

Performance Exercise: “Folk Hero”

Learning Goals

- 1) To discover what constitutes a folk hero (community role model) in terms of *yourself* and your larger community.
- 2) To detail why your chosen folk hero is of value to your community.
- 3) To determine *how* and *why* stories about folk heroes are passed on within your community.

Instructions

Is a hero someone who continually behaves in a heroic manner? Or is a hero defined in a single heroic moment? Where in the community is the hero located? How does someone become a hero? Why are heroes useful to us and our communities?

These are questions you will answer with a performance.

A folk hero is a role model (however you define that word) who exists in your immediate community. Your task will be to depict that folk hero, and at least one of his/her heroic acts, in a performance piece no longer than 3 minutes. Here are your guidelines for creating that performance:

1. These are solo performances, but you may play more than one character.
2. You may employ props, costumes, and music, but use only what is absolutely necessary.
3. The performance may be as abstract or as realistic as you like. You may “become” the folk hero and talk about yourself. You may play someone who has witnessed the hero in action. You may play an outside observer. Remember, the important thing is to use the performance to entertain and explain why the person is a hero to you.
4. You should think about intentionally *violating what you consider the “traditional” expectations of the audience* (e.g., the barrier between audience and performer, the logical progression of plot, an actor playing only one character).

Seek to answer these questions (at the very least) in the process of performance:

1. What makes up a hero? Why do I consider this person heroic?
2. How did this hero affect me? What did I learn from this person?
3. How is this hero related to the community?
4. Is this or any hero *always* heroic?
5. What message do I want to impart to my audience about this hero?

You will have two weeks to prepare this performance. You may use an in-hand script, *on the condition that it does not hinder your performance.*

Wrap-Up Questions

1. Is a local or “folk hero” different from heroes we read about in history books?
2. How are real heroes different from fictional heroes (such as mythical heroes in Homer and superheroes in comic books)?
3. What values does your individual folk hero have?
4. Are heroes *always* heroes, or are they defined by one or a few heroic acts?
5. Are there times when being called a “hero” can be negative?
6. How has your particular hero changed your life? Your community? History?
7. Is a hero different from a role model? How so?
8. Why are stories about heroes in general continually told?
9. Why are stories about your particular hero continually told?