

Lesson 10: Our Civic Heroes

Grade Level: K-5

Objective: Students will learn about civic heroes and how individuals who stand up for justice, fairness, and equality contribute to making their communities better. They will explore examples of civic heroes and reflect on how they can be heroes in their own way.

Focus Skills:

Engaging in Civil Discourse Students will discuss and reflect on the qualities of civic heroes and how standing up for fairness and justice can lead to meaningful conversations and change.

Analyzing Civic Engagement Students will explore how individuals take action to improve their communities, inspiring them to think about their own potential for civic involvement.

Materials Needed:

- Chart paper or whiteboard and markers
- Printed copies of “**Our Civic Heroes**” (story provided below)
- Pictures or short biographies of famous civic heroes (optional) from the school or public library (get suggestions from the children’s librarian on staff)
- Craft supplies (construction paper, markers, crayons, etc.)
- Pre-cut paper stars (one for each student)

Lesson Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify examples of civic heroes and their contributions to society.
 - Understand the importance of standing up for fairness, equality, and justice.
 - Reflect on how they can be “civic heroes” in their own communities.
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Introduction (5 Minutes):

Discussion Prompt: “Who can be a hero? What makes someone an upstander?”

Explain that a **bystander** is someone who sees something unfair or harmful but stays silent and does nothing. An **upstander** is someone who speaks up or takes action to stand up for others, even when it may be difficult or unpopular.

- Write student answers on the board. Encourage them to think about real-life heroes—people who help others, make the world better, and stand up for what’s right.
- Ask: “Can a hero be someone in your community? What do you think makes them a hero?”

Reading Time (15 Minutes):

Text to Read Aloud: "Our Civic Heroes"

Civic heroes are people who work to make the world a better place by standing up for what is fair and just. They are ordinary people who do extraordinary things to help their communities. Sometimes, they work together with others to fight for what's right, and sometimes, they stand up alone when they see something that isn't fair.

*For example, **Rosa Parks** was a civic hero because she stood up for equality by refusing to give up her seat on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, even though the law said African Americans had to sit at the back. This brave act helped start the civil rights movement, which worked to end segregation and give everyone the same rights.*

*Another civic hero is **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.**, who used peaceful protests to fight for equal rights for all people, regardless of the color of their skin. His speeches and actions inspired millions to work together for justice and fairness.*

Discussion Questions:

- Why do you think Rosa Parks and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. are called heroes?
- Can you think of a time when you saw someone stand up for what is right?
- How can we be civic heroes in our own lives, even if we're young?

Constitution Connection (10 Minutes):

Introduction to the First Amendment (Simplified):

"The First Amendment is part of the Constitution, and it gives us the right to say what we think, to practice our religion, and to tell the government if we don't agree with something. It also says we can gather together with others to work on things we care about."

Discuss:

- How does the First Amendment help us be like civic heroes?
- Can you think of a time when someone used their voice to make something better or more fair?
- Why is it important to speak up when something is wrong?

Activity: "Design Your Own Civic Hero" (15 Minutes)

Objective: Students will create a visual representation of their own civic hero, using qualities and actions that they believe make someone a hero in their community.

Materials Needed:

- Large poster paper or chart paper labeled "Our Civic Heroes"
- Pre-cut paper stars (one for each student)
- Markers, crayons, and glue and other craft supplies

Instructions:

1. Introduction (2 Minutes): Explain that every student will have a chance to create their own civic hero. They will choose someone from their life or community who stands up for fairness, equality, and justice. This could be someone they know personally, like a teacher, a neighbor, or a family member, or a famous civic hero they admire.

- Consider laying out pre-selected books about civic heroes for students who may have difficulty coming up with someone as their civic hero.
- Discuss how civic heroes might stand up for things like kindness, fairness, or helping others.

Creative Design (10 Minutes):

- Give each student a pre-cut star shape.
- Ask them to draw or write about their civic hero. They should include:
 - The hero's name
 - A description of why they are a hero (What did they do? How did they help their community?).
 - What qualities make them a hero (bravery, kindness, fairness, etc.)?
- Students can decorate their stars with colorful markers, glitter, or stickers to make them stand out.

