Hero Roles (adaptation of Klapp, *The Folk Hero* 18)

Role	European				
	<i>Graeco-Roman</i>	<i>Northern</i>	<i>British</i>	<i>Hagiographic Legends</i>	<i>Miscellaneous</i>
<i>Feat</i>	Ajax Hercules	Grettir Kari Sigurd Vainamoinen	Beowulf Cuchulain	Christ John Margaret Simeon-Stylites	Cid
<i>Contest</i>	Ajax Hercules	Siegfried Skarphedinn Vainamoinen	Cuchulain Launcelot	Catherine Francis	Cid Roland
<i>Test</i>	Hercules Ulysses	Ilmarinen	Cuchulain Enid Galahad Launcelot	Anthony Valentine	Don Juan Griselda Master Thief
<i>Quest</i>	Jason	Vainamoinen	Galahad Geraint		
<i>Clever roles</i>	Ulysses	Lemminkainen	Robin Hood		Cid Reynard Don Juan Ulenspiegel
<i>Unpromising hero</i>	Ulysses		Beaumains Perceval Robin Hood		Cinderella Joan of Arc
<i>Defence and deliverance</i>					
<i>Monster-slayer</i>	Bellerophon Hercules Perseus	Grettir Vainamoinen	Arthur Beowulf Tristan	George	
<i>Human enemies</i>	Achilles Aeneas	Grettir	Cuchulain Launcelot Robin Hood Tristan	Catherine	Cid Joan of Arc
<i>Impersonal evil</i>		Sigurd Vainamoinen		Christ Clement	
<i>Avenger</i>	Achilles Orestes Ulysses	Kari Kriemhild Kullervo Thorsteinn	Conall		Charlemagne
<i>Return of the hero</i>	Theseus	Frederick Barbarossa Vainamoinen	Arthur Parnell	Christ George Nicholas	Charlemagne Marko
<i>Services and benefactions</i>					
<i>Miscellaneous</i>			Robin Hood Taliesin	Christ Nicholas	Cid
<i>Culture hero</i>	Aeneas Prometheus	Onuna Treefoot Vainamoinen		Anthony John	
<i>Death for cause</i>	Achilles Antigone Iphigenia Palinurus	Njal	Beowulf Cuchulain Hereward	Christ Polycarp Stephen	Joan of Arc Roland
<i>for treachery</i>	Achilles Hercules	Grettir Gunnar Siegfried	Arthur Cuchulain Hereward Robin Hood Tristan	Christ Polycarp Stephen	Joan of Arc Roland

Summary

Social norms and moral virtues are central components of every culture and society. One of these moral categories is heroism. The original concept of heroism as it is portrayed in films and myths has evolved into a notion that can be compared to prosocial behaviour, or more precisely, to altruism. Selflessness, overcoming fears, being courageous, acting morally and benefiting others are major characteristics of (modern) heroes. There are two different psychological perspectives on why people act prosocially. One of them derives from evolutionary social psychology while the other one is a social learning approach. In the latter concept, moral behaviour, including heroism, is not innate. It is a result of socialisation, and implies that everyone can be a hero. However, in order for this concept to be realised we need heroic role models to emulate. A good resource for teaching examples of heroism is literature, which provides various different types of literary heroes.

3. The Function of Heroes and Fairy Tales for Children

3.1. Teaching Heroism

Imparting social norms and ethical virtues to children is essential, as we expect them to live and act according to these rules and beliefs. Besides the child's parents, school plays an important role in conveying values. Many teachers are of the opinion that contributing to a better world is the major component of education (Mintz 185). Chaim Ginott was a psychologist, teacher, and principal (see Jewish Chambersburg) . His appeal to educators is a clear plea to impart moral behaviour. He says:

I am a survivor of a concentration camp. My eyes saw what no man should witness: Gas chambers built by learned engineers, children poisoned by educated physicians, infants killed by trained nurses, women and babies shot and buried by High School and College Graduates. So I am suspicious of education.

My request is: Help your students become human. Your effort must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, educated Eichmanns. Reading, writing and arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more human (viii qtd. in Mintz 190).

Situations like the one described by Ginott require morally educated and duteous persons. Moreover, such situations ask for a special moral category, namely heroism. Whenever it comes to genocide, sadism or bullying at school, we need people who are not afraid to interfere and act altruistically. In short, we need heroes. Everyone has the disposition to be a hero (see Dilenschneider xiii; Mintz 189). However, one cannot find many heroes in today's society (Dilenschneider xi). This implies a necessity to cultivate, particularly in students, the conscientiousness required to behave heroically whenever the circumstances require it (Mintz 192). The crucial factor is to "ensure that people in extraordinary circumstances demonstrate unwavering commitment to heroic action" (Mintz 190). In order to achieve these "conditions for heroism", prosocial role models such as teachers and parents who induce students to perform good deeds are needed. The existence of such role models may result in a greater readiness to act altruistically (Mintz 189). Furthermore, hero models can have a strong impact on heroic behaviour, as they prompt adolescents, in particular, to

reflect on how they might fit into society (Punke 305). It is, however, worth considering that the hero model of a certain culture is not necessarily the same in other cultures. The society's hero image is usually composed of desirable traits with respect to the culture. Traits which are not socially promoted are omitted in order to clarify the hero image, making it a useful model that people want to emulate (Punke 305). Aside from all these practices for establishing heroic behaviour, perhaps the most important step in teaching heroism is to "encourage communication, compromise and consensus while simultaneously educating heroes who are willing to act boldly to seek justice and protect humanity" (Mintz 190).

3.2. Children Need Heroes

In the previous subchapter the importance of imparting ethical virtues, especially of educating heroism, has been discussed. The need for people to have hero models in order to emulate them and be encouraged to act heroically themselves was mentioned. This leads to the question of why children especially need heroes and why they are so fascinated by them.

First of all, children, like everyone else, face problems and difficult situations. As they have not yet learned or practiced using many coping strategies, they need examples to follow. Quite frequently, the models chosen for coping strategies are various heroes that children know from fairy tales, legends or TV series. In the process of identifying with the heroes, children unconsciously compare their personal situation and their options for action to those of the hero. Of course, children tend to identify with those heroes who embody their wishes and who resemble them in behaviour and experiences. In addition, children show a tendency to focus only on those personality traits of the hero which they consider to be important. They typically choose heroes who represent the qualities that the children would like to possess themselves. Identifying with the hero enables the child to feel as strong and as powerful as the hero. It also helps children to feel as self-contained and as mature as adults whom they want to emulate, but on whom they are, at the same time, dependent. Interestingly, the child's dependence on adults is a common cause for the

child's experience of a difficult situation or problem (Bischoff, Anton 42-43). Children are small and often feel restricted in a world of grown-ups. These restrictions make them aware of their limited potentials and the fact that they are expected to obey adults as they depend on them. Even though being a child has advantages in terms of being protected and discharged of much responsibility, children want to grow up in order to increase their opportunities and fortitude (Blothner 1994 qtd. in Bischoff, Anton 56). Children often feel helpless due to their size and are usually weaker compared to adults. In addition to this sense of physical inferiority, they are not allowed to make many decisions for themselves. The feeling of powerlessness causes frustration but often these aggressive and hostile feelings are repressed by authority figures and the adult world. As a result, children use their imagination and the identification with a heroic figure to cope with their emotions (Bischoff, Anton 57).

The identification with the hero also helps children to cross their boundaries of comfort and imagine trying things that they would never dare to do in reality. In their imagination they can be whoever they want to be and they are able to take on the traits needed to solve their current and future problems (Bischoff, Anton 50). Nevertheless, not all types of heroes are powerful and superior to their opponent right from the beginning. In fairy tales and legends it is often the case that the protagonist has to develop over time in order to balance his shortcomings. He must rise to his challenges in order to succeed in the end. The essential quality of the hero is to face his fear (Bischoff, Anton 52). These types of heroes seem to represent a realistic way to master difficult situations.

There have always been heroic myths and legends. This alone proves their hold over people. Being fascinated by a hero is a crucial factor of childhood. Whether a story is thrilling, funny or fascinating for a child is closely linked to whether he⁴ is fascinated by the hero. In order to appeal to children, a hero has to be just and fight evil. In addition, he must be strong, courageous and survive every dangerous situation. Children's heroes typically use tricks or witchery to defeat

⁴ In the following, I will use generic 'he' to refer to both sexes concerning children.

their opponents. They are able to use futuristic weapons and technology and always rescue people's lives. In general, they are good-looking and can be easily identified as being a good, heroic person (Bischoff, Anton 43).

The protagonists of heroic legends are often portrayed as flat characters, which means that they either have exclusively good or only bad traits. Although they are frequently criticised by adults to be unrealistic or boring due to their one-sidedness, this simplification is done for a good reason. Children need the distinct classification into good and evil characters (Bischoff, Anton 53) because they are not able to assign contrary traits to one person up to a specific age. This protects them from having to cope with ambivalent feelings which they are not yet able to handle. Moreover, a happy ending is crucial for children in order to prevent uncertainty and irritation (Bischoff, Anton 54).

The topics that appeal to children are distinct and depend on the child's problems and situation. However, there are certain topics that seem to engage most children, for instance being strong, going out into the world, but being protected, being successful and admired, as well as being loved (Bischoff, Anton 50).

In summary, there are various reasons why children need and are fascinated by heroes ranging from the identification with the hero, which fulfils different functions, to the processing of suppressed emotions.

3.3. Bettelheim's Theory

The reasons children need heroes have already been given. This subchapter will argue that children need fairy tales and legends. This is relevant in explaining the choice to use folk tales for teaching the concept of heroism in the practical part of this paper. The subchapter will show that this kind of literature is the best way to impart moral categories, hence heroism.

Bruno Bettelheim, an American psychoanalyst and child psychologist of Austrian descent, developed a theory on the importance of fairy tales for children. In his book *The Uses of Enchantment. The Meaning and Importance*

of *Fairy Tales* (1976) he says that supporting the child in finding meaning in his life is the hardest task when raising a child (3). He states that children have to understand themselves before they are able to understand their fellow man, develop empathy, and act mutually and socially acceptable (3). Bettelheim concerned himself with ways to help children find meaning in their lives. The experience that is most crucial in this process is, first and foremost, the impact of the child's parents. The second relevant experience is cultural heritage. The best way to impart cultural information to children is through literature. However, not every literary genre is suitable for this purpose. In fact, so-called 'children's literature' may not serve the purpose of passing cultural heritage as it primarily aims to entertain or inform (Bettelheim 4). It often lacks "what [a child] ought to gain from the experience of literature: access to deeper meaning, and that which is meaningful to him at his stage of development" (Bettelheim 4). Bettelheim summarises the necessary characteristics of child-orientated literature as follows:

For a story truly to hold the child's attention, it must entertain him and arouse his curiosity. But to enrich his life, it must stimulate his imagination; help him to develop his intellect and to clarify his emotions; be attuned to his anxieties and aspirations; give full recognition to his difficulties, while at the same time suggesting solutions to the problems which perturb him. In short, it must at one and the same time relate to all aspects of his personality – and this without ever belittling but, on the contrary, giving full credence to the seriousness of the child's predicaments, while simultaneously promoting confidence in himself and his future. In all these and many other respects, of the entire 'children's literature' – with rare exceptions – nothing can be as enriching and satisfying to child and adult alike as the folk fairy tale. (5)

Although fairy tales were not created in modern times of mass society, they contain ubiquitous information about human's inner problems and their probable solutions. Particularly children have to learn how to cope with their feelings and need examples and strategies to follow. They need ethical concepts as well as moral education on which to hold on (Bettelheim 5). Folk tales offer children the opportunity to "carry important messages to the conscious, the preconscious, and the unconscious mind" and can therefore be regarded as psychoanalytical reading material (Bettelheim 6).

There are various 'crises' a child must master throughout his developmental process, ranging from "narcissistic disappointments" to gaining "a sense of moral obligation" (Bettelheim 6). As parents often try to repress their child's anxieties and aggressive fantasies, he has to use his imagination to handle these feelings. His imagination helps him to cope with such contents. If a child does not deal with these usually unconscious fantasies, they may experience severe (psychological) consequences. Adults tend to make children believe that all humans are good but in doing so they mislead their children. This is, of course, the wrong way to help them give meaning to their existence. Fairy tales, on the contrary, show that one has to face one's challenges in order to succeed in life. Moreover, fairy tales portray existential dilemmas in a simple and brief way. This is a necessary precondition as a child could not analyse a complex plot. The same is true for the heroes in fairy tales. They are not complex characters, but rather stereotypical. Furthermore, good and evil are always opposed to each other, which indicates the moral problem that has to be overcome (Bettelheim 7-9). Fairy tales comprise varied messages and one tale can have various meanings for one child in his different phases of life depending on his current needs (Bettelheim 12). But, in the end, children are nearly always taught the same (moral) lesson, namely that "crime does not pay" (Bettelheim 9).

Before the creation of fairy tales, people found their heroes in religion and legends (Bettelheim 24). It was common practice to pass these stories on orally. Consequently, they were never told in the same way. Details were changed according to the purpose that the story was to serve and to the particular problems of the era. Some stories were not only modified but merged with each other. Moreover, some fairy tales developed out of myths. At the beginning, folk fairy tales were also communicated orally and therefore altered (Bettelheim 26).

In contrast to religious stories and fables, folk fairy tales do not try to represent the external world. Obviously, they do employ everyday characteristics, but the unrealistic elements indicate that the fairy tale does not aim at teaching about external life. In fact, it intends to offer a way to deal with inner conflicts and unconscious fears (Bettelheim 25). Even rational philosophers like Aristotle

consider fairy tales and myths a central way of broadening one's mind and giving meaning to one's life. Psychologists often compare the function of fairy tales for children to that of dreams for adults. They help to deal with disguised wishes and inner conflicts, although not necessarily in the same way (Bettelheim 35-36).

As already said, not all literary genres are supportive of finding meaning in life. Although religious stories, fables and myths can be suitable methods, the best literary genre for fulfilling this purpose is the fairy tale. Myths and fairy tales share some essential features. They both use symbols which incorporate unconscious contents. Furthermore, they appeal to all three components of the psychic apparatus – ego, superego and id – which makes them very effective. However, myths and fairy tales also differ in various ways (Bettelheim 36-37). Even though they both employ “the same exemplary figures and situations”, as well as “miraculous events”, there is a significant difference in how they are conveyed (Bettelheim 37). While a myth communicates that the event is unique and could not have happened on other terms and conditions, the fairy tale expresses that its events could happen to anybody at any time. In addition, myths typically end tragically, whereas the fairy tale promises a happy ending. Moreover, the heroes in myths and fairy tales are presented differently. Mythical heroes are usually equipped with superhuman features and therefore primarily form the superego. Heroes in fairy tales are often given very common names or none at all in order to emphasise their universality (Bettelheim 40-41). Therefore, they “depict an ego integration which allows for appropriate satisfaction of id desires” (Bettelheim 41).

