

Heroes essay essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

What is a hero? To you, the reader, I submit this question so that you may form your own opinion. What is a hero and what qualifications make he or she worthy of the title? The reply you have formulated in your mind has probably come to you rapidly and with alacrity, so much that you may deem even asking such a simple question to be not only a waste of the time it took me to ask it, but also the time it took you to consider it. Did you think of some virtuous individual who rescues people, putting life and limb on the line to do others help and fight the evils of the world? Did Hercules of ancient Greek mythology and Superman and Spiderman of modern times come into your mind's eye? Did a police officer, a fire fighter, or some hero of war enter your brain? If they did and they make up your answer, then, from a certain perspective, you are correct. However, if such characters were all that you thought of, then you are also indisputably very, very wrong.

It is certainly acceptable to look upon such people as heroes, but not expanding the horizons of the word also suggests a lack of scope or vision. Such people fit a dictionary's description of "hero", but in defining this word, one finds the dictionary falls short of the obligation of properly defining it. Everyone can be, and probably is, a hero. Even the person who is reading these words now is more likely than not worthy of this distinction and if they are not, then they inevitably will be. A hero is anyone who has forgotten themselves for another or anyone who has been positively influential in the life of another, for having done a deed that has consequences of a beneficial nature makes one a hero in the eyes of the one they helped. The grandness of the deeds one does to become a hero and the number of people one serves as a hero for is irrelevant, for one is a hero nonetheless.

No one life can with any validity be judged more important than another and, therefor, the heroes who influenced that life have also ascended beyond the level where they can be judged. To a basketball player, Michael Jordan, Oscar Robertson, Bill Russell, Sheryll Swoopes, or Cynthia Cooper could be a hero. Then again, so too could the coach who introduced him or her to the game. A writer could have gained heroic inspiration from Edgar Allen Poe, William Shakespeare, Carl Sagan, or any of a million other authors, but the same could also be said of the English teacher who sparked the love for writing that they now have. Anyone and everyone can be a hero. In my own opinion, the people I choose as best fitting my definition and all the varied aspects of it are my own parents, Jim and Della from *The Gift of the Magi*, and Enrique Rivas from Enrique "Rick" Rivas.

I choose my parents for innumerable reasons, only a select few of which have I the space to describe here. The most obvious of these is that without them, I would not even be here to contemplate what makes a hero. Beyond that, though, there are other things. Everything I believe in and everything I enjoy or dislike has to be linked to them. It is an inevitable and unavoidable connection. The way they have brought me up has had a far greater influence on me than anything else this world has to offer. Some things about me I can link directly to my parents and not to anyone else. For instance, would I play any musical instruments or have had the inclination to do the studying required to comprehend music theory if my mother had not herself played the piano or if she and my father hadn't had music playing for me when I was a baby? Would I be such a fan of sports or play basketball if my father hadn't been a state champion in track and field in high school and

a Division I soccer player in college? If he hadn't introduced athletics to me, helped me with them, let me develop in them at my own pace, and shown me that one must work in order to achieve and perform better, would I follow sports, or have the desire to put in the time running, practicing, and lifting weights that is needed to perfect the imperfections and become successful?

Thousands of variables went into me becoming the kind of person I have become and only my parents could have manipulated those factors in such a way so that they interacted as they have. The odds of any other people raising me up to become the same exact person I am now are astronomically small, to the point of all but impossibility. Some aspects of my personality were present at birth and would have surfaced irregardless, but the manner in which they arose is all thanks to my parents. For these things, nearly every child should look upon their parents as heroic people. Only someone whose parents were abusive should not do so, for, in most circumstances, if someone likes themselves, they have the influence of their parents first and foremost to thank for it.

In *The Gift of the Magi*, Della and Jim gave up something that they cherished to make the other happy and this makes them heroes, regardless of whether or not they were heroes to anyone besides one another. After trying all year to save money, with fruitless results due to their financial situation, Della and Jim were willing to give up almost anything so that they could obtain a Christmas gift worthy of the love they felt towards each other. The story describes Della's hair as "beautiful", noting how it "fell rippling and shining like a cascade of brown waters." Della's hair was written of as one of the "two possessions . . . in which they [she and Jim] took pride."

