



Humane Heroes

True heroism is remarkably sober, very undramatic. It is not the urge to surpass all others at whatever cost, but the urge to serve others, at whatever cost.

—Arthur Ashe

What is a hero?

According to the Encarta English Dictionary, a hero is “somebody who commits an act of remarkable bravery or who has shown great courage, strength of character, or another admirable quality.” Combined with the word “humane,” defined by the same dictionary as “showing the better aspects of the human character, especially kindness and compassion,” we get a very special person — the Humane Hero, one who has shown great strength of character to promote kindness and compassion. Heroes are important not only for their acts but for the acts they inspire in others. So here’s some inspiration...



“Blessed are the Merciful”

Henry Bergh (1813-1888)

Founder of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) and the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NYSPCC).

Henry Bergh was the son of a prominent shipbuilder. After the closing of the family business he found himself to be a man of leisure touring Europe with his new bride. In 1863, he was appointed to a diplomatic post at the Russian court of Czar Alexander II by Abraham Lincoln. It was there he had an epiphany and first took action against mankind’s inhumanity toward animals. Seeing a cart driver beating his horse, Henry Bergh leapt from his own carriage to come to the aid of the horse. Soon after, on his way back to the United States, he stopped in London to meet and learn from the Earl of Harrowby, president of England’s Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, founded in 1840.

Back in New York, Bergh set out to form the ASPCA—the first such organization of its kind in the Americas. He achieved that goal on April 10, 1866, when he was granted a charter from New York State to form the Society. The first enforceable law against animal cruelty in the US was passed a few days later. Henry Bergh was

quite an active participant in the workings of the ASPCA—serving as President and manning the streets in search of those treating their animals cruelly.

In 1874, Henry Bergh was contacted by Etta Wheeler, a church worker, who became aware of a child in a horribly neglectful and abusive home. At that time there were no laws that allowed for the removal of a child from an abusive situation, so Henry Bergh contacted his attorney Elbridge Gerry for advice. Gerry used an obscure section of habeas corpus to allow for the removal of Mary Ellen McCormack from her abusive home. As a result of this case, Bergh, Gerry and John D. Wright founded the NYSPCC in December 1874—the first child protective organization in the world.

Henry Bergh had neither pets nor children, but had the most profound effect on promoting the protection of both. We need only look to the number of animal and child protective organizations in the United States today to know that, 141 years after establishing the ASPCA, Henry Bergh’s legacy lives on!



“The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land.”

Aldo Leopold (1887-1948)

Father of wildlife management, conservationist, forester, philosopher, educator, writer, and outdoor enthusiast.

Aldo Leopold showed an interest in the natural world at an early age—spending hours outdoors observing, journaling and drawing aspects of nature. He earned a degree from the Yale Forest School and joined the US Forest Service in 1909. In 1922, he was instrumental in drafting the proposal to manage the Gila National Forest as a wilderness area. This resulted in the first official designation of a “wilderness area” and helped to preserve countless acres of undisturbed, undeveloped natural space.

Leopold’s greatest influence came from the posthumous publication of *A Sand County Almanac*, a collection of his essays that earned him the reputation as the most influential conservation thinker of the twentieth century. His legacy continues to inspire people to view nature as a community to which we belong, rather than a commodity that we can conquer.



“I don’t think one can articulate a satisfaction with harming another being whether it’s human or nonhuman.”

Henry Spira (1927-1998)

Founder of Animal Rights International

Henry Spira was involved in the labor and civil rights movements for 25 years before taking up the cause for animals in the 1970s. He is credited with the first antivivisection victory in more than a century of efforts in the US and Europe in 1977, when the American Museum of Natural History stopped its research on the effects of castration and other forms of mutilation on the sexual behavior of cats. He organized a coalition of animal welfare and animal rights groups to pressure the cosmetics industry to phase out safety testing on animals and prompted the industry to provide the initial funding to create the Johns Hopkins Center for Alternatives to Animal Testing.

During the 1980s the focus of Spira’s work shifted to farmed animals. He had success in ending the practice of face branding of cattle and negotiated with McDonald’s and other fast-food companies to more closely supervise the practices of their suppliers.