Bettelheim's general concern was to help children to find meaning in their lives. He considers fairy tales to play an important role in this process, as they are the best way to impart cultural heritage, which is, aside from the parents' impact, one of the main forces in finding meaning in one's existence. Fairy tales can stimulate a child's imagination and help him clarify his (ambivalent) feelings. They “give full recognition to his difficulties” (Bettelheim 5) and support him in finding solutions for his inner conflicts. The fairy tale's great advantage is its simple and brief plot, as well as its rather stereotypical characters. By appealing

to all three components of the psychic apparatus, it is an effective psychoanalytical method.

Although Bettelheim points out the importance of *fairy tales* for children, his theory can be held with respect to folk tales, hence the legends of Robin Hood and King Arthur, too as folk tales and fairy tales have a lot of things in common. They both contain omnipresent information about human's inner problems, show that one has to face one's challenges in order to succeed, portray conflicts in a simple and brief way, and teach the child that "crime does not pay" (Bettelheim 9). Moreover, fairy tales developed out of folk tales and legends which also proves their close connection. It can be said that Bettelheim's arguments for the importance of fairy tales for children are also true for folk tales. Consequently, folk tales are beneficial reading material which provide children with useful hero models.

Summary

Social norms and moral virtues are held dear in our culture and enable us to live together in a satisfying way. One of the moral categories we need to cultivate in people is heroism. A lot of cruel acts such as sadism or bullying could be prevented by shaping the conscientiousness to behave heroically when the circumstances demand it. This can be achieved by parents and teachers who feel responsible for teaching moral virtues like heroism. Children need hero models to emulate and to identify with, as the identification process can help them to deal with their fears and suppressed emotions. These hero models are best portrayed in fairy tales.

4. Difficulties in Teaching an Abstract Concept to Young Learners of English

4.1. Moral Development

So far, it has already been discussed that heroism must be taught and enabled in children in order to make them act prosocially and heroically. But, what is morality and how does moral behaviour develop?

According to Kohlberg moral development is, overwhelmingly, the product of the child's interaction with others, rather than the evolution of biological structures (*Psychologie der Lebensspanne* 50). In general, basic moral behaviour is to act according to cultural needs instead of personal ones in many situations. Morality is a system of beliefs, values and the ability to adjudicate on good and bad human behaviour (Zimbardo, Gerrig 493). Societies are dependent on children becoming adults who accept moral values and act according to them (Killen, Hart 1999 in Zimbardo, Gerrig 493).

Ethics and pedagogy are closely linked as morality and education are related to each other – human beings are not inherently moral but have to be morally educated. At first, human behaviour is egocentric because the need to satisfy one's own advantage is of vital importance. However, we live in a society which requires awareness of our fellow man's needs and their well-being as equally important to our own. If this was not the case, we would end up in a situation described by Thomas Hobbes in *Leviathan*, namely in a case of dog eat dog, in which only the strongest and the most cunning would prevail. In general, children are not good or bad by nature, but develop according to their (moral) education (Pieper 143). This is why parents and teachers should take their role as (moral) educators very seriously.

The two major theories on moral development are by Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg. Although Kohlberg's perspectives are more influential and widespread, they are based on and inspired by Piaget's early work on children's moral judgement (Berk 535).

4.1.1. Piaget's Theory on Moral Development

Piaget is one of the first psychologists whose theory on moral development has influenced contemporary works. He postulated two main stages of moral thinking for children.

The first stage is *heteronomous moral thinking* of young children between five and ten years. 'Heteronomous' means 'to be guided by an authority'. At this stage children believe that rules are made by authorities, in the strict sense God, parents and teachers. These rules are seen as unchallengeable, permanent and having to be strictly followed. In addition, children at this moral stage always deliver a judgement according to its result and not the agent's intention. For instance, someone who intentionally smashes ten cups is not considered by a child at the heteronomous stage of moral thinking to be as bad as someone who accidentally drops fifteen cups (Berk 535).

The second moral stage is the one of *autonomous morality*. It is reached approximately at the age of ten and is characterised by the understanding that rules are not fixed but are instead principles established in the social process and able to be modified. Children and adolescents learn to treat their fellow man in the same way as they want to be treated. This principle is referred to as 'sense of reciprocity' and is based on mutual respect. Actions are not only judged by its results but also by the agent's intention. The achievement of autonomous morality is accompanied by the cognitive progress being able to put oneself in someone else's position (Berk 535-536).

Piaget claimed that teachers should encourage children's moral behaviour by providing "students with opportunities for personal discovery through problem solving" tasks (Nucci 2008). This would help them to learn how to "work out common rules based on fairness" (Nucci 2008).

4.1.2. Kohlberg's Theory on Moral Development

Kohlberg has taken Piaget's perspective on moral development as a basis and expanded it. He developed six stages which he divided into three hierarchically arranged levels of moral development. Kohlberg considered the struggling with

moral problems, the consciousness of weaknesses in one's own way of thinking, and being able to put oneself in someone else's position as the core components of moral reasoning. These are the exact features which Piaget named as the milestones in cognitive development (Berk 536-537). Moral character traits are usually considered to "develop with age, experience, and increased moral socialization" (Kohlberg, *Child Psychology* 268). Common-sense thinking and psychoanalytic hypothesis suggest that one's moral character is formed and fixed in childhood. This contradicts Kohlberg's assumption that moral behaviour is developmental and consists of different stages (Kohlberg, *Child Psychology* 269).

Table 4. Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development (adaptation of Ghiraldo)

Level 1 Pre-conventional	Stage 1 (obedience and punishment driven) What is right and wrong is determined by what is punishable. Moral action is essentially the avoidance of punishment.
	Stage 2 (self-interest driven) What is right and wrong is determined by what brings rewards and what people want. Other people's wants and needs come into the picture, but only in a reciprocal sense.
Level 2 Conventional	Stage 3 (interpersonal accord and conformity driven) Being moral is being a good person in your own eyes and those of others. What the majority thinks is right is right by definition.
	Stage 4 (authority and social order obedience driven) Being good means doing one's duty – showing respect for authority and maintaining the social order. Laws are unquestionably accepted and obeyed.
Level 3 Post-conventional	Stage 5 (social contract driven) Individuals are viewed as holding different opinions and values. Laws are regarded as social contracts rather than rigid dictums. Although laws should be respected, individual rights can sometimes supersede these laws if they become too destructive or restrictive.
	Stage 6 (universal ethical principles driven) Moral action is determined by our inner conscience, and may or may not be in agreement with public opinion or society's laws. Moral reasoning is based on abstract reasoning using universal ethical principles. Ethical actions are not instrumental or a means to something else; they are an end in themselves.

Kohlberg's stage model is completed by four principles (Zimbardo, Gerrig 494):

- 1) a person can only be in *one* stage at a certain time
- 2) everyone has to pass the stages in this fixed order
- 3) each stage is more extensive and more complex than the previous one
- 4) the same stages exist in every culture

Almost all children reach level 3 by the age of thirteen. However, not everyone attains level 4. In fact, there are not many adults who get to level 5 and 6 (Zimbardo, Gerrig 494).

The target group which the lesson plans in the practical part are aimed at are students between eleven and twelve years. Hence, most should be at level 3 of Kohlberg's stage model. At this level children try to maintain their friends' and parents' sympathy and appreciation by being reliable, loyal, helpful and respectful. The sense of reciprocity and the golden rule, 'An eye for an eye' dominate. However, we do not want children to be kept at this level, but to reach level 4 where they feel that everyone has to follow the norms of society and uphold them, as these rules are crucial for maintaining the social order (Berk 538). It could be said that the transition from level 3 to level 4 indicates the transition from childhood into adolescence. Although children will usually manage this transition in moral development sooner or later, parents and teachers can support and ease it with moral education. As a result, the age of the target group is not randomly but deliberately chosen.

The final aim is always to reach the highest possible moral level. Studies have shown that adolescents on high levels tend to act prosocially more often by being helpful, sharing with others and protecting victims from injustice (Carol et al. 1996; Comunian, Gielan 2000 in Berk 544). Furthermore, these adolescents show fewer tendencies to act antisocially, such as by being aggressive or cheating on someone (Berk 544).

Carol Gilligan criticises Kohlberg's theory for lacking differences between male and female moral behaviour. She claims that women are more focused on caring for others whereas men's attention is on justice. However, further

investigations suggest that most adults are geared to both (Zimbardo, Gerrig 497).

4.2. Cognitive Development

One major difficulty in teaching heroism to young learners of English is that eleven- to twelve-year-olds may not have reached the level of abstract thinking yet. As heroism is an abstract concept one has to find a way to successfully impart this moral category. In order to gain an understanding of the students' cognitive maturity, this subchapter will describe the process of cognitive development.

Cognitive developmental psychology deals with the formation and the transformation of mental processes and products. Jean Piaget is a pioneer in this field. He coined the term 'schema' for describing the mental structures with which we interpret our world. With the help of exercises we can help our elementary schemata develop into more complex ones. Piaget concluded that two processes are responsible for cognitive development, namely assimilation and accommodation. In the former, information from the environment is modified to adapt it to existing knowledge. In the latter, the existing schemata are reorganised so that new information can be grasped more comprehensively. Using both assimilation and accommodation enables children to distance themselves from the concrete world and develop the ability to think abstractly (Zimbardo, Gerrig 452-453). Piaget has defined four stages of cognitive development.

Table 5. Piaget's Four Stages of Cognitive Development (source: Santrock 1998)

Stage	Description	Age Range
<i>Sensorimotor</i>	An infant progresses from reflexive, instinctual action at birth to the beginning of symbolic thought. The infant constructs an understanding of the world by coordinating sensory experiences with physical action.	0 to 2 years
<i>Preoperational</i>	The child begins to represent the world with words and images; these words and images reflect increased symbolic thinking and go beyond the connection of sensory information and physical action.	2 to 7 years
<i>Concrete operational</i>	The child can now reason logically about concrete events and classify objects into different sets.	7 to 11 years
<i>Formal operational</i>	The adolescent reasons in more abstract and logical ways. Thought is more idealistic.	11 to 15 years

Piaget states that all children have to pass these stages in the given order, although some will need more time to progress than others (Zimbardo, Gerrig 453). It can be seen that the moral development presented in 4.1. correlates with the cognitive development. There is again a transformation from the third to the fourth stage with regard to the target group for the practical part. As the table indicates children start to reason in more abstract ways at the age of eleven. The lesson plans on heroism are intended for eleven- to twelve-year-olds. Consequently, some students will already be able to grasp abstract concepts. However, not all students develop equally fast and therefore some students will have difficulties in understanding an abstract concept. They will still be at the concrete operational stage, where they are not able to replace physical actions with mental ones. For example, if a child sees that Anthony is taller than Sarah and later experiences that Sarah is taller than Tania, he will draw the conclusion that Anthony is the tallest. However, these children cannot draw such conclusions if this situation would only be verbally described (Zimbardo, Gerrig 455). Moreover, it has to be considered that even those who have greater abilities to think abstractly have just recently attained the formal operational stage and have not yet fully developed cognitively. They have only *started* to understand that their perspective on reality is only one of several

possible perspectives and they have *started* to think about truth, one's existence and justice (Zimbardo, Gerrig 456). Hence, the teacher is still challenged to find a way to impart the abstract concept of heroism successfully.

What exactly does the formal operational stage include? Basically, there are two major characteristics of formal operational thinking. One of them is hypothetical-deductive reasoning. This means that adolescents at this stage begin to predict potential outcomes of problems by considering all the possible influencing factors in their hypotheses. Then these hypotheses are systematically tested in order to find support for them. Thus, adolescents at the formal operational stage start with opportunities and then go on to reality. The second main characteristic of formal operational thinking is propositional logic which describes the adolescent's ability to grasp logical verbal propositions independently from referring to real circumstances. Piaget considered language as an abstract representative system for concepts to be necessary for formal operational thinking (Berk 502-504).

Lew Wygotsky tried to explain the social and cultural impact on cognitive development. He used the process of internalisation to describe the importance of children imbibing knowledge from their social environment on their cognitive development (Zimbardo, Gerrig 459). The children's way of thinking develops in order to fulfil culturally appreciated functions (Serpell, Boykin 1994; Serpell 2000 in Zimbardo, Gerrig 459).

4.3. Language Barriers

Besides the fact that eleven- to twelve-year-olds have not yet or only just arrived at the formal operational stage concerning cognitive development and therefore have problems in understanding abstract concepts such as heroism, they are (only) at the beginners' level of English language acquisition. They do not speak English as a mother tongue and are not growing up in an English speaking environment. Consequently, they are not secure in grammar, vocabulary, syntax, morphology and phonology. They are in their second year of learning English and have only been introduced to the basics of the

language. Therefore, the teacher has to support them in many ways in order to enable them to talk about heroism.

According to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)* the target students should be on level A1, which includes the following skills:

Student has very basic proficiency which is limited to familiar words and phrases. Spoken interaction demands support from the other person and responses are simple, often single words or short phrases. Student can write short simple texts when provided with a model or other support (English Language Support Programme).

As it can be seen students on level A1 can manage simple tasks and are familiar to common, everyday language. However, this is only the start of a long learning process. The question that arises is which common second language learning barriers exist and which factors influence second language learning.

4.3.1. Second Language Learning

First of all, a foreign language is typically learned as a teenager or adult in three to four hours a week of school time. Furthermore, this is usually only one of many occupations in which the learner is involved. In contrast, babies who acquire their first language have little else to do and are constantly exposed to target language input. Second language (L2) learners, on the other hand, already have a good command of a language which they need and use for daily communication. These conditions (can) cause difficulties in foreign language learning. Moreover, people who learn a second language usually do not reach the proficiency of someone who acquires the language in the target language environment (Yule 190-191).

The best age for learning a foreign language is between ten and sixteen because “the ‘flexibility’ of the language acquisition faculty has not been completely lost, and the maturation of cognitive skills allows a more effective ‘working out’ of the regular features of the L2 encountered” (Yule 192). However, there are, compared to the challenges faced by young children

acquiring a language, other sorts of acquisition barriers during the optimum age for L2 learning. Even if a teenager has the cognitive abilities for learning a foreign language, these capabilities may be overridden by a teenager's unwillingness or embarrassment in using the language. As this barrier is caused by an affect, it is called 'the affective filter'. Other such emotional reactions can be evoked by unappealing textbooks or classrooms (Yule 192). "Basically, if you're stressed, uncomfortable, self-conscious or unmotivated, you are unlikely to learn anything" (Yule 192). It seems that motivation is a crucial factor for successful L2 learning. Foreign language learning and success are interdependent. On the one hand, motivation causes success. On the other hand, it is proven that success increases motivation. As a consequence, teachers should not be eager for corrections and errors, but encourage their students and praise them when they have done a good job (Yule 195). In fact, errors should be seen as "an inevitable and positive part" of language learning (Hedge 15). They are "reflections of a learner's stage of interlanguage development" and a teacher should have a keen sense of how and which errors must be corrected (Hedge 15).

