

# SELF-DECEPTION



## Suggested Launch Activity TEACHER'S NOTES

### *About Launch Activities*

This optional introductory activity is designed to support you in the classroom. However, the primary narratives and photos in the section that follows can be used with or without this introduction.

### CENTRAL QUESTION

How can a person become so deceived by an idea that they will commit horrific acts against others? How can one prevent themselves from being deceived in a such a way?

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### PRIMARY SOURCES & THE HOLOCAUST

The Holocaust was a unique event in human history. Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime carried out the genocide of an entire group of people, the Jews. Although Jews were practitioners of a religion, the Nazis used Social Darwinism and other racial science theory to label Jews a race who were “inferior.” They used the modern technology of railroads to ship Jews from all over Europe and killed them in modern factory systems. The organization of the systematic mass murder was carried out by Nazi bureaucrats who saw it as a complex problem to solve. All of this happened in the modern twentieth century. As a result, the Nazis killed six million Jews and millions of other people deemed “inferior.” In the wake of World War II, the world cried, “Never Forget.”

Discuss with the students how primary sources are important to the Holocaust for several reasons. Primary sources help preserve the memory of this terrible crime so that it never happens again. Additionally, primary sources help us to remember the victims of the genocide. Since there are those who deny that the Holocaust happen or question its scope, primary sources provide stark and comprehensive evidence that the Holocaust happened. Finally, primary sources associated with the Nazi participants can help start to explain how the people could have deceived themselves into thinking that it was morally acceptable to kill Jews.



# IRMA GRESE AND DECEPTION



## Analyzing Primary Source Documents

**Background:** Below is an excerpt from BBC correspondent Patrick Gordon-Walker about his experience at Belsen concentration camp on 24 April, 1945. Read the excerpt and discuss with your classmates your impressions.

“The camps were so full because people had been brought here from east and west. Some people were brought from Nordhausen, a five-day journey, without food. Many had marched for two or three days. There was no food at all in the camp, a few piles of roots- amidst the piles of dead bodies. Some of the dead bodies were of people so hungry that though the roots were guarded by SS-men they had tried to storm them and had been shot down then and there. There was no water, nothing but these roots and some boiled stinking carrots, enough for a few hundred people.

Men and women had fought for these raw, uncooked roots. Dead bodies, black and blue and bloated, and skeletons had been used as pillows by sick people. The day after we took over, seven block leaders, mostly Poles, were murdered by the inmates. Some were still beating the people. We arrested one woman who had beaten another woman with a board. She quite frankly admitted the offense. We are arresting these people.

An enormous buried dump of personal jewelry and belongings was discovered in suitcases. When I went to the camp five days after its liberation, there were still bodies all around. I saw about a thousand.”

# THE SELF-DECEPTION OF IRMA GRESE



*Directions: Ordinary men and women have committed the most inhumane and immoral atrocities in human history. Whether falling into self-deception or being consumed by self-interest, these individuals lost their humanity. By studying these tragic events and the evil that drove them, we can learn to better avoid the dangers deception poses for all of us. Read the essay below and answer the discussion questions.*

The trial began on September 17, 1945. On the stand were 45 defendants, each accused of acts of great barbarity. One of them was a 22-year-old woman from northeastern Germany. Her beauty made her stand out from the crowd. With blonde hair and blue eyes, she was the picture of Aryan beauty. Her name was Irma Grese.

Irma was born on a small farm in northeastern Germany in 1923. Her mother committed suicide when she was only 13, leaving her to be raised only by her father. Her sister described her as a shy and meek child who would often avoid conflict instead of starting it. She left school when she was 14, as she was frustrated and bored of her schooling. After dropping out of school, Irma worked several odd jobs until she eventually began working at a local hospital, where she received training to be a nurse.

During the 1930s in Germany, a political movement called the National Socialist Germany Workers Party, or Nazis, seized power under the leadership of its charismatic, demagogic leader, Adolf Hitler, and the strong-arm tactics of its paramilitary troops, the SA brownshirts. The Nazis gained power and increasing popularity with a promise to overcome the economic calamity of the Great Depression, and an appeal to an ideology of racial superiority of the

German people and extreme nationalism. By the mid-1930s, the Nazi Party dominated Germany, establishing a one-party totalitarian state and dictatorship of Hitler. The Nazis created laws targeted especially against Jews, including forbidding marriage with Germans, limiting Jewish citizenship, and banning Jews from professions.

The Nazis tried to mobilize all members of society to form a mass movement of the entire nation. Therefore, the Hitler Youth and League of German Women were set up for young boys and girls to be introduced to the radical ideology of the Nazi Party. These organizations encouraged a fervent faith in the Nazi ideology and to report anyone who disagreed, including family members if necessary. Irma joined the League of German Women and received indoctrination at a young age. She became a fervent advocate of the Nazi ideology.

While working at the hospital and attending Nazi rallies, Irma also began to meet Nazi party officials. In addition to her personal activities, Irma was surrounded by war propaganda, calling upon German youth to aide the Nazi cause in whatever way they could. Her dedication to Nazi ideals was rewarded by the regime. By 1942 she had joined the S.S. Auxiliaries and been posted to Ravensbruck concentration camp for



training to become a prison guard.

Irma, like all other Nazi camp guards, underwent several weeks of training which further brainwashed recruits by reinforcing the party ideology and taught the women how to control prisoners. The training also dehumanized the Jews by referring to them as “sub-human” and comparing them to parasites. Irma took to the training with avidity. The warped ideology of Nazism gave her what she thought was a purpose. This combined with her training would drive her to unspeakable acts of violence.

Irma served in several concentrations camps from 1943 to 1945, including the notorious camp at Auschwitz. She saw the prisoners she was charged with as less than human and treated them with disdain. She became more and more sadistic with her prisoners. She was known to carry a whip and a pistol on her at all times; both tools she used to inflict pain and suffering upon those under her watch. She was also known to engage in the psychological torture of prisoners. She would often make them stand at roll call for hours, no matter the weather, to test their resolve. Irma was also tasked with selecting “unfit” prisoners to be sent to their deaths in the gas chambers. Many prisoners would

do all they could to disguise their true health during these inspections. Irma was known personally to poke and prod prisoners to test their true health. The shy farm girl had turned herself into a tool for the racial ideology professed by the Nazis, which created a sadistic tormentor who participated in the Holocaust, or extermination of the Jews.

In April of 1945, the elements of the British and Canadian armies captured Irma when they liberated the concentration camp of Bergen-Belsen where she was posted. In September of 1945 she went on trial for the atrocities that she and others committed at the concentration camps of Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen. She denied the severity of the charges that were brought up against her during the trial and never sincerely apologized for them.

Irma Grese was executed on December 13, 1945. She was only twenty-two, but had committed unspeakable crimes. She was deluded by an extreme racial ideology of hatred. Instead of a normal, happy childhood, she had deceived herself and enthusiastically participated in genocide and one of the greatest crimes against humanity in world history. When she was executed, she was the age of most college seniors today.



### *Defining Civic Virtues: Deception*

To lie to yourself and others either to deceive purposefully or because you are deluded into thinking that something is right when it is wrong and unjust.

# Discussion Guide



*Directions: Discuss the following questions with your partner(s).*

1. Why do you think Irma was deceived by Nazi ideology?
2. Why was the ideology of Nazism so deceptive to the German people?
3. What experiences in Irma's life may have influenced her views about Nazi ideology?
4. To what extent are individuals responsible for their deeds while participating in a collective action?
5. What do Irma Grese's actions say about her views regarding the humanity of the individuals she was guarding?
6. How did tenants of Nazi ideology corrupt Irma's view of humanity?
7. Do you think that Irma believed what she was doing was right or was she deceiving herself in order to find a sense of purpose and belonging? Does this change her level of moral culpability? If so, How?
8. Because she joined the League of German Women at a young age, was she responsible for the person that she grew to be or was she merely a product of indoctrination?
9. If she was merely a product of indoctrination, does this reduce her level of moral culpability or is a person always responsible for his or her actions as an adult?
10. Considering her level of moral culpability, are any of her actions or choices forgivable? Explain.
11. Should she be looked at as a truly horrific person who is responsible for deplorable acts or as tragic figure who was indoctrinated at a young age into a dangerous and evil ideology? Can she be both of these things at the same time?
12. What does it say about Irma that she denied or refused to admit to the charges that were arraigned against her?
13. In light of this story, how should we examine the actions of those who joined the Hitler Youth and the League of German Women? Are they all morally culpable for their actions? Does indoctrination excuse or mitigate their actions?

# PHOTO COMPARISON



## PHOTO 1

Look at the image of the girls at the left. Write down as many observations about them as you can about them. What are their emotions? What do you believe their profession is?

## PHOTO 2

Now review the second photo. What changes about your perception of the guards? What in the photo changed your perception of it? What happened to the ordinary people we saw in the pervious photo? Does your view of them change? What observations do you have about them now?





The girls in the photo were members of the League of German Women, the female arm of the Hitler youth. Several members of this league would go on to serve as female prison guards in concentration camps, such as the one pictured to the right.

### CRITICAL THINKING QUESTION

How does this photo impact your view of the three girls from before? Do you think the girls in the first photo are capable of such atrocities? How do you think it was that ordinary individuals became involved in such barbaric actions? Though Irma Grese is not one of the girls pictured, she was apart of the same League of German Women. How does knowing Irma's story affect how you view the girls?





# Virtue In Action



Strive to not be deceived or deluded by ideas that endanger the humanity of others and movements that are unjust.

Think about ways in which Irm Grese was deceived in her own life. What led her to be tempted on a dark path? Identify ways you can avoid that in your own life.

When working on group projects, be mindful how others are impacted by your decisions.

If you play sports, always remember to see other players as equals you're competing against. Let your own merits set you apart.

Treat others equally, never work to devalue others to create an advantage for yourself.

## Sources & Further Reading

Bergen, Doris L. *War & Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003.

Browning, Christopher R. *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*. New York: Harper Collins, 1992.

