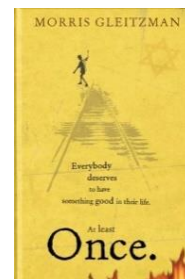
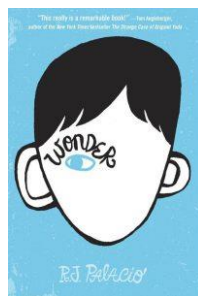
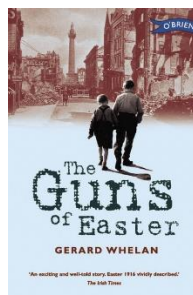
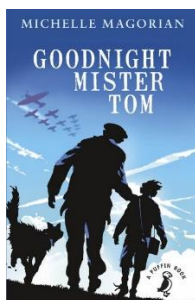


Project Title:

We could be heroes – couldn't we? Is there a potential within us all to be heroes?

What inspired our project?

We were reading the novel 'Goodnight Mister Tom'¹ and were discussing the main character Tom who looked after Willie Beech, a WWII evacuee, who had had a tough life back in London. The question arose 'Was Tom a hero to Willie Beech?'. In the other novels we read – the question 'Are the main characters heroes?' was explored. In 'The Guns of Easter'² Jimmy showed great courage as he went to find food for his hungry family during the 1916 rising and in 'Wonder'³ Auggie, who had a facial deformity, showed great courage to overcome bullying in his life. In the WWII novel 'Once'⁴ the main character Felix showed great courage in saving Zelda's life and looking after her. In all these novels there is a common theme of someone showing courage to overcome difficulties in their own life and being there to help others. This led us to thinking about and discuss the question 'What is a hero and who is a hero?'



What is a hero/heroine?

To begin our discussion we looked up the dictionary definition⁵ of a hero/heroine;

- a male/female person who is brave, good, and often looked up to by others.

We discussed the words in this definition;

<i>Definition</i>	<i>What we think it means</i>
Brave	To have courage To be fearless To be valiant Heroic
Good	An honest person

	A friendly, gentle and caring person Compassionate
Looked up to by others	A person who is admired A person who is loved

The main characters in the novels we read were brave and good people. They were looked up to by others and were role models for other characters in the story. Through their brave, kind and caring deeds and in their character traits they fitted the definition of a hero.

Exploring the World of Philosophy¹²

As we explored and researched the concept of a hero/heroine we discovered the field of Virtue Ethics⁶. A virtue is a kind of behaviour which is thought to be good. Virtue Ethics focuses on what sort of person you should try to be. It focuses on how you live rather than just one act - a virtuous person will try and do the right thing and take the right actions at all times. Based on group discussions we thought that being virtuous can be thought of as doing the right thing.

What did Aristotle think?

In exploring Virtue Ethics we read about Aristotle^{7,8,11}. He talks about virtues and identifies courage as one of them. He talks about courage and doing the right thing in the right circumstances. Too little courage is cowardice and too much courage can be rashness. So a hero/heroine will exhibit the right feelings and actions relative to the situation and this shows good judgement about life.



Aristotle⁸

Who are our heroes/heroines?

We named some of their heroes/heroines and gave reasons as to why they were heroes/heroines in our eyes:

*These are **Fictional Heroes or Legendary Heroes/Heroines** that they have seen on-screen or read about in stories.*

Batman
Spiderman
Superman
Wonder woman
Tarzan
Cuchulainn
Fionn MacCumhaill

Why are these heroes? These were seen as heroes as they have 'superpowers' and they help and save people. They carry out 'heroic' deeds.

*These are **Sports Heroes/Heroines**.*

Roy Keane – soccer star
Katie McCabe – Irish women's soccer star
Ronaldo – soccer star
Aisling Moloney – Tipperary Football Star

Why are these heroes? These were seen as heroes as these are the best players in their field of sport and are people that the children who see them as heroes aspire to be like them. They admire their hard work and the commitment they show to be the best in their field.