Another parameter in L2 learning is comprehensible input. The input hypothesis was developed by Stephen Krashen in the 1980's. Krashen said that the most important factor for second language acquisition is input that is comprehensible, which means that the second language learners must have understood the input they received (Mitchell, Myles 159- 160). If the learners' competence is i they are likely to understand the utterance $i + 1$. In contrast, acquisition does not take place if the input is $i + 2/3/\dots$ or $i - 1/2/\dots$ because it is too complex or already acquired (Mitchell, Myles 47). To make input for learners comprehensible, particularly at the beginner's level, the teacher should use simpler sentence structures and vocabulary (Yule 196). The teacher should speak more slowly, give examples, and repeat and paraphrase utterances (Hedge 12). Negotiation of meaning is also a useful tool in interaction and helps to make input comprehensible.

Besides comprehensible input, comprehensible output produced by the L2 learner is important for the development of L2 abilities. Unfortunately, there are

often too few opportunities to produce (enough) output due to limited time and the rather large number of students (Yule 196). Nevertheless, it is essential to create situations which give students the chance to talk. It has even been noted that forcing students to produce output is beneficial as learners become exposed to their lack of language proficiency which they have to overcome by negotiation of meaning or rephrasing ambiguous utterances (Hedge 13). In doing so, they learn how to cope with language difficulties and after succeeding several times, not only their motivation will increase but also their language ability and their coping strategies. It can be said that interaction helps learners to “produce more accurate and appropriate language, which itself provides input for other students” (Hedge 13). This can be achieved by task-based learning as well as in group- and pairwork (Yule 197; Hedge 13).

Apart from the general aspects of L2 learning, one should keep in mind that there are individual differences in language learning, including levels of aptitude, cognitive style, learning strategies, affective factors and motivation for learning (see Hedge 16-24).

In conclusion, second language teaching is a complex undertaking on various levels. Teachers have to design useful activities, develop supporting material and manage learning procedures (Hedge 9). They act as controllers, assessors, correctors, organisers, instructors, prompters, learning facilitators, input providers, motivators and evaluators – to mention a few of their many roles (Hedge 26-29).

Summary

Human beings are not inherently moral but have to be morally educated. There are various theories on moral development of which two influential ones, namely Piaget's and Kohlberg's perspective, have been presented. As moral categories, in particular heroism, are abstract concepts, cognitive development has been studied, too. According to Piaget's four-stage-model eleven- to twelve-year-olds, who are the targets in the practical part, are at a crucial point in cognitive development. This is the point of transition from the concrete operational stage to the formal operational stage, in which one begins to

understand abstract concepts. However, the target students have not yet or have very recently attained formal operational thinking. Therefore, dealing with heroism will still be challenging for them. In addition, students at the beginners' level of English language learning must overcome certain language barriers. It is the teacher's job to support the students in overcoming these difficulties and enabling students to talk about heroism.

5. Teaching a Moral Concept through Literature

5.1. The Value of Literature for Children

In 3.3. the psychoanalytical function of a special literary genre, namely folk fairy tales, has already been discussed. This subchapter will deal with the function of literature for children in general.

Reading is not purely a means of survival like drinking or breathing (Gold 100 qtd. in Elkin 153). However, in a broader sense reading is fundamental to “an enriched, aware life in which we exercise some measure of control over our well-being, our creativity and our connection to everything around us” (Gold 100 qtd. in Elkin 153). Almost everyone has experienced getting lost in a book and the fascination of reading, but this is not always the case, as this feeling only sets in when reading ‘the right book’. In order to enable children to experience the pleasure and fascination of reading, “the right books at the right time” are needed (Hurlimann xviii qtd. in Elkin 155). In this way, they will find in literature a way to balance their sometimes disordered life. Certainly, children need help finding appropriate literature and therefore it is their parents’ and teachers’ task to be sensitive to children’s needs and to provide them with the right books (Hurlimann xviii qtd. in Elkin 155). To do this parents and teachers must themselves be engaged in children’s literature. Moreover, they must love reading themselves “to pass that passion on to children” (Elkin 152).

To meet the requirements of a knowledgeable society, generated by the twenty-first century, it is necessary to be literate. In order to acquire this ability, reading proficiency must begin evolving in childhood. The value of reading is high (Elkin 158). Firstly, literature stimulates imagination and supports the development of “a critical and thinking mind” (Elkin 158). Secondly, reading helps people to become independent, to clarify and deal with emotions, and to understand life and human nature better. Moreover, it fosters empathy and enables the reader to reflect on past, present and future events (Elkin 158). Reading also “offers an understanding of the complexities of relationships between individuals and cultures, and of different moral codes and values” (Elkin 158).

For children, reading can fulfil a lot of useful functions. One of them is expanding language and audio skills. Books and storytelling help the child to increase his vocabulary and sentence patterns, as well as to improve the child's grammar, spelling and writing skills (Elkin 158). Furthermore, picture books stimulate visual proficiency by "encourag[ing] perception and discrimination" (Elkin 158). In addition, books are able to enrich imagination, create a sense of humour and awaken curiosity. Reading also supports cultural sympathy and provides children with positive role models. Moreover, it widens children's horizons by presenting ways to deal with problems or fears and depicting new experiences (Elkin 158-159). "Stories evoke response, recognition, identification, stimulation; they educate emotions (fear, greed, love, good, and evil are the basic ingredients of stories); they educate the imagination by stretching it to other dimensions" (Elkin 159). Another value of reading is the transfer of information. Children are introduced to a wider knowledge bank and are inspired to reflect on their world perspectives. In addition, children's social development is encouraged by literature as they often share their reading experiences with friends or their parents. However, children also learn about aspects of social behaviour, such as mutual understanding and relationships, from books. Last but not least, reading is a source for learning how to manage the difficulties of growing up. Children are shown that other people have had similar problems and how they have solved them (Elkin 159).

The importance of stories is indicated by the fact that "all cultures have some form of narrative. Stories are part of our conversation, our recollections, our plans, our hopes, our fears" and of our cultural heritage (Meek 103 qtd. in Elkin 160). The most influential period in reading occurs in the early years of a child's development (Butler 8 qtd. in Elkin 161). Hence, parents and teachers play a major role in a child's literary appreciation and education.

5.2. The Value of Teaching Literature

Before explaining the reasons why literature should be included in English language teaching (ELT), it has to be said that teaching literature only makes sense if the text is carefully chosen according to the learners' interests, language level and needs. These are crucial factors for making a reading

experience enjoyable which is likely to result in motivating students to read outside the classroom as well. Of course, engaging students in literature should definitely be one main aim of teaching literature.

There are several topics that affect all human beings regardless of their race, gender, class or ethnicity and which are therefore suitable for teaching literature. Growing up, doubting one's ability to succeed, the wish to belong to a group, family life and problems, friendship, love, death and the loss of a beloved person are all universal topics. Literature does not only address these, but also offers practical and intellectual solutions to the presented issues (Chambers, Gregory 12-13). One can conclude that "the most comprehensive and ubiquitous of all human strategies for both finding and creating meaning is the telling and consuming of stories" (Chambers, Gregory 13).

5.2.1. Why Teach Literature

Education and literature can actually have the same goals – to help students to develop intellectually, personally, socially, and emotionally. Development and enrichment are the main focus of concern. If teachers evoke in their students the feeling that learning intensifies and enriches their lives, it does not need to be further justified (Chambers, Gregory 14-15). One way of enlarging one's sense of life is through literature as "[l]iterary travelling consistently and persistently achieves [...] identification and [emotional] transport across generations, races, ethnicities, genders, classes and cultures" (Chambers, Gregory 17). In fact, reading literature is a learning process and therefore encourages self-development (Chambers, Gregory 18).

According to Collie and Slater there are four reasons why literature should be taught in the language classroom. First of all, literature offers an enormous variety of written texts that deal with basic human issues. It is also authentic material as most literary works are not composed for the purpose of language teaching (Collie, Slater 3). However, this is not entirely true for the British folk legends that will be dealt with in the practical part. Although the content of the legends is authentic, the plots and the language are simplified as they should be suitable for the target audience, English language learners at the beginners'

level. Hence, it can be said that the material used for the lesson plans is partly authentic.

The second reason for teaching literature is that it enriches cultural awareness. Although going abroad is highly recommended and efficient for developing second language skills, not every language student has the possibility to visit the country where the learned language is spoken. Therefore, another way to get to know the foreign culture and way of living must be found. Besides newspapers, radio, and television programmes, one possibility to learn about the target culture is through literature (Collie, Slater 4). Even though literary 'worlds' are often invented ones, they offer "a full and vivid context in which characters from many social backgrounds can be depicted. A reader can discover thoughts, feelings, customs, possessions; what they buy, believe in, fear, [and] enjoy" (Collie, Slater 4). Moreover, although the world described is not the real one, it is often based on a particular slice of culture or society.

Language enrichment is another reason for teaching literature in the language classroom. It is generally recognised that (foreign language) reading increases the reader's range of vocabulary and his active language proficiency. Nevertheless, it is sometimes claimed that literature provides L2 learners with 'poetic' language rather than everyday vocabulary and patterns. However, literature does increase awareness of a variety of useful word formation processes, sentence functions, possible structures and connectors, at least to some extent (Collie, Slater 4-5).

The fourth argument for the importance of teaching literature mentioned by Collie and Slater is that it requires personal involvement. This has already been addressed several times. Readers are likely to lose themselves in books when they feel connected to a character. Being engaged in a text is highly motivational and efficient in all respects (Collie, Slater 5-6).

Engelbert Thaler mentions three more reasons for teaching literature. Firstly, reading literature brings in a change from everyday classroom routine, which Thaler summarises as 'motivational value'. Secondly, literature has the

advantage of 'interpretational openness'. He argues that it is very unlikely that two students interpret a text in exactly the same way. As a consequence, there is an opinion gap which causes interaction and requires individual responses. Thirdly, Thaler asserts that literature is associated with social prestige (24).

In short, teaching literature in the foreign language classroom offers many advantages when utilising it deliberately and can be made use of at all levels.

5.2.2. How to Teach Literature

In teaching literature not only the text per se is important but also how it is taught. It is essential to maintain the students' interest and engagement (Collie, Slater 8). This can be achieved by using various student-centred activities, such as "role play, improvisation, creative writing, discussions, questionnaires, [and] visuals" (Collie, Slater 8). A variety of such activities is especially important when students are not literary specialists and when they are not yet keen on reading in the target language. Teachers should utilise the personal and emotional dimension of the text as much as possible as it is a crucial part of literature and often missing in common language learning material. Pair and group work are highly recommendable when dealing with literary texts because these social formats raise students' confidence with regard to the target language and personalise the contact with it. Moreover, group work can reduce difficulties in interpreting and understanding a text as the students can help each other. Literature can also aid language learners by giving them the opportunity to put oneself in someone else's position and to form one's own opinion. One main principle of teaching literature is to use the target language in the student-centred activities (Collie, Slater 8-10).

The main difficulty with this approach is, of course, that some learners may not yet possess the richness and subtlety of vocabulary and structure in which to couch their response in the target language. [Collie and Carter] feel that there are a number of ways in which students can be helped to express this response either non-verbally or by making a limited linguistic repertoire go a long way (Collie, Slater 10).

Finally, the overall intention of creative activities is to show the students the advantage of student-centred and especially communicative activities for improving their language skills through suitable literary texts (Collie, Slater 10).

5.2. Morality and Literature

The issue of finding meaning in life and moral virtues are part and parcel of nearly every literary work. This might be the case because, in contrast to philosophical analysis which is concerned with pedantic distinctions, literature offers a good way to develop an understanding of the complexities of moral categories and human problems (Anger 75).

Singh and Lu claim that nothing has as much of an ubiquitous appeal among children as a fascinating story with heroic protagonists. Literature which depicts the lives and personality traits of inspiring characters, no matter if they are real or fictional, delight children and give them role models. With their outstanding personalities and skills, heroes are able to go beyond their potentials and rise to personal challenges. In doing so they impress children and encourage the children to emulate them (Singh, Lu n.p.). An analysis of “award winning children’s books from around the world” shows that heroic character traits, strictly speaking “personal courage, caring for others, perseverance, resourcefulness, a belief in oneself, and optimism”, are universally valued (Singh, Lin, Lu 2000 in Singh, Lu n.p.).

As already explained, heroism is an abstract concept and therefore not easy to grasp for twelve-year-olds. However, as indicated in 4.1.2., this is a crucial age in moral development as the transition from the social contact driven moral stage to the universal ethical principles driven one is taking place. Thus moral education is needed. Although twelve-year-olds will have difficulties comprehending a moral, abstract concept, it is possible to give them an understanding of moral behaviour. One requirement is to choose and design suitable and intertwining activities which gradually establish comprehension. The other measure to teach twelve-year-olds a moral category is to use literature. As most literary texts deal with moral behaviour it will be easy to find an adequate one. The advantage of using literature to teach morality is that it

exemplarily depicts a complex, abstract concept. The students can analyse and refer to a concrete example presented in literature without the necessity of having experience and own examples at hand in a certain moral category. In addition, talking about morality gets less abstract when referring to representative examples. Moreover, passages can be reread and looked at in detail which supports the analysis of the hero's behaviour and his personality.

In short, literature offers the opportunity to increase the understanding of abstract, moral categories, such as heroism, by using concrete examples to depict them.

Summary

The value of literature is tremendous, especially for children. Reading enriches our lives, stimulates imagination, aids to develop a critical mind and is a way of balance. Furthermore, it helps readers to deal with emotions and to gain an understanding of human nature, different cultures and moral codes. Hence, it is obvious that teaching literature is of importance. The main advantages of using literature in (language) classes are cultural and language enrichment, personal involvement, and the exposure of authentic material. Moreover, it has a motivational value, interpretational openness and holds social prestige. Additionally, literature is a useful tool for teaching moral categories as it offers many concrete examples which help to give an understanding of abstract concepts.

6. Analysis of Heroism in *Robin Hood* and ‘King Arthur’

The folk tales of Robin Hood and King Arthur are legendary and disseminated widely even outside of Britain. There are many books and essays on the two myths which proves their popularity and indicates that there is room for analysis and interpretation. However, I will only give a brief analysis of why Robin Hood and King Arthur are heroes as this topic cannot be studied with twelve-year-old students at the beginners’ level in depth.

There are many different versions of Robin Hood and King Arthur so it is, first of all, necessary to name the ones to which this analysis will refer. As this chapter serves as preparation for the practical part and as the students will use simplified versions suitable for their language level for their analysis, these versions will also be taken for the present analysis. The selected story of Robin Hood is the *Penguin Readers*-version for elementary level, which is designed for English learners in their second year. It starts with Robin Hood’s birth, retells his most famous adventures involving the Sheriff of Nottingham, Prince John, King Richard, and Lady Marian, and ends with his death. The legend of King Arthur is taken out of the course book *Red Line* and is intended for the third level. It is six pages long and retells the myth of Arthur pulling the sword from the stone. Although the level is actually for English learners in their third year, this should not cause any problems if the teacher gives his or her students enough support. Moreover, the topic should be taught towards the end of the school year as the students are far better equipped in language and cognitive skills by that time. I would not recommend reading the selected texts and dealing with the topic of heroism at the beginning of the students’ second year in English because this would raise great difficulties.

6.1. Robin Hood⁵

Robin Hood has many character traits that especially children would like to possess. In the introduction he is described as being “clever, strong and brave” (Austin v). It instantly becomes apparent that Robin Hood is a hero.