Gellately, Robert. *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Johnson, Eric. *Nazi Terror: The Gestapo, Jews, and Ordinary Germans*. New York: Basic Books, 1999.

Wistrich, Robert S. *Hitler and the Holocaust*. New York: Modern Library, 2001.

# Virtue Across the Curriculum

***Star Wars: The Return of the Jedi* (1985), directed by Richard Marquand**  
Luke Skywalker is a young and often headstrong Jedi in training. He is fighting on behalf of the resistance against the Galactic Empire. The light side of the force guides his actions. When he learns that his father is the dread Darth Vader, a fallen Jedi who has been tempted away from the light side of the force by the power of the dark side, he is confronted with a choice. Will he continue fighting for his friends or join his father? Tempted by both the natural love of family and the power the dark side of the force offers, Luke must resist with all his might not to be tempted and swept away by the powers of evil.

***Captain America, Civil War* (2016), directed by Anthony and Joel Russo**  
Torn between loyalty to his friend and to a group fighting for justice, Captain America must think through what is right and what is wrong and how not to be deceived by the wrong side.

## **OTHER WORKS**

*The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank  
*Man's Search for Meaning* by Viktor E. Frankl  
*Schindler's List* directed by Steven Spielberg (1993)  
*Survival in Auschwitz* by Primo Levi  
*Night* by Elie Wiesel

## Self-Deception

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

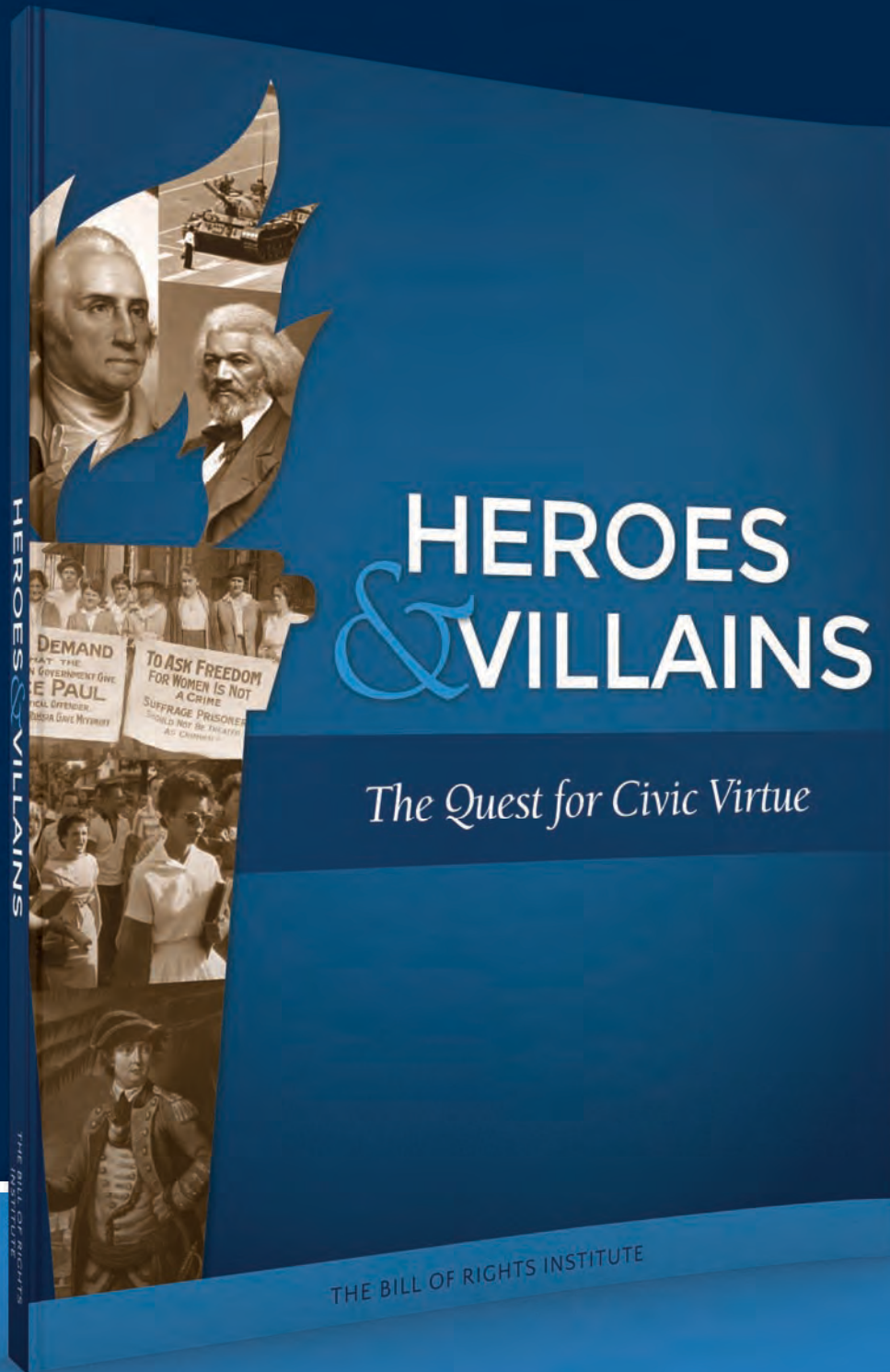


*Directions* How does a person come to be deceived by an evil or unjust idea? What are important things to keep in mind when reading about an idea? How is self-interest and self-delusion? What can one do to keep themselves grounded? How can a diversity of opinions in a civil society help prevent deception?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

“We are fighting to save the whole world from the pestilence of Nazi tyranny and in defence of all that is most sacred to man....It is a war...to establish, on impregnable rocks, the rights of the individual, and it is a war to establish and revive the stature of man.”

—WINSTON CHURCHILL, SEPTEMBER 3, 1939



# A CHARACTER EDUCATION IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE



*Equip teachers for character education that lets them do what they do best, in the context of subjects they already teach.*

# CHARACTER EDUCATION SIMPLIFIED

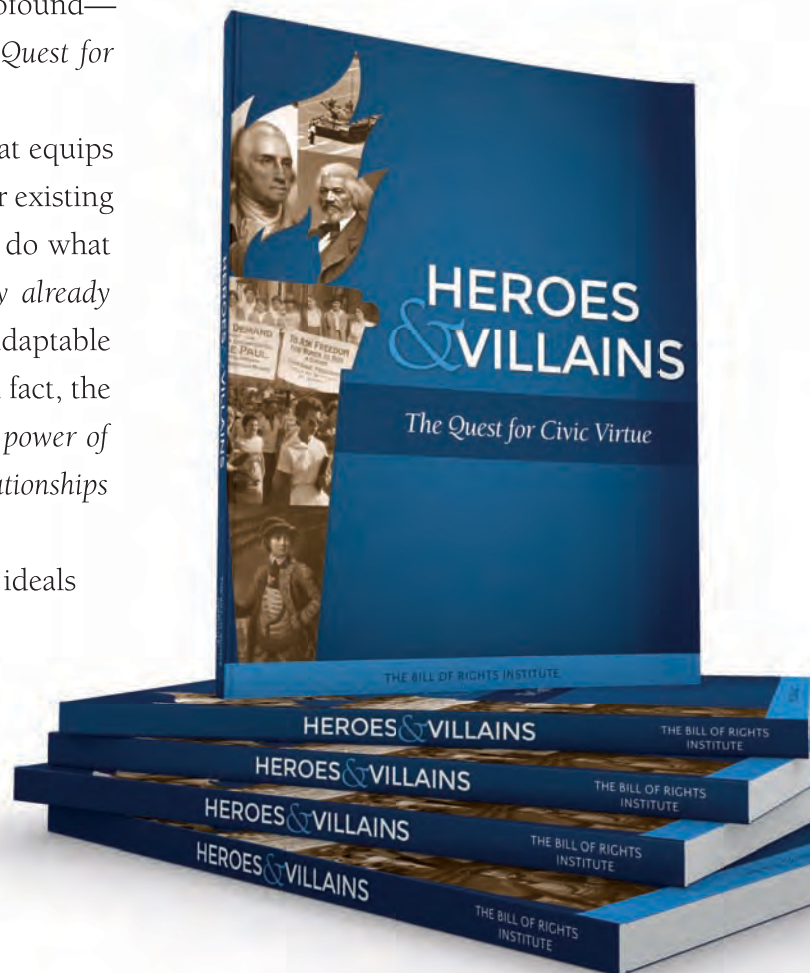
## *Introducing Our New Resource*



What are the deepest, truest aims of character education? Think about the character education you already do at your school—whether formal or informal. What are you really trying to accomplish? Though we value our students’ character formation, it can seem a daunting task. So many expectations are laid at our doorstep. So many demands pull at our time. How do school leaders ensure that, amidst competing demands, our highest aims aren’t pushed aside? Could it be less complicated? Yes, it can. Satisfying character education can be profound—and as uncomplicated as *Heroes & Villains: The Quest for Civic Virtue*.

*Heroes & Villains* is a curricular supplement that equips teachers to integrate character education into their existing curriculum, then gets out of the way to let them do what they do best ... *in the context of the subjects they already teach*. Teaching civic virtue can be robust, yet adaptable enough to tailor to your teachers and students. In fact, the more flexible it is, the more you can *harness the power of the strongest element your school already has: the relationships among faculty, students, and staff*.

At the Bill of Rights Institute, the ideas and ideals of the Constitution are at the heart of our work. This is why we developed a resource to reinvigorate the teaching of civic virtue based on primary sources, grounded in critical thinking, and focused on history. Better yet, because we know the constraints teachers face daily, we designed it to be easily





tailored to your existing curriculum, to your own school, and to the students who walk its hallways.

Character education is often viewed as an “add-on program” that distracts from “real teaching”. But it should be a rich teaching experience, not a demand—and certainly not a costly, off-the-shelf “add-on”. Even more, it can be a seamlessly integrated part of curriculum and instruction. The key? Simplicity. *Heroes & Villains* is neither costly nor an add-on. Instead, it is *a straightforward and adaptable curricular supplement*. Based on the content history and English teachers are already teaching, it provides a clear framework for extending that very content into the realm of character and civic virtue.