*These are **Historical Heroes/Heroines** we have learned about in school.*

Daniel O'Connell – fought peacefully for Catholic Emancipation
Abraham Lincoln – he abolished slavery
John F Kennedy – Worked for Civil Rights
Martin Luther King - fought peacefully for Civil Rights
Rosa Parks – in a peaceful protest she refused to give up her seat on the bus and this led to bus boycott in Montgomery
Tom Crean – he made the trip across Antarctica in very harsh conditions
Anne Frank – she wrote a diary while in hiding during WWII

Why are these heroes? These were seen as heroes as they fought with courage and bravery for what they believed was right. Some also completed great feats of bravery and endurance. Through their actions they showed what humans can achieve and what they are capable of through perseverance and in showing resilience.



Martin Luther King Jr⁹



Tom Crean⁹

We discussed historical heroes, and we explored the question ‘Are Heroes always ‘good’? We explored the question can some heroes be viewed as ‘bad’ heroes?’

When we discussed the question first, we looked at our list of historical heroes, and thought heroes are good people. Then we thought about heroes that may have been viewed by some as ‘good’ and others as ‘bad’ heroes e.g. during WWII Hitler may have been viewed as a ‘good’ hero by those who supported him as he expanded the German Empire, but others saw the death and destruction brought about during his leadership and viewed him as the opposite, a ‘bad’ hero.

In fictional stories and films the idea of ‘bad’ hero turned good is also seen. There are many ‘bad’ heroes e.g. John Walker in Captain America, Gru from Despicable Me and Megamind. These are the ‘villains’ in the story but are seen as heroes by their supporters. They subsequently change and become ‘good’ heroes who go on to save and help people. So we thought that assigning the title of ‘good’ or ‘bad’ hero depends on your perspective of that person’s character is and the actions that they take.

In our modern technological world of influencers and viral videos we explored the question ‘Is there a new type of hero/heroine emerging?’

We began by exploring and discussing who our social media heroes/heroines are and why we see them as heroes/heroines:

Michael D Higgins – He helps the homeless and is an advocate for human rights.

Taylor Swift – She is a wonderful singer and has helped a lot of people through money she has donated for different causes.

Genna – I learned to crochet watching her videos and she inspires me to work on my crochet skills.

Miriam Mullins – She is inspirational. She has lots of giveaways and has videos like ‘Get Ready with Me’. She was a contestant on ‘Dancing with the Stars’.

Norris Nuts – An Australian family who are very funny and have a great family bond.

Family Fizz – A vegan family who travelled the world and are now settled in London.

Navy Seals – They show their skills, courage and talents on YouTube videos.

Mr Beast – Worked with blind/deaf people, found homes for dogs, travelled to Africa to construct water wells and sponsors a program for clean water

Analivia Hynes – Grew up without a female figure in her life

Not Enough Nelsons – They adopted children and gave them loving homes.

We felt that social media personalities, ‘celebrities’ and influencers we follow were heroes/heroines as they inspired us to be better people and to develop our talents. These personalities had helped people in need through their charitable works and with donations, and we admired the generosity of these people. We felt it was the character traits of the person that could make them a role model for us – they lived a good life, and they do the right thing, and we could aspire to have those traits.

It was discussed that in a world of on-line personalities, celebrities and influencers we need to think about the deeds and character traits of these people to decide if they are a good role model or social media hero/heroine. We felt that having many followers may show they are popular, but it does not automatically make them a hero/heroine.

Having discussed and researched the topic of ‘heroes/heroines’ we went back and brainstormed a list of words and character traits that we now felt represented a hero/heroine.

saviour	They care about and help other people.	superpowers
Someone who helps or saves somebody in need or in danger.		
They have a catchphrase. (To infinity and beyond! – Buzz Lightyear)		
heroic	kind	nice
	helpful	brave
		courageous
strong	understanding	
They make you happy.		They might do something memorable.
Not all superheroes wear capes.		Not all people need to save to be brave.
Humans aren't the only heroes – animals can be heroes too.		
A hero is someone who saves someone else or does something good.		
People who work in special jobs e.g. paramedic, doctor, nurses, teachers..		
Inspire other people and do good deeds.		
Somebody you can talk to and who listens and you can trust.		
Show love	sees the good in people	compassion
courage to do the right thing	Knowing right from wrong	good character