⁵ The analyses are mainly based on the background information gained from Klapp’s *The Folk Hero* and Klapp’s *The Clever Hero*.

Klapp has defined various kinds of literary folk heroes, which have already been presented in 2.3. Robin Hood suits several of these heroic roles which shows that he is a hero in many respects.

Firstly, he is a benefactor who takes money from the rich and gives it to the poor (see Austin v). Robin is a kind-hearted person who as a land owner looks after his poor villagers. In contrast to most other landlords, especially to the Sheriff of Nottingham, he does not exploit the people living on his land but rather tries to help them. He even supports the sheriff's villagers, from whom the sheriff has taken everything, by sending them food and clothes. Of course, Robin Hood does not have the money to help every poor family, so he decides to stop rich men in the forest and take their possessions (see Austin 3). Even when Robin himself loses his properties and is a poor man who has to live in the forest hiding from Prince John and the Sheriff of Nottingham, he robs rich people to help the poor villagers (see Austin 6). He invites poor people who pass through the wood for dinner and lets them repay him through storytelling (see Austin 32). Robin Hood acts selflessly and is predominantly concerned with helping the poor. Of course, the question arises whether robbing the rich to aid the poor is morally acceptable or whether stealing is always morally corrupt. This issue will be included in the lesson plans as a point of discussion.

Robin Hood is not only a hero in the sense of being a benefactor, but he is also a defender and deliverer. This is again strongly linked to his caring for the poor. Robin wants to save the poor villagers from a particular danger, namely the greedy landlords, especially the Sheriff of Nottingham. The abbot of St Mary's Abbey and Prince John also treat the villagers badly by taking their money and blackmailing them (see Austin 15). Robin not only supports the poor people with food and money, but he also tries to defend them. When Robin hears that the sheriff wants to visit Farnsfield, one of Robin's former lots, he sends Will Scarlet, one of Robin's men, to protect the villagers (see Austin 8). Hence, Robin Hood is the benefactor and the defender of the poor.

Robin Hood also takes part in a contest – a situation which requires a special kind of hero. In such situations the hero must surpass his opponents in bravery, skill and strength (Klapp, *The Folk Hero* 19). Robin and some of his men participate in a contest to elect the best bowman. However, the contest is only a trap by the sheriff to find and catch Robin Hood. Everyone knows that Robin is the best bowman far and wide and that he will not miss such a contest. Of course, Robin is aware of the sheriff's plan, but he decides to participate nevertheless. He accepts the challenge as he loves adventures. Robin is convinced that he can win the contest and earn the gold arrow without being caught by the sheriff. Sure enough, Robin's plan works - he surpasses the others in skill, wins the contest, and can escape from the Sheriff of Nottingham (see Austin 28). In this scene, Robin also proves once again that he is a true friend and is ready to risk his life for others. When Robin and his men are spotted by the sheriff and want to escape, Little John gets hurt and cannot walk. Little John tells the others to leave and not wait for him, but Robin Hood puts him on his back and runs towards the forest with him (see Austin 29). Robin's behaviour is definitely altruistic and heroic.

Aside from all the different heroic characteristics ascribed to Robin Hood so far, he is most of all a clever hero. Robin is characterised by his cleverness and he shows that intelligence can triumph over muscular strength. For instance, when Robin meets Little John in the forest the first time, they start to fight. Robin soon realises that Little John is stronger and so he quickly thinks up a plan. When Little John kicks his opponent, Robin falls into the water and temporarily disappears (see Austin 10). After a while he comes up from the water and laughs, "Perhaps you won the fight [...] but you did not catch me!" (Austin 10).

Clever heroes are often rogues or villains (see Klapp, *The Folk Hero* 20; Klapp *The Clever Hero* 21). This is also true for Robin Hood. Although he predominantly robs rich people for a selfless cause and to balance inequality, stealing is basically illegal and immoral. Therefore, it could be said that he is partly an immoral character and an outlaw.

In general, clever heroes do not simply become popular because they succeed in their actions, but because they trick their opponents in a humorous way (Klapp, *The Clever Hero* 21). For example, Robin stops two churchmen and insists on serving them dinner. When he asks them to donate a bit of money in return, the churchmen pretend to be poor. Because Robin knows that the two men have gold with them, he forces them to undress. Under their clothes, the churchmen had hidden a lot of money (see Austin 26). When Robin sees the bags of gold, he laughs, “We will take this gold [...] It is not yours because you didn’t have any money. Perhaps somebody put the gold there!” (Austin 26). In this way, Robin not only tricks the churchmen, but also makes fun of them.

Clever heroes are typically smaller and weaker than their opponents and this is why they need to be intelligent. However, this is also why they remain so popular, especially among children – they prove that the weak can triumph over the strong. Moreover, clever heroes only use physical violence when necessary, and prefer to escape (Klapp, *The Clever Hero* 28-29). Although this seems to be cowardly at first, it is actually “the quality of the clever triumph” (Klapp, *The Clever Hero* 29). Robin Hood also prefers to run away instead of fighting, particularly when he knows that he is the weaker one. For instance, at the archery contest Robin Hood and a few of his men have to fight against the sheriff’s and fifty of Prince John’s men. It is obvious that Robin and his fellow men do not stand a chance and so they flee (see Austin 29).

Klapp describes the function of clever heroes in a way which perfectly depicts Robin Hood. He says,

[H]e is essentially a champion of the little man, a righter of wrongs, a protagonist of democracy, an agent of comic justice. But, more specifically, he is a *leveler*, who reduces those who have arrogated too much power or privilege to themselves. Pride meets its Waterloo at the hands of the clever hero, for no one respects or follows a fool (Klapp, *The Clever Hero* 30).

There is even a literary concept about outlaw heroes named after Robin Hood, namely the ‘Robin Hood Principle’. It summarises the similarities and characteristics found in folk tales about outlaw heroes worldwide. The kind of

hero whose actions follow this principle usually takes money from the rich to give it to the poor while following his duty to make the world a better place. In contrast to common criminals, outlaw heroes are witty and compassionate towards weak and oppressed people. They strive for equality and justice (Seal 68-73). “Outlaw heroes arise from within an ethnic, national, or other cultural group, serving the group as a symbol of resistance to perceived oppression” (Seal 75).

Remembering the contemporary notion of heroic behaviour given in chapter two, it can be said that Robin Hood fits the image of a hero. He acts selflessly, is courageous, overcomes his fears, and benefits others. Only the characteristic of acting morally can be put into doubt and leaves room for discussion.

6.2. King Arthur⁶

Similarly to Robin Hood, King Arthur’s character matches the characteristics of various types of heroes. However, he is a completely different kind of hero than Robin Hood. The story of King Arthur and the sword in the stone includes mythical themes, such as the magician Merlin, which is typical of folk tales and heroic legends (see Klapp, *The Folk Hero* 17).

First of all, King Arthur is an unpromising hero. As a child he is bossed around by Kay, his reputed older brother. Kay tells Arthur to brush his horse, clean the stable and prepare his bath. In fact, Arthur is treated like a servant by his brother and also by his father, Sir Ector, who is very domineering towards him (see Lambert 113). Kay even makes fun of Arthur when Sir Ector forbids him to hear the messenger’s news by saying, “The news is only for knights. Go and play, little boy” (Lambert 113). It seems that young Arthur is rather poor, pitiable, and has bad luck. Moreover, he is constantly mocked by others. However, his luck suddenly changes into resounding triumph. On the way to a tournament, Kay forgets his sword in a hostel and Arthur is to go back and get it for him. As he can’t find the innkeeper, he decides to take the sword that he sees in a stone. When Sir Ector spots the sword, he is shocked and commands Arthur to

⁶ The analyses are mainly based on the background information gained from Klapp’s *The Folk Hero*

take him to the place where he has found it. Arthur puts the sword back in the stone. In the meantime, a lot of other knights have arrived and one after the other unavailingly tries to pull the sword out of the stone. When Arthur is told to try it again, he pulls the sword out of the stone with ease. All the others kneel down in front of Arthur as the sword indicates that he is the king of Britain (see Lambert 113-115). So Arthur achieves his sudden success by “luck, miraculous assistance, [and] modest toil” (Klapp, *The Folk Hero* 20).

However, King Arthur is not only a lucky, unpromising hero. When he becomes king, he stops the chaos and wars in Britain and restores peace (see Lambert 115). Furthermore, although not mentioned in the *Red Line* version, the historic King Arthur was a feared warrior and fought many battles (Little n.p.). Hence, it can be said that he is a defender and deliverer.

Like in *Robin Hood*, there is a contest like situation in the King Arthur legend, which, according to Klapp, requires a special kind of hero who surpasses his opponents in skill and strength (*The Folk Hero* 19). When the knights, Sir Ector, Kay and Arthur are at the stone with the sword, they all try to pull the weapon out of the stone. It seems to be a contest of strength, although it is actually not, as only the preordained king can take the sword. However, Arthur proves his power in front of the crowd and is ‘the winner’ whom everyone immediately accepts as the new king (see Lambert 115).

Concerning the characteristics of a (modern) hero, King Arthur does not fit the definition as well as Robin Hood. First of all, King Arthur does not really have to overcome his fears. Perhaps, it could be said that he is a bit afraid of his father and Kay, but he never really talks back or asserts himself. He is only courageous to some extent. As a warrior he has to be brave, though this part of his life is not described in the *Red Line* version. In the legend about the sword in the stone he does not really have to prove his bravery. However, he acts rather selflessly by not betraying the messenger’s servant who tells Arthur about the tournament. Moreover, he always tries to please everyone instead of thinking only of himself. What King Arthur shares with modern heroes is acting morally and benefiting others. He does not mean to harm anyone and always wants to

aid others, such as when he offers to look for Kay's sword, even after Kay treats Arthur so badly all the time.

To conclude, King Arthur is not a typical modern hero, but he shows that also weak, unpromising, downtrodden people can succeed.

Summary

Robin Hood and King Arthur are heroes in many respects, although in different ways. Whereas Robin Hood is a clever hero who fits the modern notion of heroism, King Arthur is a rather unpromising hero, who achieves success through luck and miraculous assistance. However, they are both popular and admired and can serve as role models.

7. Teaching Heroism to Young Learners of English

Teaching the abstract concept of heroism to twelve-year-olds at the beginners' level of English language learning is not an easy task. It is important to illustrate the topic by using concrete examples. For the lesson plans in 7.2. the literary texts *Robin Hood* and 'King Arthur' have been chosen to illustrate the topic of heroism. Of course, there are many other literary examples of heroism, for instance *Lady Godiva*, *Guy Fawkes* and many more. However, it has to be considered that all these texts have to be read in class before starting to work on the actual topic of heroism and this takes a lot of time. Therefore, only two folk tales, which will be used for the lesson plans, have been chosen. The reason for using *Robin Hood* and 'King Arthur' is that they are two different types of heroes. The former represents the clever hero, whereas the latter is categorised as an unpromising hero. Presenting different kinds of heroes offers greater access to the topic of heroism. Nevertheless, one need not use only *Robin Hood* or 'King Arthur' to illustrate the concept of heroic behaviour.

Before the actual lessons on heroism began, the students had been working on the two folk tales for five lessons. In these lessons they had to read the texts and write summaries about them. They created a mind-map about the characters and had to describe the protagonists in detail. This was to prepare them for the topic of heroism. In addition, the students were supposed to answer questions about the content, guess what might happen next and write a reflection on how they had liked the book *Robin Hood* and the short story 'King Arthur'. It is essential to have read and discussed the two texts before starting the lessons on heroism as they will need them for illustration.

The topic of heroism is definitely compatible with the curriculum as it encourages the child's engagement with and reflection on human beings and society. Moreover, the students deal with the culture of the target language as *Robin Hood* and 'King Arthur' are British folk tales. Of course, the didactic principles for foreign language teaching are also taken into consideration with respect to the activities (see bmukk).

The four lesson plans on heroism are intended for a second form of lower secondary school for fifty-minute lessons. As the lesson plans only give an overview, it is necessary to read the explanations to get an understanding of the planned activities. The four lessons are organised to be subsequent and to form a unit. All the tasks have been created by me and are collected in the so-called 'Activity Book', which can be found in the appendix. There is also a key to the exercises added in the appendix. As the topic of heroism is rather complex and, in addition, an abstract concept, the lessons are not intended for inefficient classes. Furthermore, working on heroism with twelve-year-old students of English requires a lot of guidance and commitment on the part of the teacher.

As heroism is an abstract concept, the aim of the lessons is not concrete either. There are no right or wrong outcomes. The purpose of the lessons on heroism is to motivate the students to reflect on

- character traits of heroes
- the notion of heroism
- whom students consider to be heroes
- whether heroes are flawless
- the difference between fictional heroes and everyday heroes
- the importance of heroic behaviour
- the motives for acting heroically and
- what a world without heroes would be like.

7.1. Composing the Lessons

Before starting to plan the lessons, the ambitious aims had to be set. At first, the general purpose of the project needed to be defined and, as a second step, the goals for the individual lessons had to be ascertained. This is certainly of importance as the lessons should not be randomly composed but must strive towards a goal. It was not easy to decide how many aspects of the topic of heroism should be included and on what to put the focus. Therefore, it was essential to determine to what extent twelve-year-olds are able to analyse an abstract, moral category. The goals which have been set for the four lessons

have already been mentioned in the introductory part in chapter 7. The aims for the individual lessons can be found on the top of each lesson plan in 7.2.

It was also difficult to incorporate the background knowledge gained in the theoretical part and to take all these aspects into consideration when planning the lessons. Moreover, the information presented in chapter two, which is about defining and analysing aspects of heroism, needed to be selected according to what would be useful and appropriate for twelve-year-olds and should be incorporated in the lessons. In addition, it had to be determined how much the two folk tales should be included in the lessons. As they were not supposed to be in the centre of attention, but were only to serve as a tool for exemplification, they would be employed only when necessary and where they would fulfil their purpose.

In general, the lessons are intended to encourage the students to reflect on heroism. However, it was challenging to find a way to document this process of reflection. The best solution seemed to be a questionnaire in which the students were asked about their notion of heroism at the beginning and at the end of the project.

Of course, the order of the activities had to be well deliberated. It was essential to analyse the preconditions for other exercises and to work on them first. For instance, the students needed to be taught new vocabulary to be able to converse about different kinds of heroes and heroic qualities in order to answer the questionnaire.

Another challenge in composing the lessons on heroism was how to start the first lesson. As the topic should arouse interest in the students, an entertaining introductory activity was needed. However, it had to be considered that the exercise would not require vocabulary with which the children had not yet been provided. The game 'Hangman' seemed to be appropriate as the students usually like playing it and through doing so they become familiarised with one of the key words. Consequently, the password of the game, namely 'heroism', as well as its connected terms 'hero', 'heroine' and 'heroic' had to be explained. It

was rather difficult to give explanations which would meet the learners' level of English without anticipating any information or influencing their notion of heroism. After reading many definitions of the terms and considering the information on heroism elaborated in the theoretical part, I managed to define the new words.