We respect that you and your faculty—not any one program or book—bring the most vital elements to the character-education table: *knowledge of your own school, its faculty, and its students*. This guide is for faculty who supervise curriculum and character education. With a small investment of time up-front, you can determine how your colleagues and students can get the most out of *Heroes & Villains*. The “Working Notes” section will get you started as you tailor this surprisingly simple resource to your own school.

Look at the *Heroes & Villains* overview and see how you can bring the virtues of Aristotle and the Founders to your students. Start with the “Working Notes” on page 11.

If you don’t already have a copy of *Heroes & Villains*, contact us at [info@billofrightsinstitute.org](mailto:info@billofrightsinstitute.org). We’ll get it into your hands so you can get started.

WE BELIEVE  
*that increased  
understanding of  
virtue will lead to  
more individuals  
acting virtuously in  
school, and these  
changes will pay  
dividends in improved  
school climate.*

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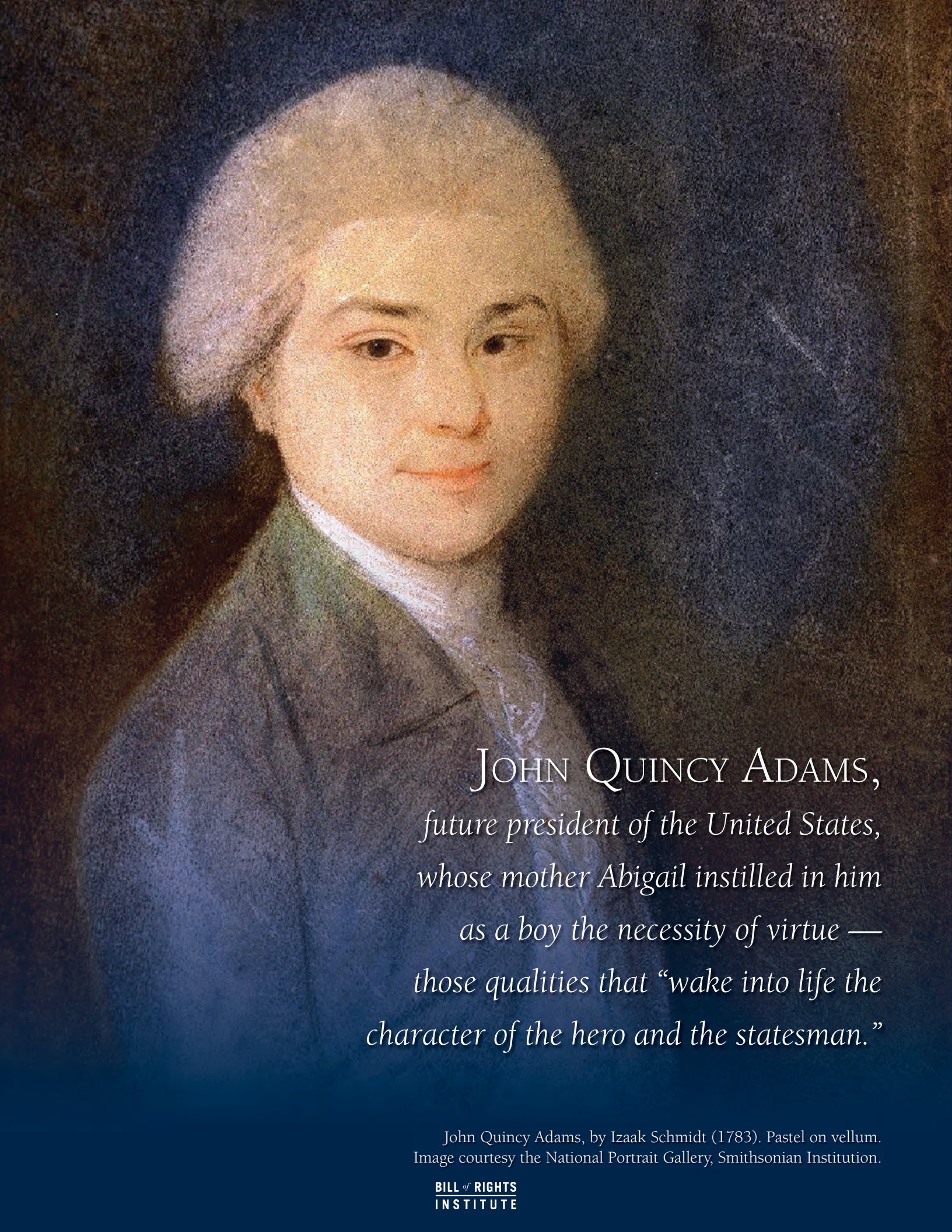


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JOHN QUINCY ADAMS,  
*future president of the United States,  
whose mother Abigail instilled in him  
as a boy the necessity of virtue —  
those qualities that “wake into life the  
character of the hero and the statesman.”*

John Quincy Adams, by Izaak Schmidt (1783). Pastel on vellum.  
Image courtesy the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution.



# HEROES & VILLAINS

## *Program Overview*



At an age when most children today are beginning their high school education, young John Quincy Adams was practicing French along with statesmanship skills on a diplomatic trip to Europe with his father. He had not wanted to go. His mother Abigail wrote him a wonderful letter expressing her hope that he would not regret the journey. She wrote:

“Great necessities call out great virtues. When a mind is raised and animated by scenes that engage the heart, then those qualities, which would otherwise lie dormant, wake into life and form the character of the hero and the statesman.”

Mrs. Adams knew that her son held those qualities in his heart and closed her letter with this stirring admonition:

“The strict and inviolable regard you have ever paid to truth, gives me pleasing hopes that you will not swerve from her dictates, but add justice, fortitude, and every manly virtue which can adorn a good citizen, do honor to your country, and render your parents supremely happy.”

Indeed, to the Founding generation, virtue was inseparable from freedom; self-government depended on a virtuous people. Abigail Adams’ son, as an adult, said, “Public virtue cannot exist in a nation without private [virtue], and public virtue is the only foundation of republics.”

But what happens to a republic when virtue withers? In a nation founded on principles such as



IMBUING  
*civic virtue into every  
aspect of school life  
will lead to deeper  
understanding, and that  
greater understanding will  
lead to an improved school  
climate and culture.*

individual liberty and consent of the governed, civic and character education must be central to all that we teach. Indeed, to teach civic virtue is to help preserve our republic.

In his Second Inaugural Address, President Barack Obama alluded to the need for citizens to live virtuously every day:

“What makes us exceptional, what makes us America, is our allegiance to an idea articulated in a declaration made more than two centuries ago: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal. That they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, and among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness...’ History tells us that while these truths may be self-evident, they’ve never been self-executing. That while freedom is a gift from God, it must be secured by his people here on earth. ...You and I, as citizens, have the obligation to shape the debates of our time, not only with the votes we cast, but the voices we lift in defense of our most ancient values and enduring ideas.”



## Ancient Values, Enduring Ideas, Daily Difference

Those “most ancient values” include commitments to justice, perseverance, initiative, and other virtues of citizenship that allow a free people to govern themselves. These are among the citizen virtues that the Founders believed were necessary for self-government.

The goals of the narratives, discussion guides, lists of resources, and journal prompts in this program include an increased understanding of civic virtue on the part of both students and teachers. We invite you to engage students with the resources not only in U.S. History, but also in World History and English classes, as well as the wider school community through department meetings, faculty meetings, lunch-and-learns, assemblies, or other creative options that could work best for your school. We believe that imbuing civic virtue into every aspect of school life will lead to deeper understanding, and that greater understanding will lead to an improved school climate and culture.

We can address challenges common to the school environment with a richer and more complete understanding of civic virtue. For example, does bullying occur because a student is seeking “respect”? Does cheating or plagiarism take place because students lack understanding of—or experience with—perseverance? A deeper and historically-grounded understanding of virtue can be arrived at through discussion in which *all* take part. When all in the school, students and adults, discuss the deepest and historically-grounded understandings about civic virtue, both the whole school and the community benefit.



*The lessons were  
valuable because  
they made the  
students reevaluate  
their own ethics.  
Although many  
of our students  
are “good” people,  
these lessons help  
reinforce the virtues  
and standards that  
we would like our  
students to embrace  
and display as  
citizens.*

—FIELD-TESTING  
TEACHER



# WHY STORYTELLING?



*“If history were taught in the form of stories,  
it would never be forgotten.”*

—RUDYARD KIPLING

The same is true of virtue. People of all ages are naturally drawn to stories. While Mrs. Adams wrote to her son about “scenes that engage the heart,” her son was living those scenes in two countries in revolution, the fate of the new nation at stake. Her lesson—that trying times are tests of virtue—endures when young peoples’ minds are raised by studying historical examples. Within the selection of visual and historical narratives in this program are examples of civic virtue to be identified, discussed, analyzed, and evaluated. In the stories of villains from history are opportunities to analyze the actions of individuals who perhaps strove for virtue, but failed.

The materials in this resource were selected to engage the heart as well as the mind. Through

discussion of all the narratives, students will implicitly judge: Why do we admire heroes? On the other hand, why do we harshly judge individuals like Benedict Arnold? The virtues (and lack thereof!) highlighted in these stories—along with self-reflection, discussion, and journaling—encourage teachers and students to make these virtues a habit.

Educators don’t simply reach students in their schools and classrooms; their influence extends beyond into times and places unpredictable and unknown, and may shape the lives of generations. As Abigail wrote to her son in 1780, we hope these materials on civic virtue will help you “transmit this inheritance to ages yet unborn.”