Assembly (3 Minutes):

- Once the stars are completed, have students take turns sharing their civic heroes with the class and gluing their stars onto the "Our Civic Heroes" board.
 - Ask each student to briefly explain why their hero is important and what makes them a civic hero.
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Closing and Reflection (5-10 Minutes):

- Ask students:
 - What makes a civic hero different from a superhero?
 - Unlike superheroes with superhuman abilities, regular heroes rely on their compassion, determination, and willingness to make a difference in the world.
 - A civic hero is someone who focuses on improving their community, standing up for fairness, justice, and the common good. They may organize protests, help people in need, or stand up against unfair systems.
 - How can we be heroes in our own communities?
 - What small things can you do every day to be a civic hero?

Conclude by emphasizing that everyone can be a hero by helping others, standing up for fairness, and working to make their community better. Encourage students to think about ways they can be civic heroes in their own lives.

Assessment:

- **Participation in Discussion:** Did the student engage with the questions and explain their thoughts about civic heroes?

- **Contribution to the “Our Civic Heroes” Board:** Did the student create a thoughtful and creative representation of their hero?
- **Reflection:** Did the student connect the concept of civic heroes to real-life actions and express how they can be a hero in their community?

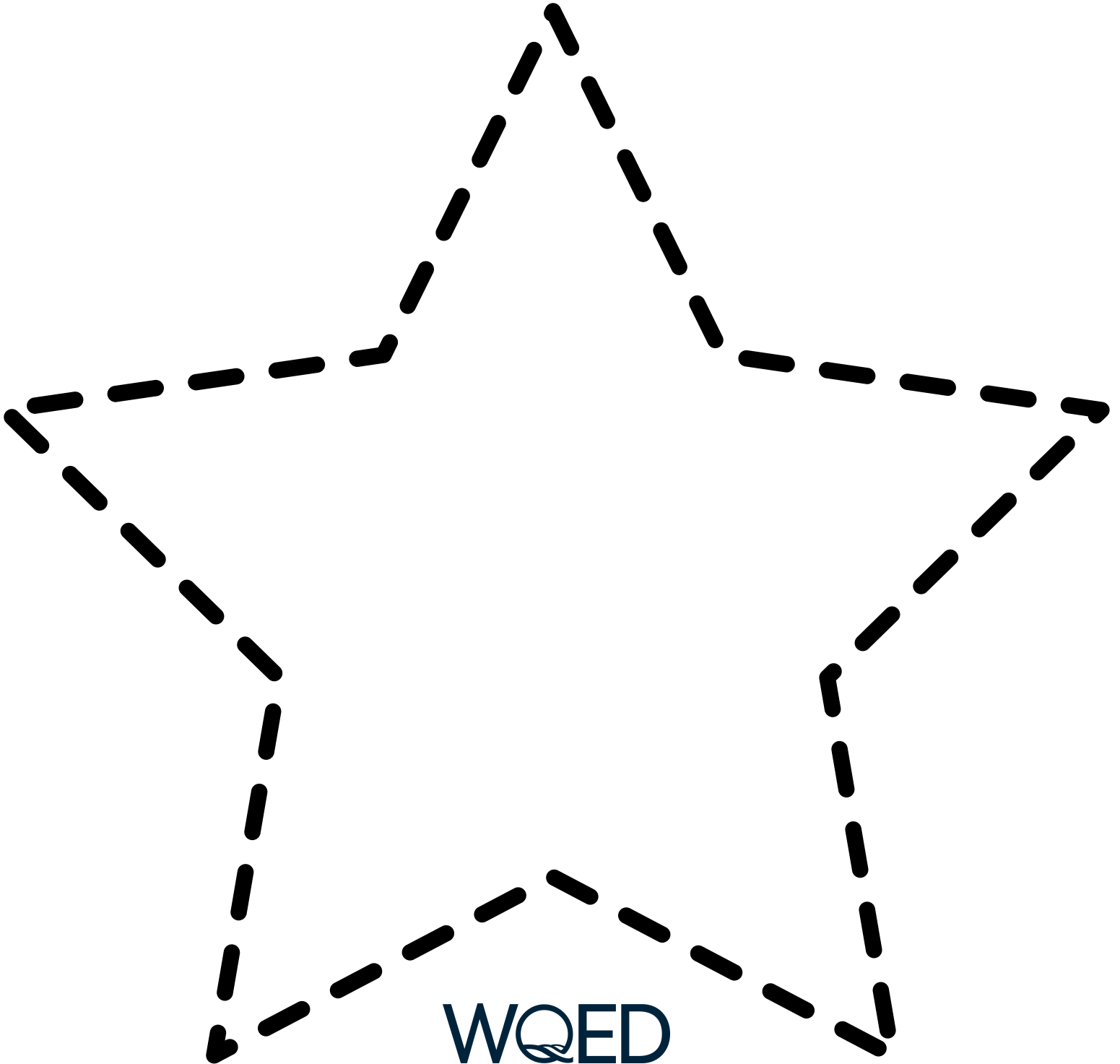
Suggested Booklist: Our Civic Heroes

- Unshakable Eleanor : How Our 32nd First Lady Used Her Voice to Fight for Human Rights by Michelle Markel
- Love Is Loud : How Diane Nash Led the Civil Rights Movement by Sandra Neil Wallace
- Someday is Now by Olugbemisola Rhuday-Perkovich
- Fighting with Love : The Legacy of John Lewis by Lesa Cline-Ransome
- Martí’s Song for Freedom : Martí y sus versos por la libertad by Emma Otheguy
- Shirley Chisholm Is a Verb by Veronica Chambers
- Soldier for Equality by Duncan Tonatiuh
- Thank You, Helpers: Doctors, Nurses, Teachers, Grocery Workers, and More Who Care for Us by Patricia Hegarty
- Ordinary People Change The World series by Brad Meltzer
- Little People, BIG DREAMS series by Maria Isabel Sánchez Vegara

Civic Hero - Paper Star Template

Draw or write about your civic hero. Include

- **The hero's name.**
- **A description of why they are a hero (What did they do? How did they help their community?).**
- **What qualities make them a hero (bravery, kindness, fairness, etc.).**



Lesson Extension: "Civic Minded Citizens" - Interviewing Local Heroes

Overview:

This extension activity provides students with the opportunity to connect with local civic heroes who have worked to make the community a better place. Students will practice interview skills, listen actively, and reflect on how these heroes impact their lives.

Introduction (5 minutes):

Explain the Activity:

Tell students that they'll have the chance to meet a local civic hero, either in person or virtually, to learn more about their work and contributions. The goal is for students to ask thoughtful questions, listen closely, and gain a deeper understanding of how civic heroes make the world better.