Preparing the students with the necessary vocabulary was generally difficult. As simply giving the German equivalents to the English terms is not a good didactic method for teaching new words or phrases, a more useful technique had to be chosen. Pictures seemed to be the best solution for describing the different kinds of heroes because nouns can easily be illustrated. However, explaining the phrases for heroic qualities was challenging as pictures are not as ideal to depict verbs and adjectives. A matching exercise in which the new phrases have to be assigned to a suitable definition seemed to be satisfying. Compiling comprehensible definitions for learners of English at the beginners' level, however, was again demanding. It can generally be said that composing adequate, student-centred activities for a complex topic was a challenge.

Moral and ethical categories offer a lot of room for discussion. In fact, they *need* to be debated. However, twelve-year-olds are not skilled in discussing and analysing (moral) topics yet. Hence, it is essential to integrate intermediate steps. At first, the students should have some time to talk about the directed issue(s) in groups. The teacher is supposed to check whether the groups come up with some ideas and arguments or whether they are in need of being given hints. When the teacher feels that all the groups have fulfilled the task, the issue(s) can be discussed in class.

The purpose and intention of the various exercises in the activity book are defined in the explanations for the individual lessons. The difficulties in composing the tasks will be briefly mentioned. The problems in composing *exercise 2* and *3*, which provide the students with new vocabulary, have already been stated. Another demanding activity with respect to its composition was *exercise 10*. The idea was to have two texts, one about an everyday hero and one about a legendary hero, which could be compared and contrasted.

However, it was not easy to find suitable texts as they had to be simple in language and not too long. In addition, the text about the everyday hero was supposed to be non-fictional because this would fascinate the children even more. As all texts found about everyday heroes were rather long and definitely not appropriate for the beginners' level, I finally adapted a text.

The questionnaire in *exercise 5* was hard to develop, too. It was important that the students' answers would reflect their notion of heroism. Furthermore, a comparison between the answers given at the beginning and at the end of the project should be possible in order to see whether a student's notion of heroism has changed because of the intensive work on the topic.

In general, designing the exercises was not as demanding as developing them. All the activities had to be well chosen, be connected with each other and form a unit. Therefore, composing every single task was challenging.

7.2. Lesson Plans

7.2.1. First Lesson Plan

Proficiency level: second form of grammar school

Aim: reflect on character traits of heroes, the notion of heroism and whom students consider to be heroes

Time	Content / Activity	Material	Interaction
5'	Hangman → students name letters of the alphabet to guess the secret word ('heroism') which is at the same time the new topic for the next four lessons	blackboard chalk	C
5'	teacher explains the term 'heroism' and connected terms such as 'hero', 'heroine' and 'behave heroically' to the students; teacher hands out the activity books; students do <i>exercise 1</i> → they think of three heroes and write down the names, then the teachers asks them for their results	activity book	C S
5'	<i>exercise 2</i> → students match the words with the pictures which portray different people who might be considered to be heroes (e.g. fire fighter, sportsman, soldier); <i>exercise 3</i> → students match the definitions with the words or phrases which describe possible characteristics of heroes (e.g. selflessness, confront risk, overcoming fears); the results are compared in class	activity book	P C
5'	<i>exercise 4</i> → students accredit the characteristics in <i>exercise 3</i> to the people in <i>exercise 2</i> ; the results are	activity book	S C

	compared in class		
10'	exercise 5 → students do the questionnaire on heroes and heroic behaviour; then they compare and discuss their results with a partner and finally the results are compared in class	activity book	S P C
19'	exercise 6 → students get together in groups of 3 or 4 and discuss if Robin Hood and King Arthur are heroes and why (not); they should also think of situations which prove their statements; students present their findings which are discussed in plenum	activity book	G (3-4)
1'	teacher closes the lesson		T

Abbreviations:

S students working on their own

T teacher-talk

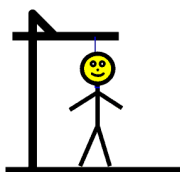
C whole class working together with the teacher

P pair work

G group work

Explanations

As an introduction the class plays 'Hangman'. The teacher draws seven lines on the blackboard – each line stands for one letter of the secret word 'heroism'. Then the students can name a letter of the alphabet. If the letter is part of the secret word, the teacher writes it down on the appropriate line. However, if the letter is not included in the secret word, the teacher starts drawing the first part of 'the Hangman'. The game ends when the students have guessed all the letters, hence the secret word, or when 'the Hangman' is completed. The finished 'Hangman' looks like this:



This is a playful and creative way to start a topic and students usually like playing 'Hangman'.

After the students have guessed the secret word, the teacher asks them if they know what it means. Then the teacher explains the term 'heroism' as well as the connected terms 'hero', 'heroine' and 'be heroic'. These words are also written down and explained in the activity book for the students that the teacher now hands out. After getting to know the term 'hero', the students do *exercise 1* for which they should name three heroes. It is important to give them a bit of time to think about the task and to write their heroes down as there may not be spontaneous reactions. The results are then presented in class. It will be interesting to see whether the students mainly name superheroes or any other kind of hero as this already indicates what characteristics they associate with heroes and heroism.

In *exercise 2* the students are confronted with different examples of heroes, such as fire fighters, soldiers or action heroes. Of course, this is only a limited range as the exercise is actually intended to prepare the students with necessary vocabulary when talking about heroism and heroes. There are pictures of people and the students should match them with the words given. As the students will not know all of the words for the people in the pictures, they work in pairs so that it is more likely that they get the correct answers. Finally, the results are compared and, if necessary, corrected.

Exercise 3 is similar to *exercise 2*. The students are familiarised with words and phrases that may be seen as characteristics of heroes. It is again a matching exercise where the pairs match the phrases with the suitable explanation. The results are again compared and corrected. The students will need the words from *exercise 2* and *3* for the questionnaire in *exercise 5*.

After being provided with some necessary words and phrases, the students should use them actively in order to internalise them. This is done in *exercise 4* where they ascribe the people from *exercise 2* the qualities from *exercise 3*. Of course, one person can be attributed several qualities but also none. Then the

results are, as usual, compared, reasoned and discussed. Comparing results is essential as the students feel that doing the exercise is well-founded, that their effort and work are taken seriously, and that interest is shown in their efforts.

In *exercise 5* students answer a questionnaire about whom they consider to be a hero and which qualities a hero possesses in their opinion. There are lots of words from *exercise 2* and *3*. In the first part the students choose who of the people mentioned, for instance doctors, parents or politicians, is a hero for them. In the second part there is a list of qualities and the students tick the ones that, in their opinion, describe heroic behaviour. The third part is, in fact, a cross check to part two. Different situations are depicted and each one stands for one quality of part two. The students tick the situations in which heroic behaviour is described. The cross check is useful in that it shows how well the answers are deliberated and how sure the students are about them. The same questionnaire will be done again in the fourth and last lesson on the topic of heroism. This indicates how well the students have reflected on the concept of heroism and if they have changed their notion of it. Nevertheless, if a student gets the same answers again, this does not mean that he or she has not engaged in the topic.

The last exercise in the first lesson is a group work about *Robin Hood* and 'King Arthur'. It is advisable that the teacher divides the students into groups so that the weak students and the more gifted ones are split among the groups. *Exercise 6* should definitely be done in group work as twelve-year-olds are not used to analysing books and may have great difficulties when working on their own. The students are supposed to discuss whether or not Robin Hood and King Arthur are heroes and to give reasons for their choices. In addition, they should think of situations depicted in the stories which prove their statements. Finally, the findings are presented, compared to each other and discussed. Of course, a discussion with twelve-year-olds is not like one between adults and requires support on the part of the teacher. However, discussions are important to indicate different points of view and to encourage a process in thinking and reflection.

7.2.2. Second Lesson Plan

Proficiency level: second form of grammar school

Aim: reflect on character traits of heroes, whether they are flawless and the difference between fictional heroes and everyday heroes

Time	Content / Activity	Material	Interaction
10'	<i>exercise 7 + 8</i> → students do the two crossword puzzles about the new vocabulary learned in the last lesson	activity book	S
10'	<i>exercise 9</i> → students get together in pairs and discuss whether Robin Hood and King Arthur always succeed or if they also sometimes fail; the results are discussed in class	activity book	P C
5'	students think of different kinds of heroes and discuss whether they are flawless → teacher chairs the discussion by asking questions → Which other heroes can you think of? Remember the different kinds of heroes that we have talked about last lesson. Are they without mistakes? Do they never fail?		C
19'	<i>exercise 10</i> → students read the two texts, answer the questions and compare whether there is a difference between heroes in fairy tales/ legends and everyday heroes	activity book	C
5'	<i>exercise 11</i> → students get together with a partner and tell each other if they have ever performed a heroic act or if they know someone who has acted heroically	activity book	P
1'	teacher closes the lesson		T

Explanations

In the second lesson on heroism the students start with *exercise 7* and *8* which are both crossword puzzles, but differently designed. In these exercises the students repeat the new words and phrases that they were provided with in the previous lesson. This is important as the students will need these words when talking about the topic of heroism.

In *exercise 9* the students get together in pairs and discuss whether the two heroes they have read about, namely Robin Hood and King Arthur, always succeed or whether - like all human beings - they at some times fail. This task should definitely be done in pair or even group work because it will be quite hard for twelve-year-olds to interpret a story and find relevant passages to prove their statements. The expected outcome is that the students find one or two situations which show that Robin Hood and King Arthur are also sometimes scared or make a mistake. However, it will not be an easy task for the students as heroes in legends and fairy tales are generally presented in a rather one-sided way, which means they are portrayed almost only as good and heroic (see Bischoff, Anton 53). Of course, the teacher should support the students when they work in pairs or small groups and can give them hints when they have problems. The students' findings are then presented and discussed with the whole class.

After the students have analysed two concrete examples with respect to being flawless, the teacher asks them about other (types of) heroes and whether they are perfect or if they sometimes fail. If the students cannot think of examples on their own, the teacher should refer to the different kinds of heroes that they have talked about in *exercise 2* and name other well-known heroes. The aim of the exercise is to show the students that no one is flawless and that even heroes sometimes fail.

In *exercise 10* the students read two texts about heroes. The first one is a real story about a man who saved a woman's life. It is a simplified version of the article "Heroes: Subway Rescue" by Mitch Lipka published online in *Reader's Digest.com*. The second text is about King Arthur being a successful, brave

knight whose existence is unsure, and is taken from a coursebook, namely *The New You & Me* 3. Both texts are rather difficult for a second form and contain new vocabulary which needs to be explained by the teacher. Therefore, it is advised that the class reads the texts together. After reading the text the students should compare the two heroes. The teacher discusses with the students which hero they consider to be more heroic and in which ways the two men differ. Moreover, the students should reflect on the difference between everyday heroes and heroes in fairy tales and legends. Another interesting issue is whether the students want to emulate fictional heroes or heroic people who really exist. In this exercise legendary and real-life heroes are compared and contrasted. It will be highly interesting to find out which of these two types twelve-year-olds prefer and take as a role-model.

During the last five minutes the students are expected to do a speaking exercise. Although five minutes seem rather short, it will be enough time as students at the beginners' level are not yet fluent speakers and are challenged by verbal production. They are supposed to tell each other whether they have ever performed a heroic act or if they know someone who has acted heroically. In this exercise the students are given the opportunity to tell about their own experiences. The best stories should be shared with the whole class. If the teacher has ever acted heroically or knows someone who did, he or she should also tell the students about it.

7.2.3. Third Lesson Plan

Proficiency level: second form of grammar school

Aim: reflect on the importance of heroic behaviour, the motives for acting heroically and what a world without heroes would be like

Time	Content / Activity	Material	Interaction
5'	teacher reminds the students of the heroic acts that they have talked about in the last lesson and asks them what would have happened if there had not been a heroic person in these situations (e.g. "What would have happened if Ismael had not been at the subway station? Would someone else have rescued Lisa? What do you think?)"		C
15'	<i>exercise 12</i> → students get together in pairs or groups of 3 and talk about the reasons why Robin Hood, King Arthur and Ismael Feneque (The man from the text "Subway Rescue" from the last lesson) have acted heroically; then they should think of more motives for behaving heroically; the results are presented and compared in class	activity book	P/G C
15'	<i>exercise 13</i> → students read a text ("The Kitty Genovese Murder – A Sad Night in New York City") about what happens if people do not act heroically in situations which need heroes and answer the questions about how people should behave in such situations; then the answers are discussed in class	activity book	C P/G C

14'	<i>exercise 14</i> → the students write a text for which they imagine being a witness when Kitty Genovese gets attacked; they are supposed to write a different ending in which they act heroically and save Kitty's life; some students can read out their endings	activity book	S
1'	teacher closes the lesson		T

Explanations:

The lesson begins by referring back to the previous lesson when the students talked about someone who has already acted heroically. The teacher asks the students what would have happened if those people had not behaved heroically. In addition, the teacher can use the text "Subway Rescue" from the prior lesson as an example and talk about Ismael's heroic act. This serves as a transition to the issue of the importance of heroic behaviour and the consequences of not acting heroically when the circumstances require it.

In *exercise 12* the students focus on the motives for behaving heroically. In order to reduce the level of abstraction, the students should think of the reasons for becoming a hero by analysing concrete examples, namely *Robin Hood*, 'King Arthur' and the story about Ismael Feneque. As already mentioned, text and literary analyses are not easy for twelve-year-olds. Therefore, it is necessary for them to work in pairs or small groups. After interpreting the motives for the three heroes in the text examples, the students are supposed to think of other reasons for acting heroically. Furthermore, they should reflect on whether everyday heroes like Ismael Feneque and fictional heroes are important and why. It will be interesting to find out if there is a difference in importance concerning real-life heroes and fictional ones for twelve-year-olds.

The text in *exercise 13* is tragic and straightforward. It is about a young woman, Kitty Genovese, who was attacked by a maniac and got killed. Although thirty-eight people heard her scream, they did not act. The text is a shorter and simplified version of the report in Hogg and Vaughan's *Social Psychology* (539).

Although I was uncertain about presenting twelve-year-olds a text about a murder at first, as this tragic event really happened and might scare the students, I decided to use it because children also get confronted with similar tragedies and catastrophes on television. Moreover, it clearly illustrates the consequences of people not acting heroically when the circumstances require it. To work with the text, the class should read it together as the teacher will have to explain some new vocabulary and the students might have questions concerning the report. They may want to know if the event really happened and why nobody could help the poor woman. This is also what the students should discuss in pairs or groups of three after reading the text. They are expected to reflect on why nobody helped Kitty Genovese and what the students would have done if they had been eye witnesses. Furthermore, they should think of how adults could act in such situations and what children or teenagers could do. Answering these questions already serves as preparation for *exercise 14*. But first, the answers to the questions will be compared and discussed in class.

In the last exercise, the students get the opportunity to cope with the text they have just read. They are supposed to imagine they are a witness when Kitty Genovese gets attacked and write a different ending in which they rescue Kitty by acting heroically. The students' texts do not have to be realistic. For example, the students can imagine having superpowers and saving Kitty with their laser sword. The aim of this activity is simply to cope with the emotions that have been provoked by the text and to let the story end positively as this gives children the feeling of security (see Bischoff, Anton 54).