*These lessons serve a vital purpose and prompt interesting conversations  
that connect past events to current events and to students themselves.*

*The lesson—that trying times are tests of virtue—endures  
when young people study historical examples.*





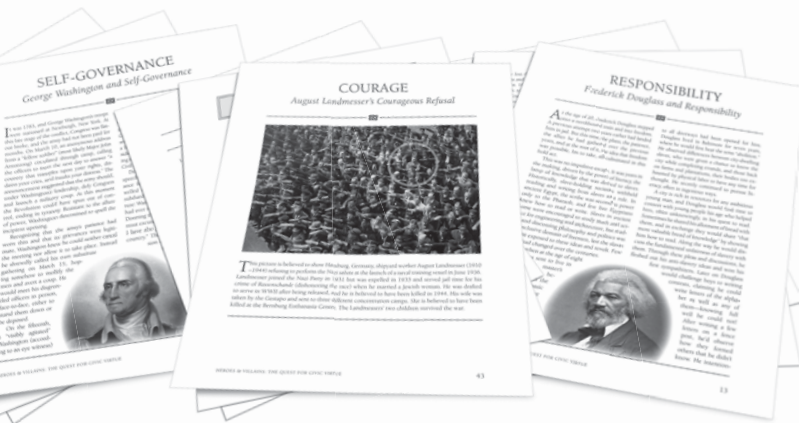
# HEROES & VILLAINS

## Materials Overview



This civic education resource stays away from shallow topics, instead inviting teachers and students to dive straightforwardly into robust, history-based topics. Through rich narratives, critical questions, meaningful discussion, and personal application, teachers and students will examine the “civic virtue” assumptions of our nation’s Founders and their relevance today.

- Ten narratives, photo-narratives, or primary sources convey stories of individuals who faced crises of civic virtue—including Benedict Arnold, Frederick Douglass, Elizabeth Eckford, and more.
- Journaling exercises engage individual students’ hearts and minds.
- “Virtue in Action” supplements provide ideas for demonstrating civic virtue in schools and communities.
- Cross-curricular connections make it easy for faculty and staff to work together toward the same character goals within the context of their own classrooms.
- Suggestions for further reading from literary and historical primary sources.



*These exercises, based on historical events, are definitely more effective in getting students to examine their own commitment to these virtues.*

# *Working Notes and Ideas for Implementing* **HEROES & VILLAINS**



## *Laying the Groundwork with Your Faculty*

- As you introduce *Heroes & Villains* to faculty and staff for the first time, ask them to recall their favorite stories from childhood or early adulthood.
- Transition to a discussion about successful storytelling in the classroom. Chances are teachers are already comfortable with a storytelling approach. (e.g., history narratives, Supreme Court cases, stories of science discoveries, or lab reports done as story structure).
- Maintain an atmosphere that allows faculty to feel confident discussing virtue with students. Assure them that when discussing with students, they can emphasize that civic virtue may include, but does not require, religious belief.
- In keeping with the above, affirm for teachers that they can encourage students who do have a faith tradition to relate their thinking about virtue to it. Allow those who wish to do so to reflect on examples from their own faiths. (For example, individuals from sacred texts who acted virtuously, religious teachings, etc.)
- Acknowledge that all schools and all curricula do teach values or virtue, whether implicitly or explicitly. You are merely providing a language that enables free and open discussion.
- Request that teachers review the materials and hold “listening sessions” for them to come to you with any questions about their use of *Heroes & Villains*.
- Encourage teachers to share information with families, and invite parents to come to class for discussions.

# Civic Virtues Based on the Thinking of the Founders



First things first. Let's define our terms. In *Heroes & Villains*, virtue is defined as:

*Conduct that reflects universal principles of moral and ethical excellence essential to leading a worthwhile life and to effective self-government. For many leading Founders, attributes of character such as justice, responsibility, perseverance, etc., were thought to flow from an understanding of the rights and obligations of men. Virtue is compatible with, but does not require, religious belief.*

Next, what virtues do we include and how do we define them? Based on writings of the U.S. founders, we could have chosen a number of civic virtues that were important to their understanding of the running of a constitutional republic. Of that number, *Heroes & Villains* addresses the following:

**Contribution:** The discovering of your passions and talents, and the use of them to create what is beautiful and needed.

Working hard to take care of yourself and those who depend on you.

**Courage:** Standing firm in being a person of character and doing what is right, especially when it is unpopular or puts you at risk.

**Humility:** To remember that your ignorance is far greater than your knowledge. To give praise to those who earn it.

**Integrity:** To tell the truth, expose untruths, and keep your promises.

**Justice:** To stand for equally applied rules and to make sure everyone obeys them.

**Perseverance:** To stay the course, choosing not the easy path, but rather the right one.

**Respect:** To protect your mind and body as precious aspects of your identity. To extend that protection to every other person you encounter.

**Responsibility:** To strive to know and do what is best, not what is most popular. To be trustworthy for making decisions in the best long-term interests of the people and tasks of which one is in charge.

**Self-Governance:** To be self-controlled, avoiding extremes, and to not be influenced or controlled by others.



# THE QUESTION

*How can we make character education seamless and integral to our school's culture?*



Get outside the “character curriculum box.” Instead, stop to think about the following three aspects of your school: **Leadership**, **Understanding**, and **Informing Instruction**. As you do, you’ll naturally discover ways to weave the themes of *Heroes & Villains* into the processes and culture that already exist among your faculty, students, and staff.

As you, with your faculty, plan to integrate *Heroes & Villains* into your school’s teaching and culture, these three areas will provide you with the clearest path to implementation.



## WORKING NOTES:

### *Our Current School Climate and Culture*

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Before using *Heroes & Villains* at your school, describe the current school culture, character strengths, and areas for growth. Use the following prompts to help you do just that.

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#### **Our School's Best Cultural Attributes Are...**

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#### **Our School Culture Could Be Improved by a Focus On...**

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**Our Ideal School Culture Would Be...**

# *Let's start with...* Leadership

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Below, and on the following pages, are some leadership-related items to consider as you integrate *Heroes & Villains* into the curriculum and civic education at your school.

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## **Faculty Ownership**

- Among your faculty, who are the key influencers whose leadership can help make this happen?
- How will we incorporate staff feedback to tailor this to our school?
- How might that feedback inform your use of *Heroes & Villains*?

## **Integration with Existing Character-Education Efforts**

- What existing character efforts, formal or informal (if any), does your school employ?
- How can *Heroes & Villains* content bolster those efforts? What tensions may exist?

## **Role Modeling**

- How do your faculty and administrators already exemplify these virtues for the school community?
- How might this role-modeling look in different areas of school life (rehearsal rooms, athletic fields, classrooms, hallways, cafeteria, etc.)?



*“People who work together will win, whether it be against complex football defenses, or the problems of modern society.”*

–VINCE LOMBARDI

### **Athletics & Extracurriculars**

- How might coaches, resource teachers, directors, and other extracurricular and facility staff extend these ideas beyond the classroom?

### **Parents & Community Involvement**

- How involved should parents be in this process? What opportunities exist to extend these ideas beyond the classroom?
- How might you involve the larger community (outside speakers, authority figures such as law enforcement, older students mentoring younger students, etc.)? What about volunteer opportunities?

**On what other leadership areas may you want to focus as you implement *Heroes & Villains*?**

## *Next, look at...* **Understanding**

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Use the prompts below to plan how you will ensure that everyone in the school community shares the same understandings as you use *Heroes & Villains*.

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### **Staff Education and Professional Development**

- How will these civic virtues be understood and reinforced among your school's faculty?
- Who will be primarily responsible for this effort?
- What opportunities will the faculty have to discuss these ideas with each other on an ongoing basis?

### **Teaching the Content**

- How will social studies and/or English teachers address this content?
- How many teachers in each department will cover this content?
- Will the content be taught all at once, periodically, or throughout the year?
- What cross-curricular efforts would be helpful? What, for example, could this look like in a math or science classroom?
- Will we evaluate students in some way? If so, how?
- How will these virtues be reinforced year-round...
  - ❑ in social studies or English classrooms?
  - ❑ in other classes?
  - ❑ in school assemblies, communications, or daily announcements?



## Peer Discussions and Mentoring: Students

- Identify students whose leadership could move others in the direction of these goals.
- What opportunities will older students have to mentor younger students?
- In what contexts can you envision getting students to discuss these ideas?
  - ▣ In class...
  - ▣ Outside of class...
- How might student clubs, student government, or other school groups reinforce these goals in your school?

**On what other areas of student and faculty understanding may you want to focus as you implement *Heroes & Villains*?**

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*“Nobody ever listens to a teenager. Everybody thinks you should be happy just because you're young. They don't see the wars that we fight every single day.”*

—FROM FREEDOM WRITERS

## Thinking about...

# Informing Instruction and Implementation

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Below, and on the following pages, are feedback-related items to consider as you and your faculty implement *Heroes & Villains*.

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### Your School: *Start with Your Strengths*

- Look back at what you noted on your “School Climate and Culture” chart on page 11. Which civic virtue does your student body currently reflect most fully? Which virtue is currently weak? (*Full list on page 9.*)
- Consider the civic virtue that is strongest at your school. How can you reinforce it? How can you harness it to improve in the weakest area?

### Policies & Language

- Given the language and format of *Heroes & Villains*, how might your feedback to students (both positive and constructive) be revised?
- How might classroom and school policies be revised to reflect these civic virtues?

### Faculty Feedback

- What could positive accountability look like in relation to these virtues? Are there ways to incorporate these concepts into existing feedback systems?
- Identify some informal ways colleagues can hold each other accountable for role-modeling these civic virtues.

## Home-School Communication

- How can discussions about conduct be used to reinforce these civic virtues with students and their parents?
- How can written communication to parents incorporate the language of civic virtue?

What additional feedback-related ideas do you have as you integrate *Heroes & Villains* into your school curriculum and culture?

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*“The life I touch for good or ill will touch another life, and that in turn another, until who knows where the trembling stops or in what far place my touch will be felt.”*

—FREDERICK BUECHNER

# Integrating Heroes & Villains Throughout the School and Across the Curriculum

Each narrative includes a “Virtue in Action” section with concrete suggestions for making civic virtue both active and a habit. In addition to these examples, you may consider some of the following suggestions.



