

## Introduction

People are in need of heroes today more than at any other time in our history. We are often bombarded with everyday media focusing on the negative messages of violence, drugs, terrorism; and the list goes on with anything that is an attention grabber and will sell. The heroes profiled in the following stories display the drive, motivation, and dedication to overcome adversity and numerous challenges to reach their goals. Their stories teach the values of self-discipline, responsibility, accountability, and loyalty. They demonstrate the qualities necessary to be successful in life—good character, integrity, a strong work ethic, dedication, and perseverance.

In developing character it is important that we use positive thoughts. These positive thoughts can be fueled by positive stories. The stories of heroes who have overcome adversity and the challenges of life can have a very powerful influence in making a life-changing impact. —

An ancient philosophy handed down through the ages is that a person becomes what they think. It is a philosophy characterized by the idea that a person's character is the outward expression of their inner thoughts. James Allen in his book, *As a Man Thinketh*, states, "All that a man achieves or fails to achieve is the direct results of his own thoughts."

Stories are memorable; they lodge in the long-term memory. American psychologist Jerome Bruner (1990) investigated different modes of thinking and found that people are 20 times more likely to remember information in the form of a story than as a set of disconnected facts. As Rudyard Kipling stated, "If history were taught in the form of stories, it would never be forgotten."

Reading and listening to stories require a complex human activity that uses the whole-brain function. The left brain is the pattern seeker, the side of the brain that processes the language sequentially and analyzes the character and plot. It focuses on the content or "what" of the story. The right brain focuses on the "why" and puts the information into context. It sees the big picture and visualizes. The right brain takes us out of our normal thinking mode and tells us how the story relates to us.

When we listen and relate to information in the shape of a story, our imagination starts telling us a secondary, almost parallel story that has unique relevance to us. It connects with our emotions and mobilizes us into action. Most of this happens in our subconscious mind and we don't even realize that we have been influenced.

During difficult times it becomes easy to get stuck in the same negative thinking pattern. Stories can lift individuals or groups out of the negative mindset, and allow them to step back and see things in a different, more positive way, maybe in a way they have never imagined.

You're bound to find motivation and encouragement from the stories, affirmation, quotes and questions in *Developing Character Through Motivational Heroes*, no matter your walk of life. Hopefully, you receive pleasure and inspiration from these pages and develop the strong, positive character that will lead to a long, happy, highly productive and positive life.

There are many ways the questions can be used. Here are ten suggestions.

1. Post on bulletin board for all to read.
2. Distribute event specific stories.
3. The leader reads the story and then a group discussion takes place.
4. Individuals are assigned to read stories to a group. Group discussion takes place after the story is read.
5. An individual reads the story within a small group. Small group discussion takes place after the story is read.
6. A group discusses questions during an activity.
7. Stories can be read during a break in activity.
8. Questions can be discussed during a break in activity.
9. Reading of the story and discussion on stories can take place at the end of an activity.
10. Individuals can be given a story to help motivate them under specific situations such as when injured, performance is sub-par, or a person is depressed.