Della's hair was apparently so magnificent that it could "depreciate the Queen of Sheba's jewels and gifts." Yet, despite its rare and wonderful beauty, Della was willing to give it up so that she could buy her husband a chain for his beloved pocket watch, the counterpart to Della's hair in the department of things they took pride in.

The watch was something to behold as well, for ". . . Had King Solomon been the janitor, with all his treasures piled up in the basement, Jim would have pulled out his watch every time he passed, just to see him pluck his beard with envy." Besides its appearance, the watch was also a treasured heirloom. Yet Jim gave it up for the same reason his wife gave up her hair, save that his gift was a fine set of combs with which she could comb her hair. The sacrifices they made makes them heroes, as does the fact that neither was angered at the other for giving up their treasures or at the ironic twist of fate that rendered each of their gifts, for the moment, worthless in every form of value except sentimental.

Enrique "Rick" Rivas is a hero because he stood upon the brink of the abyss and returned. In the story, we see Rivas descend into the deepest circles of depression, so that all his hopes and dreams are clouded by a dark mist originating from his abuse of drugs and alcohol. Rivas drops out of school, saying he felt "no guilt in lying to" his mother as he deceived her into allowing him to do so. He then proceeds to go on "a mad hunt for drugs." This costs him his job and it threatens his sanity, for as Rivas says himself, ". . . when I wasn't high, I was driven crazy by a voice inside my head. . . It told me over and over that I wasn't worth much, that I wasn't smart." Drug

addiction deteriorates Rivas' mind to the point that it craves nothing but drugs.

It causes his dying mother to loathe what her son had turned into. Yet, just as it seemed Rivas had reached a level only one up from dying, he, through a rediscovery of religion and a warning from his girlfriend, comes back, slowly abandoning the drugs that had plagued him and taken over his body like a festering malignancy. Enrique Rivas enrolled in a college, got married, and has his life back on track. To take such a voyage through purgatory and into hell and to come back a better person than when he went in is inspirational enough to warrant his being called a hero. Further justification to Rivas' status as a hero is added because he volunteers to help other people who have the same burdens he once bore straighten themselves out and because he vows not to let his child make any of the mistakes he did, lest she face the same barriers he did and not be able to get over the almost insurmountable challenges.

According to Webster's Third International Dictionary, (published in 1981 by Encyclopedia Britannica Incorporated) a hero is " a mythological or legendary figure often of divine descent endowed with great strength or ability, an illustrious warrior, or one that shows great courage ". Many people throughout the ages have fit within these guidelines, but do the people who I have described, and shown to be heroes, do the same? Only Rivas, unless one really wants to stretch the boundaries of these quotes, does, for he showed the noted great courage in dropping his addiction to drugs.

In my opinion, these definitions should be added as well : anyone who influences another person in a beneficial manner, while receiving no real compensation save the feeling that he or she has done something that could potentially have extraordinary results, anyone who is looked up to by another for reasons of a positive nature, and anyone who would lose sight of themselves and, for motives that would not help them at all, sacrifice something, not necessarily material, for the happiness or well-being of another. All of the people I described fit within these sentences that truly define heroism. Some critical people may complain that anyone could be a hero if what I say is to be taken seriously, making it lose some of the glamour that went with being in an elite class open to a select few.

I have already agreed with the former part of that complaint, but as to the latter portion, which really makes it a complaint, I disagree. Being a hero is still a vastly important job the significance of which should not be underestimated. Without heroes, there would be no one for people to look up to and no one for people to try and pattern themselves, in attempts to become better individuals, after. The facts that everyone has their own heroes and that most people are heroes in someone else's eyes doesn't diminish the title in the least. This definition is, indeed, the proper one and my parents, Jim and Della from *The Gift of the Magi*, and Enrique Rivas from Enrique "Rick" Rivas are all heroes beyond a shadow of a doubt.