## In the Social Studies Classroom

- Complete the activities for one narrative per month during the school year.
- Acknowledge that “heroes” are not demigods but human and, therefore, imperfect.
- Encourage teaching of history as “philosophy teaching by example.” Have students work as detectives to find virtues in history. For example, individuals who acted courageously in pursuit of justice; great historical moments involving what Aristotle called righteous indignation: American Revolution; Abolition; Women’s Suffrage; Civil Rights Era; etc.



## In the English/Language Arts Classroom

- Students could write short historical fiction stories based on the lives of the individuals in the narratives.
- Select companion stories or poetry for a literature class that reflect the same virtue being studied in the historical narrative. (See *Further Reading* and *Virtue Across the Curriculum* resources included after each of the book’s narratives.)
- Acknowledge the complexity of life and literature — even “good” characters may do bad things.



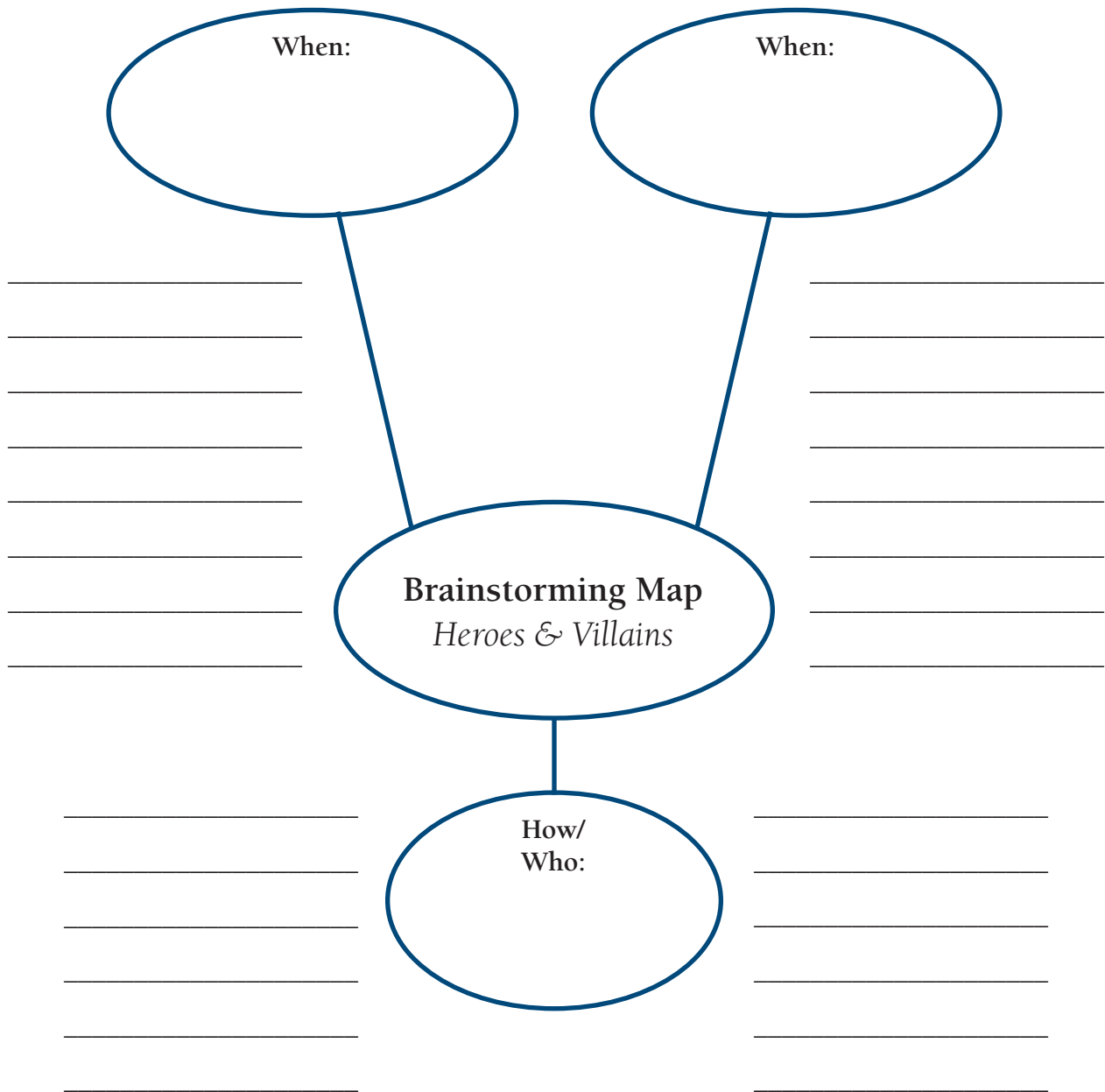
## In Classrooms, in Rehearsal Rooms, on Athletic Fields, and Beyond

- When affirming students who achieve excellent results, emphasize character traits such as **perseverance** and **responsibility** rather than innate intellect or talent.
- George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and other great leaders saw themselves as role models; within the school community, we are all role models. The question is not *whether* we will be role models, but *which virtues we will model*.
- If students wish to reflect on **examples of virtue** from sacred texts, encourage those contributions to the discussion.
- Encourage awareness of **humility, contribution, and justice** on the playing field.
- Distinguish between aggressor and defender in bullying cases. Praise the **courage** of those who defend the weak.
- Include references to these character traits, and use specific language, when communicating with parents—including report card narratives, and in parent meetings.



# BRAINSTORMING SPACE

Use the map below either to brainstorm your ideas, or to begin to organize the “Who/What/How” for the ideas that you may already have brainstormed with your faculty.



# ORGANIZING YOUR THOUGHTS

## *Planning for the School Year*

What will the implementation of *Heroes & Villains* look like across the school year?

Use this space to plan.

Time Period	Administrators	Teachers	Students
September			
October			
November			
December			
January			
February			
March			
April			
May			
June			

# NEXT STEPS—FIRST STEPS

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What are the very next steps you want to take as you begin integrating  
*Heroes & Villains* into your school's curriculum and instruction?

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What?	Why?	Who?	When?

## ADDITIONAL NOTES

## ADDITIONAL NOTES





In December of 1784, when he sought recommendations for a tutor for Martha Washington's two grandchildren at Mount Vernon, George Washington wrote a letter to George Chapman, former headmaster of the grammar school in Dumfries, Scotland. In the letter, Washington wrote,

**“My sentiments are perfectly in unison with yours sir, that the best means of forming a manly, virtuous and happy people, will be found in the right education of youth.”**

Whatever your next steps may be, they are significant. You have the affirmation of George Washington himself.

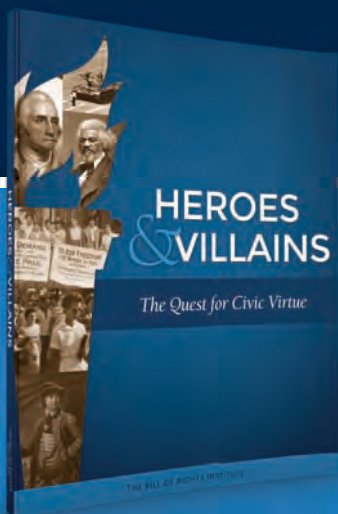
# PRAISE FROM TEACHERS FOR *HEROES & VILLAINS*



“Giving the students a role model of the virtue is a great way to teach civic virtue. The stories do a great job of giving the students characteristics to emulate.”

“I find myself drawn to, and using, more and more primary sources. The students enjoy deciphering pictures, especially, and then discussing their context and importance.”

“The cross-curricular approach was great! I was able to do the historical aspect and discussion, and the English teacher worked with them on writing their essay ... It was a great lesson for everyone.”



*Heroes & Villains: The Quest for Civic Virtue* is a program of the Bill of Rights Institute. For more information or to order, visit

**[www.BillofRightsInstitute.org](http://www.BillofRightsInstitute.org)**

# Defining Civic Virtue



*Launching Heroes & Villains with your Students*

As you begin to integrate Heroes & Villains into your instruction, you may find it helpful to have a place to consider how it relates to topics you already teach. On page xiii is a curricular planning guide so that you and your colleagues can do just that—and determine where and how you can naturally *weave character themes into the curricula you are already teaching*.

As you initiate student discussions involving civic virtue, you will naturally be checking students' current understanding and defining the terms that will be a part of readings and classroom discussions. The readings and activities on the following pages will be an indispensable starting point as you do this.

## ***Heroes & Villains Launch Activity:***

1. On the pages that follow are the student handouts *What is Virtue?—Historical and Philosophical Context* and *What is Virtue?—Defining the Term*. Before distributing those readings, have students respond in writing to the Defining Virtue questions on the following page. Do not discuss them before students have completed the reading. Explain to students that after they have read this, they will be expected to be able to elaborate further on their written responses. Have students read the handout, then discuss it as a class, referring to the questions included in the text.
2. After the reading, distribute the *Clarifying Civic Virtue* handout to the students. Have students write complete responses to the questions. Use that second set of questions as the basis for a discussion about the reading and to check students' understanding of the content as well as their engagement with the ideas.
3. Separate students into groups of 2 or 3 to discuss questions on the handout, particularly the final questions about whether they changed their responses, and why. Transition to a whole-class discussion of these final questions, ensuring that students refer to the text of both handouts to support and explain their responses.
4. The *Identifying and Defining Civic Virtue* handout includes a list of the civic virtues addressed in this book, along with a definition for each. Post or project that list—without the definitions—on the board. Elicit from students what each one means, asking them to offer examples from their personal lives. Encourage examples from within their families, school, and community. Explain that these are among the virtues that the U.S. Founders believed were essential to the form of government they were creating. Break students into their former groups of 2 or 3 and have them read the definitions. Then, assign to each group one or two of the listed virtues and have them write down examples of each, including context and further explanation. Examples could come from U.S. or world history, literature, or current events.
5. Students report back to the large group their examples and why, according to the listed definition, those people exemplify that civic virtue.

# Defining Civic Virtue



1. When you encounter the term “civic virtue”, what do you believe it means?

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2. Why do you believe this?

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3. Think about principles in the U.S. Constitution such as consent of the governed, separation of powers, and limited government. What assumptions did the Founders seem to be making about human nature? Why might those principles have required civic virtue among citizens and elected leaders?