Henry Spira noted that we cannot abolish cruel practices overnight—it is a step-by-step process. He took many steps that improved the lives of countless animals.

There are so many humane heroes stories that can inspire your students. Activity Sheet 4 includes a far from exhaustive list of people throughout history along with resources for gathering information about them. Where will the inspiration lead your students?



Activity Sheet 1 Grades K-2

Students will construct a story of a humane hero (a person who helps animals) through either words or pictures. Read the story of Joe and the animal control officer with your students and ask them to think of their own example of a humane hero. Also, brainstorm some of the traits of a humane hero and mention some of the famous humane heroes listed in the article in this issue. Depending on your students' skills, they can either write a story or draw pictures to tell their story. Once your students finish their work, have them read or describe their picture story to the class. Then, display your students' work in the classroom or hallway.

STANDARDS:

NCTE English Language Arts #3:

Evaluation strategies

NSAE Arts Education #1:

Understanding and Applying Media, Techniques, and Processes

NSAE Arts Education #2:

Using Knowledge of Structures and Functions



Activity Sheet 2 Grades 3-5



Poetry can be a fun, creative way for your students to express their appreciation for the heroes in their life. Various forms of poetry should be encouraged: Haiku (5 words-7-5 words), Couplets (2 lines, last words match), Triplets (3 lines-rhyming pattern AAA or ABA), or quatrains (4 lines-rhyming pattern AABB or ABAB).

The fun part of poetry is that it doesn't really have to follow a specific form—creativity is key! Have students bring their poetry to visual life, by illustrating their work with photographs, drawings and painting.

STANDARDS:

NCTE English Language Arts #4:

Communication Skills

NCTE English Language Arts #5:

Communication Strategies

NAEA Visual Arts #4:

Techniques and Processes



Activity Sheet 3 Grades 6-8

Creating a superhero comic book is a fun and educational project. Students learn about real heroes who protect animals; about design and layout; develop their communications and teambuilding skills; conduct research; and develop multimedia skills. Discuss with your students famous and local humane heroes they know. Have them research other humane heroes not discussed on the Internet. Once your students have selected a person on whom to base a super hero comic book, discuss and guide your students with their research and their plan of action for the layout and design. Have them assign tasks, such as who will draw the character, edit, layout the comic book, research background information, design costumes, etc. It is important to offer students a time for reflection as a group or in a journal about their experience in working on the project and any follow-up they feel is necessary.



STANDARDS:

NCTE English Language Arts #4:
Communication Skills

NCTE English Language Arts #8:
Developing research tools

NETS Technology #4:
Technology Communication Tools

NETS Technology #5:
Technology Research Tools

Activity Sheet 4 Grades K-8

People have worked for many years to improve the quality of life and/or conditions of animals around the world. Begin this activity by asking students to name well-known humane heroes. Write their answers on the board, initiate discussion and then hand out Activity Sheet 4. The activity sheet offers students a recommended list of books and websites that provide stories and information about people who promote kindness and compassion toward animals. Once students have read one or a few of the books and looked at the websites, teachers can continue the discussion on what information students have found. You can also ask students about humane heroes in their community.



STANDARDS:

NCTE English Language Arts #1:
Reading for Perspective

NETS Technology #5:
Technology Research Tools



Humane Heroes Storytelling

A HUMANE HERO IS SOMEONE WHO DOES SOMETHING VERY SPECIAL TO HELP ANIMALS. ANYONE CAN BE A HUMANE HERO.

Create a short story with pictures of a person who does something special for animals.

HERE IS AN EXAMPLE OF A HUMANE HERO:

Joe was walking down the street. It was very cold outside. He saw a mom cat and three tiny kittens under a tree with no food, water or shelter. He called the animal shelter and waited for them to help the mother cat and her kittens. The animal rescue officer took the cat and her kittens to a warm and safe animal shelter. Joe and the animal rescue officer are both humane heroes.





You're
a Poet

And You Didn't Even Know It!

