Heroes and Heroines:

An inspirational story collection

SLIS 5440 - Storytelling

November 20, 2002
Heroes and Heroines

• This is a presentation for sixth grade reading teachers.

• The teachers have a heroes unit the second semester.

• One of the big initiatives in our district is for teachers to participate in storytelling/reading to their students.
Location of Resources

The Library

This non-fiction novel is based on the sinking of the USS Indianapolis in 1945. The ship sank almost instantly after being hit by a Japanese torpedo and only 317 men survived. The Navy kept the real story top secret until a sixth grade boy working on his history fair project began to research this Naval disaster.

One of the greatest racers known throughout the world, Dale Earnhardt, died in the prime of his career with over seventy-six wins and millions of dollars in prize money. Earnhardt is a respected race car driver and a hero to many race car fans old and new.
“The Tale of Gamelyn” is based on a heroic story from 1350. There are many connections throughout the story that show similarities to Robin Hood. It is a romantic story in which there are several brothers, the oldest which is evil disobey and has zero respect for his father. There is a wrestling competition in which Gamelyn wins. The oldest brother throws Gamelyn into prison and sentences him to death. Upon his escape, King Edward names him chief forester and his brother the sheriff of the county.
Kate Shelley is an ordinary person who became a hero. In 1881 on a stormy night, a horrible train wreck occurred near this fifteen-year-old’s home. Shelley treks through the dark night in torrential rains to attempt to save the victims and stop another approaching train. This is based on a true story.


Hatshepsut, the daughter of an Egyptian pharaoh, ruled the land with her stepson and nephew. Because she was such a successful ruler, her stepson resented her and after she died, he ordered all of her statues, temples, and inscriptions destroyed. She was honored and loved by many throughout her land because she was a peaceful ruler who was the only woman to successfully rule.

More Americans were killed because of the September 11th tragedy than the attack on Pearl Harbor or the Revolutionary War. When the 9/11 tragedy occurred, many ordinary citizens became heroes in the eyes of others. The firemen, doctors, paramedics, and nation all came together to support the people involved in the tragedy.

This is a story based on a real boy who was a drummer in the Civil War. At thirteen, Orion Howe is shocked by the life of military men during war. At one point during the war, the boy has a chance to prove that he can be a hero like all of the other soldiers.

This is a personal anecdote of the author’s father, her hero. The Jimmy Stewart- Sean Connery speaking father is a steady influence in the author’s life. The story recounts memories of when her father supported her, when he made her laugh, when he made her cry, and when he walked her down the aisle on her wedding day.

A young man who is teased by others at school changes into a super-hero because of a spider bite he receives at a school fieldtrip. Spider-Man as the media dubs him begins to fight evil in his town of New York City and gets the girl he has always wanted.
In Who-ville, the entire town of Whos are frightened of the mean, green, creature called the Grinch. The Grinch lives above the town in a cave and vows to destroy Christmas for the peaceful townspeople. Instead, the Grinch learns that what he is doing is wrong, and he eventually saves Christmas for everyone.
Theme

All of these stories are related in theme; they all teach a lesson about heroism. The theme that is prevalent in these stories is: circumstances often lead to acts of heroism. In each story, a person is changed in some way which leads to a heroic act of sorts. The Grinch changes his ways of thinking to be a hero to the Whos; the Drummer Boy becomes a true soldier and a man instead of a mere drummer in the war; the people of the nation come together as a patriotic community to fight terrorism; Hatshepsut overpowers the evil kings of her kingdom to rule her land peacefully; the father in the story, Horsey Teeth, works to overcome poverty to raise a family and become a successful educated person and a hero to his daughters. All of these stories teach the reader that he/she possesses compassion and heroism, but it is often the circumstances in which they are thrown that assist in exemplifying these characteristics.
Archetypes

With all of the individuals in the novel who are static characters, i.e. the heroes, there is a motivation to become better in some way. The Grinch is the character that made the biggest change; his change from evil to good is such a one-hundred and eighty degree turn around for him. He was the antithesis of the Whos, but by the end of the story, he is their hero. Another archetype that is prominent is the weak becoming the strong. In Spider-Man, the main character is harassed at school because he is weak and tired of his situation; by luck, he becomes strong, and he uses his physiological change to his advantage i.e. to become the hero of New York City. Finally, in Helping Hands the story of 9/11, people of the nation are motivated by fear and compassion to become helpful citizens to the victims of this tragedy. This story collection contains the change for the better archetype which is exemplified through the actions of the characters in the stories.
Characters

All of the stories in this collection contain characters with similarities i.e. they are heroes or heroines. Heroes/Heroines reach their status because of the characteristics admired by their respective society. Many heroes are wealthy, intelligent, attractive, physically strong, and have charisma and determination; however, each society has its own definition specific to their culture. Earnhardt is a hero to the people in his society; heroes in the American society are often wealthy, good at what they do, and are in the public eye. The Grinch is the antithesis of what American society perceives to be heroic; he is unattractive, lacks intelligence at times, and is not very appealing. It is the metamorphosis of his character that makes him the hero; he is determined to save Christmas for Whoville. Each hero/heroine in the stories possesses the qualities that cause society to revere them.
Research Process

I enjoyed my research process. It was as if I were on a scavenger hunt, which I do everyday, looking for resources needed by teachers. I plan on sharing these resources with the reading teachers at my school because they have a unit on heroism. I know they would be so pleased to have a list of sources ready for their unit. I felt my research process went smoothly. I enjoy making the connections between story because this is something I taught often in my AP High School English courses. I felt comfortable with the theme and character connection, but I did have to change to archetypes instead of motifs because the motifs were difficult to connect besides weakness to greatness, there was not much of a common thread. I enjoyed the stories from the books although I did read many of the books themselves. Many of the stories came from a compilation of stories from the book itself. My favorite story is the personal story about my father; he is a hero to me, but may not be to just anyone. I often share anecdotes about my father with friends and family, so this was easiest for me because it was the closest personally to me. All in all, I felt my research and project went well. I am more of a paper writer than a power point person, but I thought it would be a different way of presenting my material.