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# What Is Virtue? — Historical and Philosophical Context



*Some assumptions underlie our selection and discussion of virtues.*

## Right and wrong exist. Understanding civic virtue means acknowledging this.

To further justice requires that one exercise judgment. To understand and evaluate virtue, we must be willing to admire heroes and condemn villains. We must be willing to take a stand. A special challenge today may be that many people do not wish to appear judgmental. We seek to balance two ideas: on the one hand, being too quick to judge is wrong. Respect means not looking down on others who are not harming anyone simply because you don't agree with them. On the other hand, a reluctance to judge the behavior of others should not mean we do nothing in the face of evil. All that is needed for evil to triumph, it is often said, is for good people to do nothing.



“You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view—until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.”

—Atticus Finch, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, by Harper Lee



“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.”

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

## Being virtuous does not require belief in a supreme being.

We need not shy away from the term “virtue.” Despite the occasional misunderstanding that it requires religion, virtue may in fact be defined as conduct that reflects universal principles of moral and ethical excellence essential to leading a worthwhile life and to effective self-government. For many leading Founders, attributes of character such as justice, responsibility, perseverance, and others were thought to flow from an understanding

of the rights and obligations of men. Virtue is compatible with, but does not require, religious belief.

To many in the Founding generation, religion and morality were “indispensable supports” to people’s ability to govern themselves. This is because religious institutions nurtured virtue, and the Founders knew virtue was needed for self-government to survive. On the other hand, to paraphrase Thomas Jefferson, it does you no injury whether your neighbor believes in one god or twenty gods. A person’s religion alone would not make him virtuous, and his particular (or lack of) religion would not mean he was incapable of virtue.



“We ought to consider what is the end [purpose] of government before we determine which is the best form. Upon this point all speculative politicians will agree that the happiness of society is the end of government, as all divines and moral philosophers will agree that the happiness of the individual is the end of man. ...All sober inquirers after truth, ancient and modern, pagan and Christian, have declared that the happiness of man, as well as his dignity, consists in virtue.”

—John Adams, *Thoughts on Government*, 1776

## Why virtues and not “values” or “character”?

Virtues are eternal because they are rooted in human nature. Values, on the other hand, can change with the times. The word “value” itself implies that values are relative. While values can change with circumstances, it is *always* good to be just, to persevere, to be courageous, to respect others, and so on. The word “character” refers to the sum total of virtues an individual displays. A person of character is virtuous.



## Why these virtues?

The United States Founders believed that certain civic virtues were required of citizens in order for the Constitution to work. Numerous primary sources—notably the Federalist Papers and the Autobiography of Ben Franklin—point us to the “Founders’ Virtues.” You will explore some of the following civic virtues as an integral part of *Heroes and Villains*.

- Contribution
- Courage
- Humility
- Integrity
- Justice
- Perseverance
- Respect
- Responsibility / Prudence
- Self-Governance / Moderation

## Virtue

Conduct that reflects universal principles of moral and ethical excellence essential to leading a worthwhile life and to effective self-government. For many leading Founders, attributes of character such as justice, responsibility, perseverance, etc., were thought to flow from an understanding of the rights and obligations of men. Virtue is compatible with, but does not require, religious belief.

# What Is Virtue? — Defining the Term

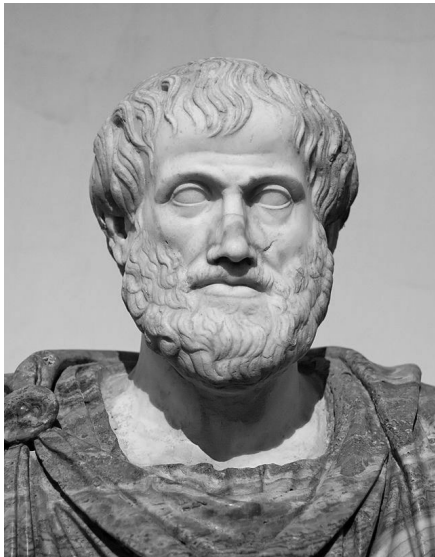


## **Virtue is a “golden mean.”**

Aristotle understood virtue as a “mean” (or middle) between two extremes. The same character trait, when expressed to the extreme, ceases to be virtue and becomes vice. For example, too little courage is cowardice, while too much makes one foolhardy. A healthy respect for authority becomes blind obedience to power when expressed too strongly, or it descends into unprincipled recalcitrance when completely lacking.

## **Virtue is action.**

Thoughts may be about virtuous things, but do not themselves merit the name of virtue. Similarly, words can describe virtuous acts or traits, but can never themselves be virtuous. One’s thoughts and words alone don’t make a person virtuous—one must act on them.



*Bust of Aristotle. Marble, Roman copy after a Greek bronze original from 330 BC.*

## **Virtue is a habit.**

Aristotle also believed that virtue is a habit. Virtuous behavior is not the result of numerous, individual calculations about which course of action would be most advantageous. For example, a person who finds a piece of jewelry, intends to keep it, but later returns it to the owner to collect a reward helps bring about a just outcome (property was returned to its rightful owner); however he falls short the title “virtuous” because of the calculation he went through to arrive at his course of action. While all virtues must be habits, not all habits are virtuous.

## **Virtue requires a just end.**

Behavior can be virtuous only when done in the pursuit of justice. For example, though courage is a virtue, a Nazi who proceeded in killing thousands of people despite his own feelings of fear cannot be called courageous. Though respect is a virtue, a junior police officer who stood by while his captain brutalized a suspect cannot be called respectful. A complication can come when we either “zoom in” or enlarge the sphere within which action takes place. Could an officer on the wrong side of a war display virtue in the form of courage by taking care of the younger men in his charge and shielding them from harm? Is the “end” of his action the responsibility towards his men, or the continued strength of his army, which is working toward an evil cause?

# Clarifying Civic Virtue



Questions 1 and 2 are also on the *Defining Civic Virtue* handout you completed earlier. Now that you have completed and discussed the *What is Virtue?* readings, write your revised responses to those questions, as well as full responses to the additional questions.

1. After further reading and discussion, what do you now believe “civic virtue” means?

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2. Compare your response to Question 1 to your response to the same question on the *Defining Civic Virtue* handout.

Did your response change at all after having read and discussed the articles?

Yes / No (Circle one)

If you did revise your answer: What, in the reading and discussion, caused you to revise your response?

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If you did not revise your answer: Why did you not change your response?

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Even if you did not change your response, what points (in the reading, the discussion, or both) did you find compelling and worth considering?

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3. Think about principles in the U.S. Constitution such as consent of the governed, separation of powers, and limited government. What assumptions did the Founders seem to be making about human nature? Why might those principles have required civic virtue among citizens and elected leaders?

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# Identifying and Defining Civic Virtues



Below are several civic virtues, along with definitions.

**Contribution:** To discover your passions and talents, and use them to create what is beautiful and needed. To work hard to take care of yourself and those who depend on you.

**Courage:** To stand firm in being a person of character and doing what is right, especially when it is unpopular or puts you at risk.

**Humility:** To remember that your ignorance is far greater than your knowledge. To give praise to those who earn it.

**Integrity:** To tell the truth, expose untruths, and keep your promises.

**Justice:** To stand for equally applied rules that respect the rights and dignity of all, and make sure everyone obeys them.

**Perseverance:** To remember how many before you chose the easy path rather than the right one, and to stay the course.

**Respect:** To protect your mind and body as precious aspects of your identity. To extend that protection to every other person you encounter.

**Responsibility:** To strive to know and do what is best, not what is most popular. To be trustworthy for making decisions in the best long-term interests of the people and tasks of which they are in charge.

**Self-Governance:** To be self-controlled, avoiding extremes, and to not be excessively influenced or controlled by others.

In the table below, write down the virtues your teacher assigns to your group. For each, identify a person or character in history, literature, or current events who exemplified that virtue. Include an explanation.

Civic Virtue	Person/Character	Why, or How?

# Teacher's Notes for Launching *Heroes & Villains*



As you begin to integrate *Heroes & Villains* into your instruction, you may find it helpful to consider how it relates to topics you already teach. Below is a curricular planning map so that you and your colleagues can do just that—and determine where and how you can naturally *weave character themes into the curricula you are already teaching*.

## Curricular Planning

If you would like to collaborate with colleagues to align your teaching of various themes across your subject areas, a simplified curriculum map may be a quick, easy, and useful tool. See the example below. A blank, full-page version is on the following page.

Notes:

- The history and art teachers have a natural fit, in that both are covering nineteenth century United States.
- Though the English classes are in a different century entirely since they will be reading Homer's *The Odyssey*, they have the opportunity to team up with the history and art teachers by reinforcing the character theme of perseverance in the course of their studies during those weeks.

SAMPLE			
Time	Subject	Topic(s)	Virtue(s)
Sept-Oct	History	Westward Expansion	Perseverance
Sept-Oct	English	<i>The Odyssey</i>	Perseverance
Sept-Oct	Art	19 <sup>th</sup> c. American Art	Perseverance



# Heroes & Villains Curricular Planning



Virtue(s)						
Topic(s)						
Subject						
Time						

# BENJAMIN FRANKLIN AND CIVIC VIRTUE



## Suggested Launch Activity TEACHER'S NOTES



### *About Launch Activities*

This optional introductory activity is designed to support you in the classroom. However, the primary narratives and photos in the section that follows can be used with or without this introduction.

Initiate a discussion about individual character by diving, with your students, into Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*. As you prepare to teach this primary source activity, select eight or nine of Franklin's list of 13 virtues (listed below) that you believe are either well-reflected or absent from your school's culture. Post your selected list on the board for reference as you read with your students.