Explanations

In the fourth lesson the issues about heroism dealt with in the previous three lessons are summarised. In *exercise 15* the students have to fill the words from the box in the text which is a summary of the topics on heroism with which the students have been concerned in the last lessons. The text contains the most important aspects and the new words that the students should have acquired. It is a good revision because it gives an overview.

Exercise 16 also serves to review the topics dealt with. The students have to remember the three texts that they have read, namely “Subway Rescue”, “The Legendary King Arthur” and “The Kitty Genovese Murder”, and have to decide whether the listed statements are true or false. As *exercise 15* and *16* only repeat already discussed aspects, the students should be able to manage working on their own.

In *exercise 17* the students once again answer the questionnaire which they have already completed in *exercise 5*. It is important to tell them that they should not look at their answers in *exercise 5* because they are not expected to give the same answers again, but to honestly do the questionnaire so that it will be obvious whether their notion of heroism has changed due to dealing with the topic. The students are also supposed to answer whether or not they feel that their understanding of heroism has altered. Of course, not all students will think differently about heroism after the four lessons. However, this does not mean that these students have not reflected on the topic.

After having thought rather intensely about heroes and acting heroically, the students are expected to write a text about someone they consider to be a hero in *exercise 18*. It can be any kind of hero, for instance a real person, an everyday hero, a legendary figure or a superhero. As students at the beginners’ level need some help in writing, there are two sample texts given which should serve as models for their own writing. The text should be about 100 words. When everyone is finished, some volunteers can read out their texts.

Finally, the project on heroism is completed with *exercise 19*. It is a quiz about superheroes and is intended to be a funny activity for the students. First, the teacher gives them some time to answer the questions. When everyone is finished, the teacher reads out the correct answers so that the students can compare them to their own.

7.3. Reflections

7.3.1. Reflection on the First Lesson

In general, the first lesson worked really well. The students were happy to start the lesson with the game 'Hangman' and, as expected, they won and therefore guessed the topic for the next four lessons. Of course, the term 'heroism' was new to them and they immediately wanted to know what it means. So, I explained the word and its connected terms 'hero' and 'heroine', as well as 'heroic' to them. When the students had understood what we were going to deal with in the next lessons, they were extremely motivated and highly interested in the topic. After explaining the major terms to them, the activity book was handed out. The students instantly had a look at it and were fascinated by the pictures.

Then they had to do *exercise 1*, in which they had to think of and name three heroes or heroines. Most students named superheroes like Spiderman or Catwoman, but some also mentioned football players, fire fighters, Robin Hood or their parents.

In the next exercise the students matched the words, which were suggestions for different kinds of heroes, with the pictures. Although most words were new to them, they could easily do the exercise.

However, *exercise 3* was rather difficult for them. They had to work in pairs and match the new phrases on the left with their definitions on the right. I was aware that the phrases were far above their level, but the new words were essential for talking about a hero's qualities. The students had a few minutes to try to solve the exercise in pairs and I also helped them when they had problems. After about five minutes we compared *exercise 3* and I also explained the phrases once again in a different way and gave examples. I finally got the impression that they understood the meaning of the words and so they were able to do *exercise 4* in which they had to ascribe a hero's possible qualities from *exercise 3* to the different kinds of heroes from *exercise 2*. It seemed that they had fun doing the activity and did not struggle with using the new phrases.

Having played the introductory game and done the first four exercises, there were only about fifteen minutes left, which means that up to then it took us fifteen minutes longer than planned. There was no particular activity which took much more time than expected. All of the four exercises took about two or three minutes longer and this added up. So, I decide to omit *exercise 5* and moved on to the last activity for the lesson, namely *exercise 6*.

The students were supposed to get together in groups of three or four and discuss whether Robin Hood and King Arthur are heroes and find situations which support their answers. Although the students did not have difficulties in deciding if Robin Hood is heroic, they were not sure about King Arthur. Of course, it is not easy to analyse the heroic qualities of King Arthur from only being familiar with the legend about the sword in the stone as he is presented as an unpromising hero in this folk tale. However, some students correctly remembered that King Arthur had stopped the wars, had restored peace and had been a good king. Certainly, one cannot expect detailed literary analyses of twelve-year-olds, but all in all, they found some examples for Robin Hood and King Arthur acting heroically.

As there was not enough time to do *exercise 5* at school, the students had to do this activity at home. However, this was not a problem as they had already been provided with the new words at school. The results of the exercise will be presented in 7.3.2.

In short, the students were enthusiastic about the topic of heroism, the colourful activity book full of pictures, and the exercises in it.

7.3.2. Reflection on the Second Lesson

First of all, the questionnaire in *exercise 5* that the students had to do at home was compared. I named the different possible heroes and everyone who considered this group of people to be heroic raised his or her hand. Most students were of the opinion that fire fighters, superheroes, doctors and parents are heroes. Teachers, sportsmen and politicians were rarely thought to be heroic. Then the qualities of heroes were discussed. A lot of students considered selflessness, overcoming fears, being brave and strong, as well as having superpowers as heroic characteristics.

Then the students were supposed to do *exercise 7* and *exercise 8*, which were two crossword puzzles. The students were enthusiastic and had great fun doing the activities. It was also a good practice to repeat the new words and phrases. However, the two exercises took them about fifteen minutes instead of the planned ten.

In *exercise 9* the students had to start thinking about a new aspect of heroism, namely that heroes are not flawless. With the concrete example of Robin Hood and King Arthur, the students were expected to discuss whether the two heroes sometimes fail, or if they behave heroically around the clock. This activity is really challenging for twelve-year-olds and so they should work in pairs or small groups. Although it was a difficult task, the students came up with good results. For instance, they stated that Robin Hood steals money and kills some of the sheriff's men in a fight which they considered not to be moral behaviour. Concerning King Arthur, they mentioned that he was lying to Sir Ector about how he got to know about the tournament. I also asked the students about other heroes, like their parents, fire fighters or superheroes, and if they were without faults. Finally, the students concluded that nobody is 'a full-time hero'.

In the next exercise the students were supposed to reflect on the difference between everyday heroes and fictional ones. We read the two texts together and I explained the new words to them. It is a good idea to draw the scene of the first text on the blackboard because the new vocabulary can be explained easily with the help of the drawing. When the students were told that the first

text about a man who had rescued a woman from getting killed by a subway train was a real story, they were fascinated and asked some questions like when and where it had happened. After reading both texts, we discussed the questions below together. In general, the students agreed on everyday heroes being more heroic than legendary heroes and that the former ones are better role models. Although it was easy for them to decide who was more heroic, they had difficulties in giving reasons for their choice. Hence, I made some suggestions to help the students reflect on their decision.

As it took about five minutes to compare the students' homework, which was not included in the lesson plan, there was no time left to do *exercise 11* which wants students to talk about heroic people they know. I did not want to omit the activity as some students might come up with fascinating stories. So, I just planned to do it at the beginning of the third lesson.

All in all, the second lesson on heroism worked well and the students especially liked the crossword puzzles, as well as the story about Ismael Feneque.

7.3.3. Reflection on the Third Lesson

The third lesson started with an exercise which should have already been done in the previous lesson, but had been omitted due to lack of time. The students were asked if they had ever performed a heroic act or if they knew someone who had acted heroically. As the students had not made any experiences in that field, I asked them if they had heard about any everyday heroes in the media which brought about some answers. Then the students were asked what would have happened if those people had not acted heroically. It was agreed on that the victims might have died and that everyday heroes are extremely important.

In *exercise 12* the students got together in small groups of three and reflected on the possible motives for Robin Hood, King Arthur and Ismael behaving heroically. It was not an easy task for the twelve-year-olds, but they managed to find one motive for every person. Concerning Robin Hood, most students said that he wanted to help the poor people because they were treated unfairly. With respect to King Arthur, they all agreed that it is a king's 'job' to stop war and to look after his country. As a motive for Ismael acting heroically the students claimed that the woman would have died without his help and that he felt that he *had* to help her. It was good to analyse the reasons for heroic behaviour by means of concrete examples because when the students were supposed to generally name more possible motives, they could not think of any. Hence, I mentioned some more reasons, such as being rewarded for one's heroic behaviour, setting a good example and expecting others to do the same. The students all agreed that it is important to have everyday heroes because people are dependent on each other's help. However, they all said that legendary heroes are not of importance because they cannot directly aid people. But, when I asked them whether legendary heroes might be helpful as they can serve as role models, the students all affirmed my question.

Then the whole class read the text in *exercise 13* about the Kitty Genovese Murder together. The students were really shocked when I told them that it was a real story and they asked why the man had killed Kitty. We also worked on the questions together and they had to think about why nobody had helped Kitty Genovese. The students came up with rather implausible reasons, for instance

that all the telephones had not worked or that the neighbours had not liked Kitty. Then I told them the psychological theory behind such tragic incidents, namely that nobody feels responsible if there are many spectators and expect others to interfere. Moreover, I explained to them that in such situations, the victim should directly address someone to help him or her because this addressed person does feel responsible then and it is likely that other spectators will help as well if one has made the first move. The class also discussed what people in situations requiring heroic behaviour could do and they agreed that calling the police or, depending on the situation, interfering are the best ways to help.

As a final activity, the students had to write a different ending concerning the Kitty Genovese murder in which they save Kitty's life. Although students are often not happy about having to write a text, they were really enthusiastic about it. The students had ten minutes left to do the exercise and were asked to finish the text at home if they did not have enough time at school. Some volunteers read out their texts in the following lesson. Most of them had superpowers in the text or fought the criminal with a pan. In some texts the students called the police or told their parents about the crime. In two texts the criminal even got killed, but in all texts, as required, Kitty Genovese survived.

In summary, it was a successful lesson and I have learned that students are extremely interested in real stories about (anti-) heroes.

7.3.4. Reflection on the Fourth Lesson

After a few students had read out their texts that they had written for *exercise 14*, the students did the fill-in exercise, which was a summary about the aspects dealt with so far. Furthermore, the students had to do *exercise 16* which was a 'true or false exercise' about the three texts in the activity book. Both tasks were not easy for the twelve-year-olds, but they were not too difficult either. In any case, the two activities briefly summarised the main aspects of heroism talked about as well as the new vocabulary.

In *exercise 17* the students were expected to do the questionnaire on the notion of heroism once again. As they already knew the questions, they were quickly finished. I asked everyone to read out his or her answer to the question below in order to get to know whether the students' concept of heroism had changed because of the lessons devoted to the topic. All students stated that their notion of heroism has, in fact, changed. Most of them said that they did not only consider superheroes as acting heroically any more, but that their concept of who was a hero had been enlarged. In addition, some students mentioned that they now ascribe the role of heroes more importance. It seemed as if the students had reflected on their concept of heroism. Consequently, the project had been successful.

After the questionnaire, the students were supposed to write a text about their own hero or heroine. First, the two sample texts were read together and then the students had about fifteen to twenty minutes to fulfil the task. About half of the class wrote about a superhero, such as Batman, Catwoman or Edward Cullen. The other half wrote about everyday heroes like a parent, a friend, or fire fighters. All students used some new words or phrases and produced interesting texts.

Exercise 19 should complete the topic on heroism. It was a quiz on superheroes which the students enjoyed a lot. They liked the colourful pictures and the questions on the most popular superheroes. Although most students did not know all the heroes in the quiz, they had fun doing it and guessing the answers. It only took them about five minutes to finish the quiz. Then I read out the

correct answers so that the students could compare them to their own. On average, the students had seven out of ten correct answers.

All in all, the four lessons on heroism worked well and the students had fewer difficulties in talking about the topic than expected. Nevertheless, one has to bear in mind that twelve-year-olds will not come up with a great variety of ideas when analysing texts as this is new to them and the teacher needs to support them in their analyses. In addition, some lessons plans took a bit longer than expected, but this also depends on the students. Of course, a teacher should give his or her class enough time to finish an activity and a teacher should not move on to the next task just for a plan's sake, especially not when the students develop great ideas or bring up an interesting point for discussion.

In short, the students enjoyed working on heroes and heroic behaviour and the aim of having the students reflect on their notion of heroism was achieved.

8. Conclusion

Although teaching the abstract concept of heroism to young learners of English at the beginners' level is challenging, this thesis has shown that it is nevertheless possible to do. There are several reasons why moral concepts, which include heroism, should be discussed at school.

First of all, imparting social norms and ethical virtues is necessary as we expect people to live and act according to these rules. Children have to be familiarised with the social standards to raise them to become decent members of society. This is not only their parents' job, but the teachers' as well. It must be kept in mind that children are not inherently good or bad, but that they develop according to their moral education (see Pieper 143).

The hardest and most crucial aspect for a child is finding meaning in life (see Bettelheim 3). The child's parents and cultural heritage are the most important supporting aids in this process. The best way to convey cultural heritage is through literature. Especially fairy tales and folk tales are beneficial because they "stimulate [the child's] imagination, help him to develop his intellect and to clarify his emotions" (Bettelheim 5). Furthermore, literature is a good way to develop an understanding of the complexities of moral categories and human problems (see Anger 75).

The topic of heroism, which is often picked out as a central theme in literature, is usually appealing to students as they are fascinated by heroes. As children do not have much experience yet and are therefore lacking coping strategies for their problems, they need examples to follow. Hero models can have a strong impact on children because they identify with the heroes which helps them to cope with their emotions. Moreover, children want to emulate their heroes which supports the children's development with respect to heroic behaviour.

The age of twelve is an especially crucial one because some relevant transitions take place. According to Kohlberg, twelve-year-olds have already

acquired the sense of reciprocity. However, they are just about to learn that everyone must follow social norms and uphold them because these rules are essential for maintaining the social order, which represents the fourth stage in Kohlberg's model on moral development (*Child Psychology* 269). Besides the moral transition, twelve-year-olds are also facing a cognitive transition point where they are about to reach the level of abstract thinking which will be needed when talking about an abstract concept such as heroism.

The fact that not all twelve-year-olds will already have achieved the level of abstract thinking was one of the problematic aspects in teaching the concept of heroism to twelve-year-old students. The solution to this problem is to illustrate and exemplify heroic behaviour through literature as it depicts complex, abstract concepts. The second problem in teaching young learners of English at the beginners' level the moral category of heroism are second language learning barriers, like the students' unwillingness or embarrassment, as well as unappealing activities (see Yule 192). Therefore, it is extremely important to motivate and elate the students, as well as creating meaningful, appealing, well-developed exercises.

Composing such activities and planning lessons on a moral, abstract concept is of course challenging. One difficulty in developing the lessons on heroism was to decide how detailed the topic could be worked on and which goals should be achieved. In addition, incorporating all the background knowledge on how to teach a moral, abstract category to young learners of English was crucial but not easy. Moreover, the order of the activities had to be deliberated. Another challenge was to overcome the language barriers, such as explaining necessary, but new vocabulary to learners at the beginners' level.

All in all, composing the lessons on heroism and creating the activities for young learners of English was challenging, but not impossible. Testing the lesson plans through practice has indicated that, with the teacher's support and commitment, it is possible to overcome the problematic aspects and teach the abstract concept of heroism to young learners of English at the beginners' level.