Using this list we began to question 'Who are the heroes/heroines in our everyday lives that don't have superpowers or 'wear a cape' but are brave, good and someone to look up to?'. We identified these heroes in our own lives:

Our parents	Our Grandparents
People who care for us and help us through hard times	Our cousins
Nurses and Doctors	Blood donors
Our Pets – they are always there for us no matter what Cats, dogs, horses	People with disabilities
Our friends who help us and play with us	Jesus Christ – showed compassion to those around him
Our teachers – they set out our future for us	Soldiers – those that keep us safe and those that are peacekeepers
Gardaí	
Firefighters.	

We explored the question does being a hero/heroine mean you have to perform a 'big' gesture for the world to see? Can you be a hero in the little things?

All children agreed that No – you don't have to perform a 'big' gesture. If you do 'little' things you can be a hero/heroine. You don't need recognition or fame for this. The gesture you make can make the other person feel good and it can also make you feel good for doing it. A small deed can have a big impact in the life of another person. We can act with courage and compassion to those around us and at that time you can become a hero/heroine to them.

We explored examples of 'small gesture's that can be heroic.

Check in on someone and ask how their day was?

Call a friend or relative

Listen to someone

Hold a door for someone

Be helpful and show kindness towards someone

We explored the question 'Are we heroes/heroines?'

The question was raised 'Are we heroes/heroines?' and the initial response was a resounding NO! We looked back at our list of character traits of heroes/heroines and began to see examples of courage, bravery and doing the right thing in our own lives;

I taught my friend to swim.

I saved my sister from drowning when she fell into the pool.

I saved my friend when he was falling out of the tree.

We are our friends' heroes because without us they would not laugh, smile, have fun and wouldn't enjoy their time.

I saved a goal to win the match.

I helped a young child related to me with his homework.

I held the door open for an elderly person.

After the discussion some of the children changed their view of themselves. In our examples we showed courage and compassion in the situations we were in. They may not have been 'big' gestures but, just as Aristotle wrote about, they were the right thing at the right time. He also wrote 'We can do noble acts without ruling the earth or sea'¹⁰ meaning true greatness comes from within, from the choices we make and the values we uphold.

We can exhibit the right feelings and actions relative to a situation and this shows good judgement about life. We can learn about this from our role models and our heroes/heroines. In turn we become good role models for others, and we become heroes/heroines.

Conclusion

- During our discussion of heroes/heroines we were introduced to Virtue Ethics which focuses on what sort of person you should try to be. We learned that Aristotle discussed courage and doing the right thing in the right circumstances. Too little courage is cowardice and too much courage can be rashness.
- We identified our heroes/heroines from films, books, the world of sport, history, social media and our 'real' lives. We raised the question 'Are they heroes because of their actions or because of their character traits?'. Most agreed that character traits were most important, and heroes/heroines are admired for their hard work, commitment to their cause or field of sport and the type of character traits they show. These people are our role models as they make good judgements in life, and we aspire to be like them and to act as they do. In turn we can then become role models for others.
- We discussed the idea of 'good' and 'bad' heroes/heroines and recognised that there can be 'bad' heroes/heroines and the idea of a good or bad hero/heroine will depend on your perspective of what is happening around you.
- As a group we agreed that you do not have to make a 'big' gesture for the world to see to be a hero/heroine. Small gestures that are the right thing at the right time and that show good judgement in life , can make you a hero/heroine.

Most importantly we learned that - the more we research the more questions we raise:

We could be heroes – couldn't we? Is there a potential within us all to be heroes?

Although we initially rejected the idea that we were heroes/heroines on further questioning and discussing Aristotle's idea about the virtue of courage we changed our mind. We learn about developing good character traits and making good judgements from our role models – our heroes/heroines. If we do the right thing at the right time then in Aristotle's eyes, we show courage and good judgement in life making us heroes/heroines and role models for others. We could we be heroes – couldn't we? Is there a potential within us all to be heroes? Yes, there is. So now we just need a catchphrase!

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