Temperance	Industry	Cleanliness
Silence	Sincerity	Tranquility
Order	Justice	Chastity
Resolution	Moderation	Humility
Frugality		

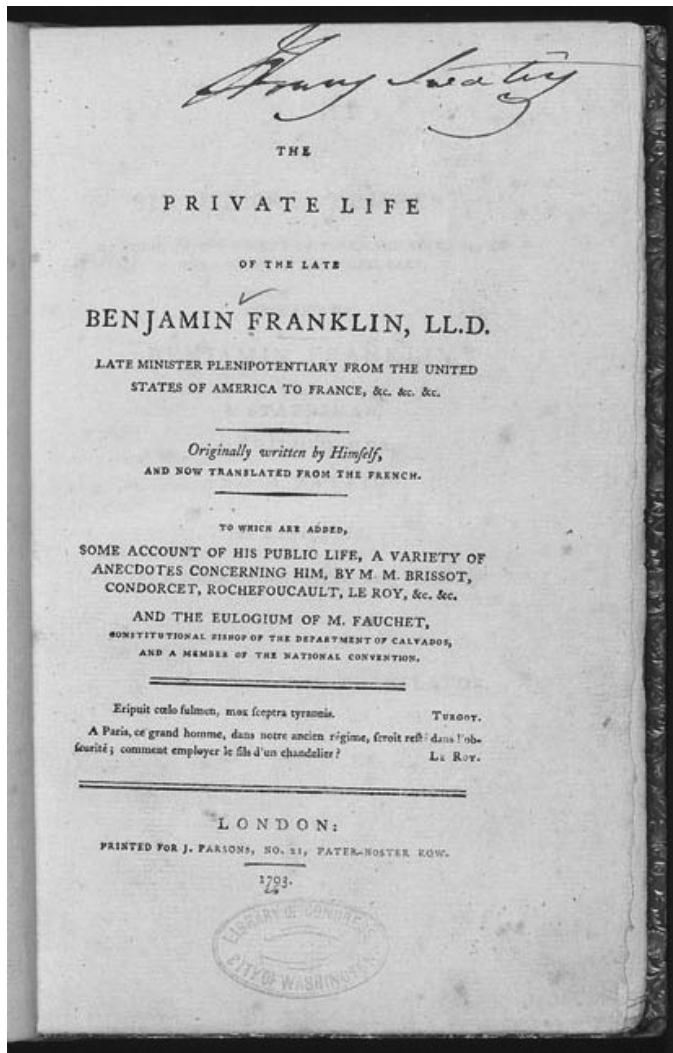
As students enter, instruct them to:

- Read the posted list, identifying the one trait they believe is particularly strong within your school's culture.
- Identify what they believe are the "top three" they believe are weak or absent in your school's culture.
- Write a definition for each of the four that they selected.

Lead a brief discussion of the traits the students listed as strong as well as those they listed as absent or weak. Discuss their definitions of each of the traits you listed on the board.

After students have drafted their lists and written their definitions, ask them what kinds of lists they have ever written. (They may mention homework, packing for trips, reading lists.)

Follow up by asking what techniques they use to motivate themselves for improving artistic or athletic performance, saving up money for something, etc. (They may mention workout lists, practice lists, schedules, college lists, etc.)



Title page, *The Private Life of the Late Benjamin Franklin... Originally Written by Himself, and Now Translated from the French*. London, Printed for J. Parsons, 1793 *Library of Congress*.

Introduce the Benjamin Franklin *Autobiography* excerpts by relating it to the kinds of lists that they just described and explaining that they will find out how he defined the traits. Instruct students to refer as they read to the lists they created when they entered the classroom. Ask them to compare Franklin's definitions to their own as well as to evaluate the effectiveness of his strategy.

# Benjamin Franklin and Civic Virtue

## Primary Source Activity — Student Handout



*Directions: When Benjamin Franklin was in his twenties, he began a project to become a more virtuous person. Many years later, he wrote the following selection from his Autobiography about that time. Read his reflections on virtue, then answer the questions that follow.*

**I**t was about this time that I conceiv'd the bold and arduous Project of arriving at moral Perfection. I wish'd to live without committing any Fault at any time; I would conquer all that either Natural Inclination, Custom, or Company might lead me into. As I knew, or thought I knew, what was right and wrong, I did not see why I might not always do the one and avoid the other. But I soon found I had undertaken a Task of more Difficulty than I had imagined. While my Attention was taken up in guarding against one Fault, I was often surpris'd by another. Habit took the Advantage of Inattention. Inclination was sometimes too strong for Reason. I concluded at length, that the mere speculative Conviction that it was our Interest to be completely virtuous, was not sufficient to prevent our Slipping, and that the contrary Habits must be broken and good ones acquired and established, before we can have any Dependence on a steady uniform Rectitude of Conduct. For this purpose I therefore contriv'd the following Method.

In the various enumerations of the moral Virtues I had met with in my Reading, I found the Catalogue more or less numerous, as different Writers included more or fewer Ideas under the same Name. Temperance, for example, was by the some confin'd to eating & Drinking, while by others it was extended to mean

the moderating every other Pleasure, Appetite, Inclination or Passion, bodily or mental, even to our Avarice & Ambition. I propos'd to myself, for the sake of Clearness, to use rather more Names with fewer Ideas annex'd to each, than a few Names with more Ideas; and I included under Thirteen Names of Virtues all that at that time occur'd to me as necessary or desirable, and annex'd to each a short Precept, which fully express'd the extent I gave to its Meaning.

These Names of Virtues with their Precepts were:

TEMPERANCE. Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation.

SILENCE. Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself; avoid trifling conversation.

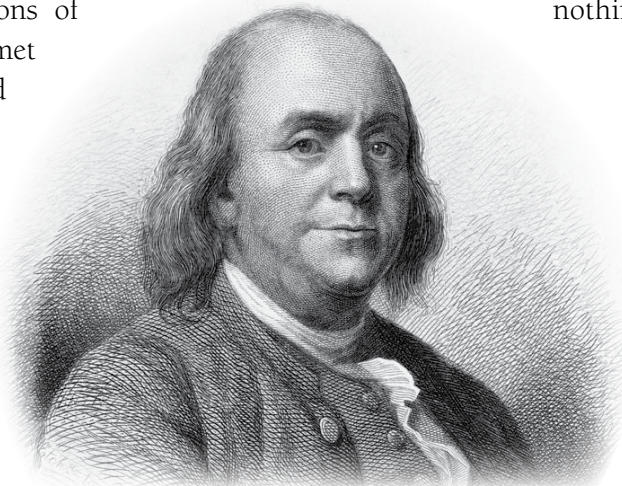
ORDER. Let all your things have their places; let each part of your business have its time.

RESOLUTION. Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve.

FRUGALITY. Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself; i.e., waste nothing.

INDUSTRY. Lose no time; be always employ'd in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions.

SINCERITY. Use no hurtful deceit; think innocently and justly, and, if you speak, speak accordingly.



JUSTICE. Wrong none by doing injuries, or omitting the benefits that are your duty.

MODERATION. Avoid extremes; forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve.

CLEANLINESS. Tolerate no uncleanness in body, cloaths, or habitation.

TRANQUILITY. Be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable.

CHASTITY. Rarely use venery but for health or offspring, never to dulness, weakness, or the injury of your own or another's peace or reputation.

HUMILITY. Imitate Jesus and Socrates.

My Intention being to acquire the Habitude of all these Virtues, I judg'd it would be well not to distract my Attention by attempting the whole at once, but to fix it on one of them at a time, and when I should be Master of that, then to proceed to another, and so on till I should have gone thro' the thirteen. And as the previous Acquisition of some might facilitate the Acquisition of certain others, I arrang'd them with that View as they stand above. Temperance first, as it tends to procure that Coolness & Clearness of Head, which is so necessary where constant Vigilance was to be kept up, and Guard maintained, against the unremitting Attraction of ancient Habits, and the Force of perpetual Temptations. This being acquir'd & establish'd, Silence would be more easy, and my Desire being to gain Knowledge at the same time that I improv'd in Virtue and considering that in Conversation it was obtain'd rather by the use of the ears than of the Tongue, & therefore wishing to break a Habit I was getting into of Prattling, Punning & Joking, which only made me acceptable to trifling Company, I gave Silence the second Place. This, and the next, order, I expected would allow me more Time for attending to my Project and my Studies; RESOLUTION, once become habitual, would keep me firm in my endeavors to obtain all the subsequent Virtues; Frugality & Industry, by freeing me from my remaining Debt, & producing Affluence & Independence, would make more easy the Practice of Sincerity and Justice, &c &c. Conceiving then that agreeable to the Advice of Pythagoras in his Golden Verses daily examination would be

necessary, I contriv'd the following Method for conducting that examination.

I made a little Book in which I allotted a Page for each of the Virtues. I rul'd each Page with red Ink, so as to have seven Columns, one for each Day of the Week, marking each Column with a letter for the Day. I cross'd these Columns with thirteen red lines, marking the Beginning of each line with the first letter of one of the Virtues, on which line & in its proper Column I might mark by a little black Spot every Fault I found upon examination to have been committed respecting that Virtue upon that Day.

I determined to give a Week's strict Attention to each of the Virtues successively. Thus in the first Week my great Guard was to avoid every the least offense against Temperance, leaving the other Virtues to their ordinary Chance, only marking every evening the Faults of the Day. Thus if in the first Week I could keep my first line marked clear of Spots, I suppos'd the Habit of that Virtue so much strengthen'd and its opposite weaken'd, that I might venture extending my Attention to include the next, and for the following Week keep both lines clear of Spots. Proceeding thus to the last, I could go thro' a Course complete in Thirteen Weeks, and four Courses in a Year. And like him who having a Garden to weed, does not attempt to eradicate all the bad Herbs at once, which would exceed his Reach and his Strength, but works on one of the Beds at a time, & having accomplish'd the first proceeds to a Second; so I should have, (I hoped) the encouraging Pleasure of seeing on my Pages the Progress I made in Virtue, by clearing successively my lines of their Spots, till in the end by a Number of Courses, I should be happy in viewing a clean Book after a thirteen Weeks, daily examination.