Using standard poetry forms, create original works of poetry about real or imaginary humane heroes.

Some standard forms of poetry include **Haiku, limerick, triplets, quatrains and cinquains.** Use your creativity to come up with new forms for your poem—"I wish poems," shape poems or even **acrostics** are all fun ideas.



*After you compose your poem, mount it on a poster decorated with illustrations, photographs and drawings. The sky's the limit! Decorate your classroom with beautiful, inspirational poems and art about some unsung heroes—**Humane Heroes!***

HERE IS AN EXAMPLE TO GET YOU STARTED:

**There once was a brave boy from Nog
Who always protected his dog
Once his house caught fire
And his dog he did squire
To safety, away from the smog!**



Humane Superhero



USING ONE OF THE HUMANE HEROES LISTED BY YOUR TEACHER OR ONE OF YOUR OWN, CREATE A SUPER HERO COMIC BOOK CHARACTER!

CREATE A SUPER POWER (SUPER-KINDNESS, SUPER-BRAVERY!), AND IMMORTALIZE THESE HEROES INTO A COMIC BOOK CHARACTER!

PROCESS

You can work in groups or individually. Your comic book can be several pages long or a simple comic strip. Each person in your group will contribute to the creation of the superhero. Tasks may include helping create the background information for the character, creating the super powers for the character, creating a villain or problem for the character and designing the costumes for the characters.

QUESTIONS

Remember that your superhero is based on a real humane hero, so research background information on the Internet and incorporate the information in your story. In creating the super powers, you may want to answer the following questions: What kind of powers does your hero have? Do these powers work all the time? How did they get these powers (born with them? accident?)?

BE CREATIVE

Create a costume for your character and if he or she uses equipment, design it. Use computer programs to design and create the booklet, to create characters, and layout the design of the comic book. To be super creative, you can even use a computer program to animate your comic book superhero!





Recommended Resources

Henry Bergh

www.aspca.org/history

Friend of Animals: The Story of Henry Bergh

by Mildred Mastin Pace and Danny L. Miller,
Ages 9-12, Jesse Stuart Foundation, 1995

The ASPCA (International Organizations)

by Patricia Miller-Schroeder, Ages 4-8,
Weigl Publishers, 2002

Rachel Carson

www.rachelcarson.org

Rachel Carson (Rookie Biographies)

by Justine Fontes and Ron Fontes, Ages 4-8,
Children's Press, 2005

Dian Fossey

www.gorillafund.org

Dian Fossey: At Home with the Giant Gorillas

by Corinne Naden and Rose Blue, Ages 9-12,
Millbrook Press, 2002

Jane Goodall

www.janegoodall.org

The Chimpanzees I Love: Saving Their World and Ours by Jane Goodall, Ages 9-12, Scholastic, 2001,
2001 ASPCA® Henry Bergh Children's Book Award Winner

My Life with the Chimpanzees by Jane Goodall,
Ages 9-12, Aladdin, 1996

Aldo Leopold

www.aldoleopold.org

Of Things Natural, Wild and Free: A Story About Aldo Leopold

by Marybeth Lorbiecki, Ages 9-12,
Carolrhoda Books, 1993

John Walsh of WSPA

www.wspa-international.org

Animal Rescue: The Best Job There Is

by Susan E. Goodman, Ages 4-8, Aladdin, 2001

John Muir

www.sierraclub.org/johnmuir

John Muir: My Life with Nature by Joseph Cornell
Ages 9-12, Dawn Publications, 2000; 2000 ASPCA®
Henry Bergh Children's Book Award Winner,

John Muir: America's First Environmentalist by
Kathryn Lasky, Ages 4-8, Candlewick Press, 2006

Temple Grandin

www.grandin.com

Rescued by a Cow and a Squeeze: Temple Grandin
by Mary Carpenter, PublishAmerica, 2003

Caroline Earle White

www.aavs.org/about02.html

Velma Bronn Johnston (aka Wild Horse Annie)

www.unr.edu/wrc/nwhp/biograph/johnston.htm

Henry Spira

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Spira

