



# The Hero's Trail

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## About the Book

*Heroes are people who triumph over obstacles, advocate for good, and show uncommon bravery or strength of spirit.*

*Here, through moving narrative and powerful profiles of heroes of all ages and from all walks of life, T. A. Barron sets young people on a path toward finding the hero inside themselves.*

## Reviews

"Incredibly important...both potent and inspiring."

— **Chinaberry Book Review**

"A rewarding, informative read, the book introduces and pays homage to heroes throughout time, literature, and life."

— **Booklist, starred review**

"The simplicity of the message and wide range of examples combine to make compelling motivational reading."

— **Kirkus Reviews**

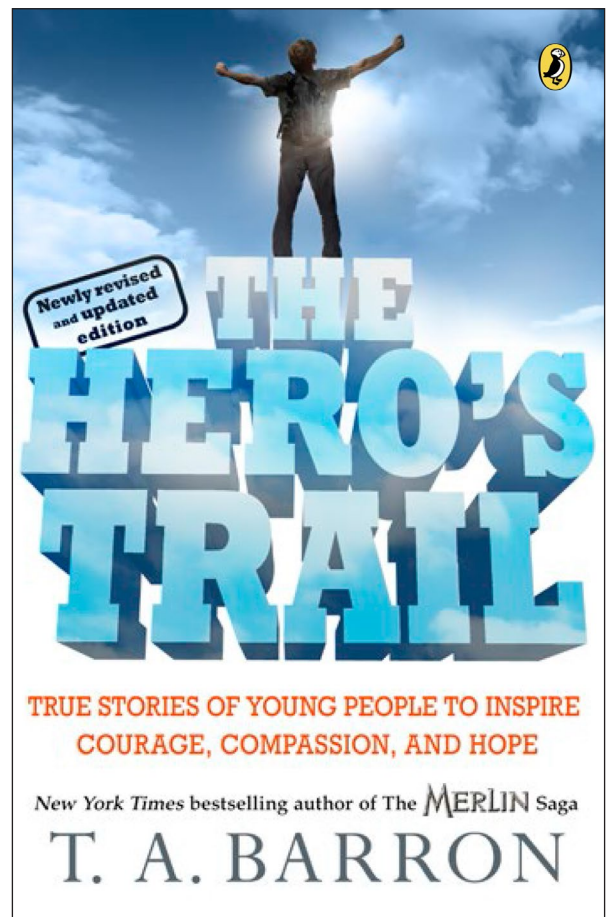
## Discuss

All page numbers used in this guide are from the 2015 Puffin edition of *The Hero's Trail*. This is an abridged version of *The Hero's Trail Study Guide* flyer.

### Definition of a Hero

Have students work in teams to define the word "hero." Ask them to revisit *The Hero's Trail* and picture book biographies to see how these authors define "hero," drawing on inference when necessary. Older students could also reference:

- *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* by Joseph Campbell (prologue)
- *A Call to Heroism* by Peter Gibbon
- The Giraffe Heroes Project ([www.giraffe.org](http://www.giraffe.org))
- Various dictionaries
- Definitions offered by Barron Prize young heroes at the start of the *Dream Big* documentary (available from [BarronPrize.org](http://BarronPrize.org) or [TABarron.com](http://TABarron.com))



## Heroic Character Qualities

Compare the classroom list to the five heroic character qualities that T. A. Barron uses in *The Hero's Trail* for categorizing heroes—**courage, perseverance, generosity, compassion, and hope.**

Do students agree or disagree with his choice to focus on these five qualities? Have them write a letter to T. A. Barron explaining and defending their position.

## Hero vs Celebrity

Ask students to free write for ten minutes using the prompt, “What is the difference between a hero and a celebrity?” If needed, provide them with additional prompts such as: “Which one does something more lasting?”; “Which one is more about fame?”; “Which one is more about qualities of character?”

## Historical Heroes

Ask each student to choose one historical hero to research in depth and to share their findings via a multimedia presentation. Challenge students to find connections and make comparisons among the heroes presented (e.g., Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Harriet Tubman; Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mohandas Gandhi).

## Literary Heroes

Discuss with students the theme of the hero's quest as a recurring motif in much of literature. Point out the young heroes and their journeys in some of T. A. Barron's fictional books:

- The boy who washes ashore and becomes a wizard in *The Lost Years* (book 1 from *The Merlin Saga*)
- Young Anna, who finds her true identity in *Tree Girl*
- Kate, who saves the people she loves with the help of a great redwood tree in *The Ancient One*

Ask students to share other examples of fictional heroes and their quests.

## Personal Heroes

Have students create and conduct a poll of their peers to determine young people's heroes. They might include questions such as: “Do you have a hero? If so, who is it?” and “Are star athletes heroes?” Ask students to create graphs to present their poll results.

## Everyone can be a Hero

Have students visit the “Meet the Winners” page of the Barron Prize website ([barronprize.org](http://barronprize.org)) to read profiles of young people making a heroic difference to the world. Discuss why these young people can be considered heroes and which heroic character qualities they demonstrate.

## Choosing to Act Heroically

Refer students to these words in T. A. Barron's *The Hero's Trail*:

“Sometimes it takes courage just to walk down the trail of life. Yes—just to keep walking, to keep trying, to keep going even when we stumble or twist an ankle or get lost. Yet each step we take—each choice we make—can make a difference. And sometimes, that difference can be truly heroic.” (Introduction, page 2)

Then ask students to read Robert Frost's poem “The Road Not Taken” and consider the lines:

“Two roads diverged in a wood and I—I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference.”

Compare what these two authors are saying about making courageous choices and the difference that can make.

**To download or order an in-depth discussion guide for *The Hero's Trail*, visit:**

<https://tabarron.com/young-heroes/the-heros-trail/>