I enter'd upon the execution of this Plan for Self examination, and continu'd it with occasional Intermissions for some time. I was surpris'd to find myself so much fuller of Faults than I had imagined, but I had the Satisfaction of seeing them diminish. To avoid the Trouble of renewing now & then my little Book, which by scraping out the Marks on the Paper of old Faults, to make room for new ones in a new Course, became full of Holes: I transferr'd my Tables



& Precepts to the Ivory leaves of a Memorandum Book, on which the lines were drawn with red Ink that made a durable Stain, and on those lines I mark'd my Faults with a black lead Pencil, which Marks I could easily wipe out with a wet Sponge. After a while I went thro' one course only in a year, and afterward only one in several years, till at length I omitted them entirely, being employ'd in voyages and business abroad, with a multiplicity of affairs that interfered; but I always carried my little book with me.

...on the whole, tho' I never arrived at the perfection I had been so ambitious of obtaining, but fell far short of it, yet I was, by the endeavour, a better and a happier man than I otherwise should have been if I had not attempted it; as those who aim at perfect writing by imitating the engraved copies, tho' they never reach the wish'd-for excellence of those copies, their hand is mended by the endeavor, and is tolerable while it continues fair and legible.

## Questions to Consider



1. How does Franklin understand virtue? How does he define, use, and refine the term?
2. What was Franklin's rationale for ordering and working on the virtues in the order he did?
3. Franklin wrote that there was something more powerful than his intention to live virtuously. What was that more powerful thing?
4. Aristotle believed that virtue was a habit. Would Franklin have agreed with him?
5. How did Franklin incorporate the virtues he wrote about into his project to embody them?
6. How does Franklin describe his struggle to live virtuously? Do you believe moral perfection is possible? Is so, how? If not, what motivates an individual to act virtuously? Is it better to aim for perfection and fail than to not try at all?
7. What does Franklin reveal about his beliefs regarding the universality of right and wrong?
8. Did Franklin believe he succeeded in his ultimate goal? Why or why not?
9. What value did Franklin find in the project?
10. What most impresses you about Franklin's project?
11. Compare Franklin's list to the one found in the "Identifying and Defining Civic Virtue" handout earlier in this book. What differences do you find? What similarities?
12. How could you borrow some of Franklin's ideas and strategies to help you work on just one or two character traits you would like to improve?

## STUDENT ACTIVITY

*There's an App for That*



Imagine that the inventive Benjamin Franklin is not only alive in the present day, but that he is designing an app to help people improve their character. It will be a twenty-first century version of his journaling project as described in his *Autobiography*. With your partner(s), write a description of how the app will work. How will goals and progress be measured? Will it interface with any existing apps? Will it require any accessories?

Give the app a name, as well as a description that would accompany its listing in the App Store.

**Extension:** Display the students' App Store descriptions, and devise a system for students to "browse" the App Store, then select two or three apps for which to write a review and to rate on a five-star system.

[illegible]

# Be Like Ben?

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_



*Directions* Should you try to be “the best,” or even perfect, at every endeavor? If perfection is unattainable, then what is the purpose of striving, every day, to do better than you did the day before? Identify an area of your life in which you, like Ben Franklin, work to improve, and explain why you do so.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

*“Resolve to perform what you ought. Perform without fail what you resolve.”*

–BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

# HEROES & VILLAINS

## Answer Key



### *Defining Civic Virtue (p. v)*

1. Answers will vary. Some students may say that when they encounter the term “civic virtue,” they assume it refers to religious morality, or some sort of general morality. Others may be more specific, saying that it refers to personal conduct that affects society in a positive way.
2. Answers will vary. Encourage open and thoughtful discussion of responses.
3. Sample responses: Because human beings are imperfect, no one person should have too much power—hence, separation of powers. Because no one group should have too much power—limited government.

### *Clarifying Civic Virtue (p. x)*

1. Students’ responses should expand on their previous answers and incorporate historical and philosophical context, perhaps including Aristotle and indicating that it may include, but does not require, religious belief. Some students should also note that it involves a balance between extremes, action rather than just ideals, regular habits, and must be related to just purposes.
2. If student response did change, response should be a reasoned explanation of what points in the reading contributed to this change. If the student response did not change, response should provide a reasoned explanation for why, based on the text, it did not.
3. Student responses should have expanded beyond their first response and make a direct

connection between the U.S. constitution and a constitutional republic, as well as to the ideas about human nature and the constitutional republic as addressed in the reading.

### *Identifying and Defining Civic Virtue (p. xi)*

Student responses will vary; accept answers that make a reasonable connection among the civic virtue, the person or character, and the justification based on the definition.

### *Benjamin Franklin and Civic Virtue - Questions to Consider (p. xix)*

1. Franklin understood virtue to be habits or traits that would reflect good conduct (“rectitude of conduct”) and bring a person closer to moral perfection. He refined his understanding as he concluded that moral perfection was not possible, but that the ambition and attempt toward it made him a better and a happier person.
2. Franklin ordered the virtues because he thought that working on all of them at the same time would be distracting and that focusing on one at a time would be a more effective way to work on them. He put them in an order so that virtues he acquired earlier might help him to develop others that were later on his list.
3. “Contrary Habits” or “Inclination” led him to keep slipping into habits that were not virtuous.
4. Given how frequently Franklin refers “habit” as a part of his attempt to become more “morally

perfect,” and the system he devised in order to increase his practice of virtues, he appears to have agreed with Aristotle that virtue was, indeed, a habit.

5. Franklin intended to master one virtue at a time, focusing on each one for a week and marking in his book the number of times he failed at that virtue. His goal was to keep each week clear of marks indicating when he had failed.
6. Franklin has difficulty living as virtuously as was his goal. He had difficulty keeping his weekly lines “marked clear of spots.” He did, however, see his faults diminish.

Moral perfection: Student responses will vary, but should be reasonable and related to the student’s overall beliefs and understandings. Challenge students to identify the bases of their motivations to act virtuously.

7. Franklin’s words are based on assumptions that right and wrong are universal and absolute, even while moral perfection may not be humanly impossible.
8. Franklin did not accomplish his initial goal of moral perfection because he never did rid himself of the faults he sought to eliminate because he found himself “so much fuller of Faults” than he had imagined.
9. He did eventually begin to see his faults diminish, and he did become a happier person than he would have been if he had not made the attempt, and he believes he was made better for having tried.
10. Student responses will vary, but should be based on the text.
11. Similarities students may find are:
  - Contribution – Industry.
  - Integrity – Sincerity.
  - Justice – Justice.
  - Perseverance – Industry.
  - Respect – Chastity.

- Responsibility – Resolution. Responsibility – Frugality. Responsibility – Temperance.
- Self-Governance – Silence. Self-Governance – Order. Self-Governance – Moderation.

Students may find several differences, including that some of Franklin’s virtues may not seem to correlate to those in the “Identifying and Defining Civic Virtue” list. Students may also identify differences in the definition of virtues that may otherwise seem similar.

12. Accept reasoned student responses.

### *Tanks in the Square (p. 3)*

1. Students may be somewhat familiar with this scene, including the fact that it is often referred to as “Tank Man” and that it took place in China. Some may know the decade or year it took place. Some may also know something about the political context and its place in history. Use responses to inform instruction.
2. Student responses will vary. Use responses to inform instruction throughout the rest of the activity. Provide answers, to students’ additional questions, or provide a means for them to research them in class.
3. Accept reasoned responses that are based on what can be observed in the photograph. Students should spot the man standing in front of the tank.
4. Students should identify the man standing in front of the tank on the left side of the photo. In the context of the size of the Square, and the size and number of the tanks, he appears quite small—and could almost be missed by someone not looking closely.

Students may say that he is making a statement about his determination in his protest, about his lack of fear of the tanks and troops, or of his willingness to sacrifice for what he is demanding.



thus making this quite courageous. Some may also note that under the Nazi regime, the state-controlled police fostered fear and distrust among citizens; no one knew who, among the people around them, was an informant.

***August Landmesser's Courageous Refusal: Discussion Guide (p. 185)***

1. Some students may identify themselves as being more like Landmesser. Others may identify themselves as part of the majority in the crowd. Use the question to probe students' understanding of human nature and why the majority of people did not defy the Hitler regime.
2. Student responses may vary. Use the question to explore and to discuss why humans often do not make virtuous choices when the circumstances make it difficult or dangerous to do so.
3. Accept and discuss reasoned responses.
4. Student responses will vary; guide students toward a connection between the ideas in the text and their own life experiences.
5. In a society founded on democratic principles, tyranny of the majority can occur. When it does, it is important that citizens have the courage to speak their conscience and stand up for people with little or no voice.
4. Answers may vary. Students should explore whether an individual is responsible for his actions when those actions are part of a larger collective movement.
5. Irma saw the prisoners as less than human and her actions reflected this belief.
6. Irma was indoctrinated into believing in the racial superiority of the German people and that the Jewish people were "sub-human" and likened to parasites.
7. Answers may vary. Due to intense indoctrination, Irma likely believed in what she was doing. Students should explain whether her moral culpability is diminished due to her beliefs.
8. Answers may vary. Students should explore the extent to which we are responsible for the people we grow to be. If Irma is merely a product of indoctrination, can she be faulted for the choices she made as child to join the League of German Women?
9. Answers may vary. If Irma was merely a product of indoctrination, students should explore how this affects her culpability as an adult. Can she be held fully responsible for actions she believed were right?
10. Answers may vary. Students should explain the level to which they believe Irma is culpable and whether or not they believe any or all of her actions are forgivable in light of her culpability.

***Irma Grese and Self-Deception: Discussion Guide (p. 195)***

1. Answers may vary. Irma was young and susceptible to propaganda and indoctrination.
2. The Nazi ideology was championed by a charismatic leader and appealed to an ideology of racial superiority of the German people and extreme nationalism.
3. Irma's mother committed suicide when she was only 13 and she was frustrated and bored with her schooling.
11. Answers may vary. Students should explain how they believe we ought to view Irma Grese and her actions after considering her circumstances and culpability.
12. Answers may vary. Was she in denial about her actions or was she fully indoctrinated into believing she had not done anything wrong?
13. Answers may vary. Students should explain how they view culpability in light of indoctrination.