In general, the practical part of this thesis has shown that moral, abstract concepts can be successfully taught to young learners of a foreign language by using literary texts in the target language to illustrate and exemplify the abstract category. Especially young learners must be provided with concrete examples to analyse complex concepts. Moreover, foreign language learners need meaningful, well-developed tasks and the teacher's support. Considering these aspects, moral and abstract concepts will be taught with success in foreign language classes.

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11. Zusammenfassung

Soziale Normen und moralische Werte sind ein wesentlicher Bestandteil jeder gut funktionierenden Gesellschaft und Kultur. Deshalb ist es notwendig, diese Werte an alle Gesellschaftsmitglieder, besonders an Kinder und Jugendliche, weiterzugeben. Kinder sind nicht von Natur aus gut oder böse, sondern sie entwickeln sich entsprechend ihrer moralischen Erziehung. Die Übermittlung von ethischen Werten ist nicht nur Aufgabe der Eltern, sondern auch der LehrerInnen.

Die vorliegende Arbeit beschäftigt sich mit der Frage, wie zwölfjährigen SchülerInnen, die in Englisch auf Anfängerniveau sind, ein spezifisch moralischer Wert, nämlich Heldenhaftigkeit, im Fremdsprachenunterricht vermittelt werden kann. Die ursprüngliche Auffassung von Heldenhaftigkeit, wie man sie aus Filmen und Legenden kennt, ist heutzutage jedoch kaum präsent. Das heutige Verständnis von Heldenhaftigkeit umfasst vielmehr einige verschiedene Werte, wie Selbstlosigkeit, Hilfsbereitschaft und Mut. Das Lehren von Heldenhaftigkeit ist insbesondere wichtig, da Helden einen starken Einfluss auf Kinder haben. Sie streben danach, ihren Helden nachzueifern, was wiederum ihre Entwicklung von heroischem Verhalten positiv beeinflusst. Außerdem haben Kinder, wie alle anderen, Probleme, jedoch fehlen ihnen die Erfahrung und die Bewältigungsstrategien, um sie zu lösen. Die Identifikation mit Helden ermöglicht es den Kindern, mit ihren Gefühlen umzugehen und sie als Vorbild für Handlungsmöglichkeiten zu nehmen.

Die Herausforderung bei der Übermittlung von Heldenhaftigkeit ist es, Zwölfjährigen, die noch nicht fähig sind, ein abstraktes Konzept gänzlich zu begreifen, eine moralische Kategorie zu erklären. Weiters stellt es für SchülerInnen auf Anfängerniveau eine Schwierigkeit dar, sich in der Fremdsprache auszudrücken und ihre Ideen zu artikulieren. Dies sind die beiden größten Herausforderungen, die es beim Lehren von Heldenhaftigkeit im Fremdsprachenunterricht zu überwinden gilt. Diese Arbeit zeigt, wie die

genannten Schwierigkeiten bewältigt und die Vermittlung von Heldenhaftigkeit praktisch umgesetzt werden kann.

Die Zielgruppe der Zwölfjährigen für die Vermittlung von Heldenhaftigkeit wurde bewusst gewählt, da in diesem Alter wichtige Wendepunkte in der kognitiven und moralischen Entwicklung stattfinden. Zwölfjährige sind sich über das wechselseitige Geben und Nehmen in einer Gesellschaften durchaus im Klaren, jedoch sind sie gerade erst dabei zu lernen, dass jeder den sozialen Normen folgen muss, weil diese Regeln für das Aufrechterhalten der sozialen Ordnung wichtig sind (vergl. Kohlberg, *Social Psychology* 269). Dies spiegelt den Übergang von der dritten zur vierten Stufe der moralischen Entwicklung wider. Auch kognitiv befinden sich Zwölfjährige an einem Wendepunkt. Sie lernen in diesem Alter, abstrakte Konzepte zu verstehen und sind dabei, die Stufe des abstrakten Denkens zu erreichen.

Die Tatsache, dass die meisten Zwölfjährigen noch nicht auf der Stufe des abstrakten Denkens angelangt sind, ist eine der beiden Hauptschwierigkeiten beim Lehren des abstrakten, moralischen Konzeptes von Heldenhaftigkeit. Die Lösung des Problems liegt darin, literarische Texte zu verwenden, die Heldenhaftigkeit exemplarisch darstellen. Dadurch wird die Abstraktheit reduziert, und Heldenhaftigkeit kann anhand von illustrierenden Beispielen veranschaulicht und analysiert werden. Bei der Wahl der Texte ist zu beachten, dass sich besonders Märchen und Legenden für die Vermittlung von moralischen Werten eignen, da diese Kinder in ihrer geistigen Entwicklung unterstützen, ihnen helfen, mit ihren Gefühlen umzugehen und durch individuelle Interpretationen Lösungsansätze für Probleme bieten (vergl. Bettelheim 5).

Die zweite Herausforderung beim Lehren von Heldenhaftigkeit ist es, die sprachlichen Barrieren zu überwinden. Es ist wichtig, dass die Lehrperson die SchülerInnen mit den notwendigen Vokabeln ausstattet und sie mit auf die SchülerInnen abgestimmten Übungen zum Ziel führt. Die Aufgaben sollen die SchülerInnen motivieren und ihnen Freude bereiten. Beim Erstellen der Übungen muss besonders darauf geachtet werden, dass diese aufeinander

aufbauen, dass sie sprachlich so einfach wie möglich gehalten werden und dass das soziale Format unterstützend wirkt. Wie solche Übungen schließlich aussehen sollen, sowie Erklärungen und Begründungen für bestimmte Aufgaben, wird im praktischen Teil der Arbeit, in Kapitel 7, genau dargestellt.

Die entwickelten Übungen sowie die gesamten Stundenplanungen zum Thema Heldenhaftigkeit wurden bereits an SchülerInnen der zweiten Klasse Unterstufe eines Gymnasiums in Niederösterreich erprobt. Die Testung verlief sehr erfolgreich und zeigt, dass es möglich ist, die sprachlichen sowie die kognitiven Schwierigkeiten zu bewältigen, und Zwölfjährigen das abstrakte, moralische Konzept von Heldenhaftigkeit im englischen Fremdsprachenunterricht, trotz des Anfängerniveaus der SchülerInnen, zu vermitteln.

Appendix

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Heroism



Activity Book



Name: _____

Class: _____



Heroism

hero = a *man* who is brave, risks his own life to help others, or has done something great and important

heroine = a *woman* who is brave, risks her own life to help others, or has done something great and important

to be **heroic** (adj.) = if a person acts/ behaves like a hero or heroine

heroism = the act of behaving heroically

Exercise 1

Name three heroes or heroines you know:



Exercise 2

Match the words from the box with the pictures.

fire fighter superhero soldier sports(wo)man figures from fairy tales politician













Exercise 3

Connect the words or phrases on the left with the correct definition on the right.

selflessness

acting morally

overcoming fears

confront risk

having superpowers

serve as a role model

accept others

try to act good and right

to face the adventure

take others as they are

act without thinking about one's own interest

others want to be like you and admire you

have the power to fly, be extremely strong, etc.

to be scared but forget your fear to do something

Exercise 4

Look at the people below and find words that describe them. Use the words and phrases from *exercise 3*.

soldier: _____

sportsman: _____

fire fighter: _____

politician: _____

superhero: _____

figures from fairy tales: _____



Exercise 5

Answer the questionnaire.

Tick the people who are heroes for you.

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| ☐ soldier | ☐ sportsman | ☐ parents |
| ☐ fire fighter | ☐ politician | ☐ superhero |
| ☐ doctor | ☐ teacher | ☐ figures from fairy tales |
| ☐ everyone | ☐ others: _____ | |

Tick the words and phrases that describe heroes.

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| ☐ selflessness | ☐ overcome fears | ☐ be brave |
| ☐ act morally | ☐ help others | ☐ be strong |
| ☐ have superpowers | ☐ confront risk | ☐ be clever |
| ☐ serve as a role model | ☐ accept others | ☐ others: _____ |

Read the sentences and tick the ones where the person is a hero for you.

- ☐ Superman saves the world.
- ☐ Robert wants to get into a taxi. He sees a woman with a broken leg who waits for a taxi. Robert offers the woman to take his taxi and waits for the next one.
- ☐ A little boy is scared of dogs but he goes into the neighbour's garden where a big dog is sleeping to get his ball.
- ☐ A knight fights against a dragon.
- ☐ A body-builder fights three other men.
- ☐ Robin Hood loves adventures and is not scared of meeting the Sheriff of Nottingham or Prince John.
- ☐ A mouse plays a trick on a cat so that the cat does not eat the mouse.
- ☐ Some kids do not want to play with Henry because he is black. Emma plays with Henry.
- ☐ Robin Hood gives money to poor people.
- ☐ Kids want to be like Spiderman.
- ☐ Lisa has broken her mother's new vase. She knows that her mother will be angry and that she will not be allowed to go to her friend's party. When her mother asks Lisa about the vase, she tells her mother the truth.

Exercise 6

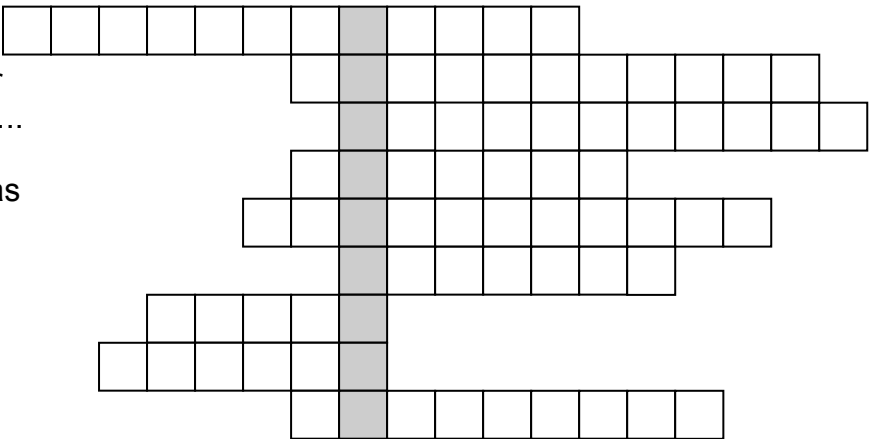
Get together in groups of 3 or 4. Talk about Robin Hood and King Arthur. Are they heroes? Why (not)? Think of situations which show that they are (not) heroes.

Robin Hood	King Arthur
Is he a hero? Why (not)? 	Is he a hero? Why (not)? 
Situations: 	Situations: 

Exercise 7

Do the crossword puzzle and find the secret word.

- 1. act without thinking about one's own interest
- 2. have the power to fly or be extremely strong
- 3. Barack Obama, Martin Luther King and George W. Bush are.....
- 4. a *woman* who is brave, risks her own life to help others, or has done something great and important
- 5. someone who puts out a fire
- 6. the act of behaving heroically
- 7. the opposite of being 'scared'
- 8. another word for 'intelligent'
- 9. a hero should serve as a



The secret word is _____

Exercise 8

Find the ten words and phrases about heroes and heroism. Look in all directions.

O	V	E	R	C	O	M	E	F	E	A	R	H
E	C	A	C	T	M	O	R	A	L	L	Y	E
F	I	O	S	V	A	L	D	G	C	O	U	L
A	M	I	N	O	U	Z	N	A	N	E	O	P
I	L	A	I	F	D	O	E	E	H	Y	R	O
R	O	U	F	L	R	O	T	C	O	D	W	T
Y	X	B	T	T	U	O	I	P	O	S	A	H
T	D	F	S	G	R	O	N	J	L	D	I	E
A	M	P	E	L	D	E	R	T	C	M	N	R
L	H	E	R	N	A	M	S	T	R	O	P	S
E	Q	G	S	U	O	P	I	D	A	I	P	K
C	I	S	O	L	D	I	E	R	A	O	S	L
A	C	C	E	P	T	O	T	H	E	R	S	K



Exercise 9

Remember Robin Hood and King Arthur. Do they always act heroically? Are they without mistakes? Get together with a partner and think of situations where the two heroes fail.



Exercise 10

Read the two texts. Then answer the questions below.

Subway Rescue

Lisa Donath was on her way to work and she was already late. Her life had been stressful the last days and when she ran down the stairs to the subway, she felt dizzy. So she leaned against a post close to the tracks. A few metres away Ismael Feneque was waiting for the train with his girlfriend.

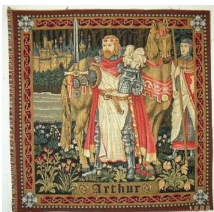
Suddenly he heard someone screaming, "Oh my God! She fell in!". Ismael did not hesitate and jumped down to the tracks where he saw a body lying facedown. "No, Ismael, not you," his girlfriend shouted after him. When Ismael reached Lisa, he could feel the vibration on the tracks and saw a light coming nearer. Ismael knew that he had only about 20 seconds before the train would reach them. "I'm going to get her out and then I'm going to get myself out. I'm not going to let myself get killed here," Ismael thought. It was hard for Ismael to lift Lisa, but he managed to raise her to the platform so that bystanders could get her. This was the moment when Lisa woke up again. She could not speak and a man tried to stop the blood pouring from her head. She had broken her eye socket, her jaw and lost some teeth. Ismael had troubles to get himself onto the platform but he managed to rescue himself only a few seconds before the train passed him. After some time the police arrived and Ismael told them what had happened. They thanked him and Ismael went away with his girlfriend.



Lisa had to stay in hospital and had a series of surgeries. When she was okay again, she wanted to find the man who had saved her life. She found him by going on TV and getting her picture put in the *New York Times*. When they first met, Lisa threw her arms around Ismael and thanked him for saving her life.

The Legendary King Arthur

It is not certain that King Arthur existed at all. It is a fact that the name Arthur only very rarely turns up in books before the 10th century. There is one book by a writer who lived in the sixth century and who wrote about what happened after the Roman's left Britain. He was a Welsh monk called Gildas. The name Arthur does not turn up in Gildas' books. In about 830 AD, another Welsh monk wrote a book about Arthur and his time. Other monks copied this book in the 10th century. The original book does not exist any more, but the copy does. Here is a summary of what the copy says about King Arthur:



Arthur fought against the Saxons with the kings of the Britons. There were many battles. Arthur was always the leader, and he won all his battles. The twelfth battle was on Badon Hill, in which Arthur killed 960 men.

Historians think Arthur was certainly not a king. And he was probably very different from the Arthur we know in the stories. But most people don't care about the historical facts: There are lots of books, comics and films about

King Arthur. And every year, thousands of tourists from all over the world visit places in England where they think the "real" Arthur lived.

- What is the hero in the first text like? What is the hero in the second text like?
- Who is more heroic, in your opinion? Why?
- In which ways are Ismael and King Arthur different? Why?
- Are heroes in legends and fairy tales different from everyday heroes?
- Who is the better role model for you - Ismael or King Arthur?
- Are your role models heroes from fairy tales or people that really exist?

Exercise 11

Get together with a partner and tell each other if you have ever acted heroically or if you know a person who has behaved heroically. Use the phrases for help.

A: Have you ever acted heroically?

B: Yes, I have.

No, I haven't.

A: What happened?

B:

A: Do you know someone who has saved another person's life?