- Ask the class, "What do you think makes someone a civic hero? What kinds of things do you think these people do to help others?" Encourage students to think about local figures such as community leaders, volunteers, activists, or people who have helped fight for equality, safety, or justice.
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Preparation (5-10 minutes):

Brainstorm Questions Together:

As a class, brainstorm a few simple questions to ask a civic hero. Some possible questions could include:

- "What is your job, and how do you help others?"
- "What made you want to become a civic hero?"
- "What's one of the biggest challenges you face in helping the community?"
- "How do you know if you're making a difference?"
- "What advice do you have for someone who wants to help others like you do?"

Assign Roles:

- **Question Helpers** – students who will ask the questions.
 - **Note-Takers** – students who will draw or write down the hero's responses.
 - **Listeners** – students who will listen and observe the interaction.
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Classroom Interview with Local Hero (20 minutes):

Arrange a Visit:

Invite a local civic hero to visit the classroom (either in person or virtually). This could be someone like a community activist, local government official, police officer, healthcare worker, or an educator. Be sure to give students a bit of background on the person beforehand.

Student Questions:

Encourage each "question helper" to ask one of the questions they brainstormed earlier. Students should also have follow-up questions based on what the hero shares.

Note-Taking and Observation:

While the interview is happening, have the “note-takers” draw pictures or write key points from the conversation. This could include a picture of the hero at work, a list of things they do to help, or key quotes from the interview.

Group Sharing and Reflection (10 minutes):**Share Observations:**

After the interview, give students a chance to share what they learned. Each “note-taker” can present what they drew or wrote to the class, and “question helpers” can share what they learned from the answers.

Reflection Prompt:

Ask students to reflect on the following:

- “How did this person become a civic hero in our community?”
 - “What qualities do they have that make them a hero?”
 - “What are some ways you can make a difference in your own community?”
 - “What did you learn from their story that inspires you?”
 - “Do you have to work for the government to be a hero? Why or why not?”
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Assessment:

- **Participation in discussions and activities:** Did the student actively engage in the brainstorming and interview process?
- **Quality and creativity of drawings or notes:** Did the student capture meaningful aspects of the interview, and how did they thoughtfully represent what they learned?
- **Quality of interview questions and reflections:** Did the student ask relevant, thoughtful questions? Did they reflect on how they can make a difference, inspired by the civic hero's example?