B: Yes, I do.

No, I don't.

Exercise 12

Think of Robin Hood, King Arthur and Ismael Feneque (from the text "Subway Rescue"). Why do you think did these people act heroically? What was their motivation?

What other motives for acting heroically can you think of?

/ _____

Is it important to have everyday heroes like Ismael Feneque? Why?

/ _____

Is it important to have legendary heroes like Robin Hood or King Arthur? Why?

/ _____

Exercise 13

Read the text and answer the questions.

The Kitty Genovese Murder – A Sad Night in New York City

Late at night, in March 1964, Kitty Genovese, a 28 year old woman, was attacked by a man with a knife. The attack took place in Kew Gardens, in Queens in New York, a respectable neighbourhood. Her screams and struggles stopped the attack first, but when he saw that no one came to help the woman, he attacked her again. Once more she could run away, shouting and crying for help. But everyone ignored her screams and she was soon attacked again. It took the man about half an hour to kill Kitty Genovese. But nobody of her neighbours helped her.

After about 30 minutes after the attack had begun, the police arrived. They had been called by an anonymous person who had seen the murder. The next day, when the police interviewed the people from the neighbourhood, 38 people openly said that they had heard the screaming. They had all had time to do something, but they didn't act. One might understand that no one wanted to run down on the street and help Kitty because they could have get killed themselves, but why did they not call the police?



Why do you think nobody helped Kitty Genovese?



What could an adult do in such a situation?



What could a child or a teenager do?



What would you do?



Exercise 14

Imagine you are a person who sees that Kitty Genovese gets attacked. Write a different ending in which you act heroically and save Kitty's life. Start like this:

Suddenly, I heard someone scream. I looked out of the window and saw a woman and a man with a knife.....



Exercise 15

Read the text and fill in the missing words from the box.

accept fighters	brave help	confront heroically	fairy tales role models	fears superpowers
--------------------	---------------	------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------

Everybody wants to be and can be a hero or heroine. But, what is a hero? It can be said that a hero is someone who is _____, risks his own life to _____ others, or who has done something great and important. There are many different types of heroes, for example soldiers, sportsmen, fire _____, politicians, parents, superheroes, doctors, or figures from _____. Not all heroes are the same, but a lot of them are brave, selfless, clever, strong, overcome _____, act morally, help others, _____ risk, and _____ others. Heroes in myths and on TV sometimes even have _____. But, heroes do not always win. They sometimes fail like everyone else. Acting _____ is important and heroes can serve as _____ to learn heroic behaviour.

Exercise 16

Remember the texts "Subway Rescue", "The Legendary King Arthur" and "The Kitty Genovese Murder – A Sad Night in New York City" and tick true (T) or false (F).

	T	F
Ismael Feneque was on his way to work when he saw a woman falling on the tracks in a subway station.		
When Lisa Donath woke up, she looked for the man who had saved her life.		
Lisa found Ismael by going on TV and getting her picture put in the <i>New York Times</i> .		
Gildas wrote a book in which he describes what King Arthur looked like.		
In the 10 th century, monks copied Gildas' books.		
There are many books, comics and films about King Arthur.		
Kitty Genovese was attacked by two men with a knife.		
Nobody heard Kitty Genovese's screams.		
The man with the knife killed Kitty Genovese		

Exercise 17

Answer the questionnaire. Do not look at your answers of the questionnaire in exercise 5.

Tick the people who are heroes for you.

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| ☐ soldier | ☐ sportsman | ☐ parents |
| ☐ fire fighter | ☐ politician | ☐ superhero |
| ☐ doctor | ☐ teacher | ☐ figures from fairy tales |
| ☐ everyone | ☐ others: _____ | |

Tick the words and phrases that describe heroes.

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| ☐ selflessness | ☐ overcome fears | ☐ be brave |
| ☐ act morally | ☐ help others | ☐ be strong |
| ☐ have superpowers | ☐ confront risk | ☐ be clever |
| ☐ serve as a role model | ☐ accept others | ☐ others: _____ |

Read the sentences and tick the ones where the person is a hero for you.

- ☐ Superman saves the world.
- ☐ Robert wants to get into a taxi. He sees a woman with a broken leg who waits for a taxi. Robert offers the woman to take his taxi and waits for the next one.
- ☐ A little boy is scared of dogs but he goes into the neighbour's garden where a big dog is sleeping to get his ball.
- ☐ A knight fights against a dragon.
- ☐ A body-builder fights three other men.
- ☐ Robin Hood loves adventures and is not scared of meeting the Sheriff of Nottingham or Prince John.
- ☐ A mouse plays a trick on a cat so that the cat does not eat the mouse.
- ☐ Some kids do not want to play with Henry because he is black. Emma plays with Henry.
- ☐ Robin Hood gives money to poor people.
- ☐ Kids want to be like Spiderman.
- ☐ Lisa has broken her mother's new vase. She knows that her mother will be angry and that she will not be allowed to go to her friend's party. When her mother asks Lisa about the vase, she tells her mother the truth.

You have worked on the topic of heroism quite a lot. Do you think differently about heroes and acting heroic now? What aspects of thinking have changed?



Exercise 19⁸

Test how much you know about superheroes with this quiz.

1. Superman is from the planet Krypton. What is his real name?

- ☐ Clark Kent
- ☐ Kal-El
- ☐ Lois Lane

2. How did Spiderman get his superpowers?

- ☐ A spider bit him.
- ☐ He ate a spider.
- ☐ He watched spiders.

3. Which superhero changes colour?

- ☐ Mr. Incredible
- ☐ Wonder Woman
- ☐ The Incredible Hulk



4. Which superhero has a partner called Robin?

- ☐ Batman
- ☐ Spiderman
- ☐ Wonder Woman

5. Why does Daredevil have a special 'radar' sixth sense?

- ☐ He can't hear.
- ☐ He can't run.
- ☐ He can't see.



6. Storm is one of the X-Men. What was she when she was born?

- ☐ a monster
- ☐ an alien
- ☐ a mutant

7. The Green Goblin and Doctor Octopus are enemies of which superhero?

- ☐ Superman
- ☐ Spiderman
- ☐ Batman

8. Princess Diana of Themyscira is a superhero. What is she also known as?

- ☐ Storm of the X-Men
- ☐ Catwoman
- ☐ Wonder Woman



9. Wonder Woman has a special piece of equipment. What is it?

- ☐ a shield
- ☐ a cape
- ☐ a lasso

10. Which superhero lives in a cave?

- ☐ Batman
- ☐ Wolverine of the X-Men
- ☐ Spiderman



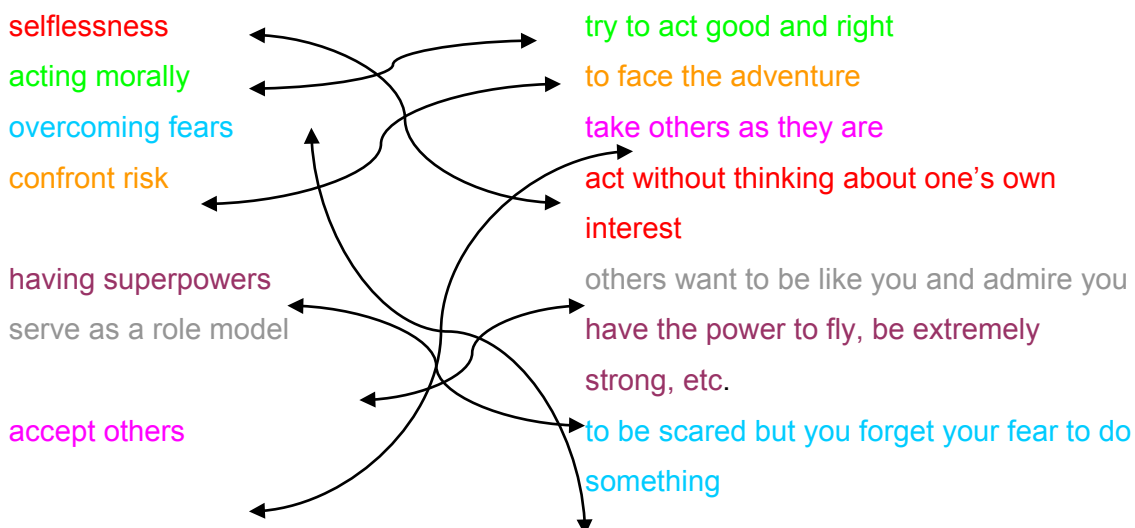
⁸ The quiz is from <http://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/play-with-friends/quiz-superheroes>

Key to Exercises⁹

Exercise 2

		
soldier	fire fighter	sports(wo)man
		
politician	superhero	figures from fairy tales

Exercise 3



Exercise 4¹⁰

soldier: selfless, overcome fears, confront risk

sportsman: serve as a role model, overcome fears

fire fighter: confront risk, selfless, overcome fears, serve as a role model

politician: accept others, act morally

superhero: have superpowers, act morally, overcome fears, confront risk

figures from fairy tales: overcome fears, act morally, confront risk

⁹ Some exercises have no fixed answers and are therefore not listed in the key.

¹⁰ There are various possible answers, here are just some suggestions.

Exercise 6¹¹

Robin Hood	King Arthur
<i>Is he a hero? Why (not)?</i> ✓ Yes, he is a hero because he is selfless, acts morally and confronts risk <i>Situations:</i> ✓ he helps the poor villagers; he goes to the archery contest although he knows that the sheriff wants to catch him there; he helps Sir Richard	<i>Is he a hero? Why (not)?</i> ✓ Yes, he is a hero because he accepts others, is selfless and overcomes his fears <i>Situations:</i> ✓ he stops the war and restores peace; he gives all children free honey cakes

Exercise 7

1. selflessness
2. superpowers
3. politicians
4. heroine
5. fire fighter
6. heroism
7. brave
8. clever
9. role model

The secret word is **superhero**.

Exercise 8

O	V	E	R	C	O	M	E	F	E	A	R	H
E	C	A	C	T	M	O	R	A	L	L	Y	E
F	I	O	S	V	A	L	D	G	C	O	U	L
A	M	I	N	O	U	Z	N	A	N	E	O	P
I	L	A	I	F	D	O	E	E	H	Y	R	O
R	O	U	F	L	R	O	T	C	O	D	W	T
Y	X	B	T	T	U	O	I	P	O	S	A	H
T	D	F	S	G	R	O	N	J	L	D	I	E
A	M	P	E	L	D	E	R	T	C	M	N	R
L	H	E	R	N	A	M	S	T	R	O	P	S
E	Q	G	S	U	O	P	I	D	A	I	P	K
C	I	S	O	L	D	I	E	R	A	O	S	L
A	C	C	E	P	T	O	T	H	E	R	S	K

strong, soldier, sportsman, doctor, fairy tale, act morally, help others, overcome fear, confront risk, accept others

¹¹ There are various possible answers, here are just some suggestions.

Exercise 9¹²

Robin Hood and King Arthur do not always act heroically and are not without mistakes. For example, Robin Hood does not act totally morally when he steals money from the rich, even though he does not keep the money but gives it to the poor people. Moreover, he often runs away in fights where he cannot win, which is not very heroic, but clever. King Arthur actually only behaves really heroically when he becomes king and stops the wars. Before he was king, he did not dare to talk back or fight for his rights.

Exercise 10¹³

- Ismael is selfless and overcomes his fear in order to save a woman's life. King Arthur is a fearless warrior who fights for his country.
- Ismael is more heroic because he acted selflessly and had only little time to rescue the woman.
- Ismael is an everyday hero who acted heroically when the circumstances required it, whereas King Arthur is a legendary hero.
- Yes, heroes in legends are often depicted as only heroic and good. They have to accomplish heroic deeds and surmount fictional figures like dragons. They are somehow larger than life.
- Ismael is a better role model because it is more likely that someone faces a similar situation and has to act accordingly.

Exercise 12¹⁴

		
✍ Robin Hood acted heroically because he wanted to balance inequality. He felt responsible for the poor people and wanted to help them.	✍ As a king, one has to act heroically. It is the king's duty to fight battles for his country.	✍ Ismael knew that the woman would get killed without his help and so he felt responsible to rescue her. Maybe he would expect others to do the same for him.

Other motives for acting heroically could be the desire for survival of the human species, setting a good example or being rewarded for one's heroic behaviour.

Yes, it is important to have everyday heroes like Ismael because in a society people need to help each other in order to survive.

Legendary heroes can be very helpful, especially for children, because they help to deal with emotions and motivate people to emulate them.

¹² There are various possible answers, here are just some suggestions.

¹³ There are various possible answers, here are just some suggestions.

¹⁴ There are various possible answers, here are just some suggestions.

Exercise 13¹⁵

- Perhaps nobody helped Kitty because all people were scared and when too many people are witnesses, nobody feels responsible to act because they wait for the others to take action.
- An adult should interfere and tell the other witnesses to help him. Of course, he should also call the police.
- A child or teenager should call for help and contact the police.

Exercise 15

Everybody wants to be and can be a hero or heroine. But, what is a hero? It can be said that a hero is someone who is **brave**, risks his own life to **help** others or who has done something great and important. There are many different types of heroes, for example soldiers, sportsmen, fire **fighters**, politicians, parents, superheroes, doctors or figures from **fairy tales**. Not all heroes are the same, but a lot of them are brave, selfless, clever, strong, overcome **fears**, act morally, help others, **confront** risk and **accept** others. Heroes in myths and on TV sometimes even have **superpowers**. But heroes do not always win. They sometimes fail like everyone else. Acting **heroically** is important and heroes can serve as **role models** to learn heroic behaviour.

Exercise 16

	T	F
Ismael Feneque was on his way to work when he saw a woman falling on the tracks in a subway station.		x
When Lisa Donath woke up, she looked for the man who had saved her life.		x
Lisa found Ismael by going on TV and getting her picture put in the <i>New York Times</i> .	x	
Gildas wrote a book in which he describes what King Arthur looked like.		x
In the 10 th century, monks copied Gildas' books.		x
There are many books, comics and films about King Arthur.	x	
Kitty Genovese was attacked by two men with a knife.		x
Nobody heard Kitty Genovese's screams.		x
The man with the knife killed Kitty Genovese	x	

¹⁵ There are various possible answers, here are just some suggestions.

Exercise 19

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- ☐ **Kal-El**
- ☐ Lois Lane

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- ☐ **A spider bit him.**
- ☐ He ate a spider.
- ☐ He watched spiders.

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- ☐ Wonder Woman
- ☐ **The Incredible Hulk**



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- ☐ **Batman**
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- ☐ Wonder Woman

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- ☐ He can't hear.
- ☐ He can't run.
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- ☐ a monster
- ☐ an alien
- ☐ **a mutant**

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- ☐ **Spiderman**
- ☐ Batman



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- ☐ Storm of the X-Men
- ☐ Catwoman
- ☐ **Wonder Woman**



9. Wonder Woman has a special piece of equipment. What is it?

- ☐ a shield
- ☐ a cape
- ☐ **a lasso**

10. Which superhero lives in a cave?

- ☐ **Batman**
- ☐ Wolverine of the X-Men
- ☐ Spiderman



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Gänserndorf, June 2010

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