

Hero Figures

Pay tribute to the everyday heroes in the community

(art + social studies)

One of the oldest themes in the history of painting and sculpture is tribute portraiture. Across almost every culture, heroic figures and their deeds have been portrayed in art, captured for the historic record and to inspire future generations. Often larger than life, these venerated figures are placed in spaces where they can be admired by the public.

Heroes can be characterized by many admirable traits. Bravery, charity, self-sacrifice, and exceptional abilities are just a few of the qualities of a heroic spirit. Everyday heroes possess the same traits, but are not often paid tribute or placed on a pedestal.

In this lesson, students select a person that they know who has demonstrated these heroic qualities. They then create a small representational figure sculpture that pays tribute to them and what makes them a hero.

Soft, flexible wires can be twisted into a human form and positioned on a pedestal of air-dry clay. Details such as hair, clothing, and tools can be added assemblage-style with a variety of materials, such as paper, yarn, fabric, and craft foam.

Defining what it means to be an everyday hero is highly individual—each student will come up with their own ideas based on what is important to them. This lesson not only gives students an opportunity to honor community heroes and recognize their own ideals, but also provides a chance to understand the perspectives of others.

GRADES 1-8 Note: Instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 24 students. Adjust as needed.

Preparation

1. Divide dough into portions approximately the size of a ping pong ball and place into zip-close plastic storage bags to keep moist until needed.
2. Cut and distribute wire. Each student will need one full-size and one half wire. These can be placed in the bag with the dough ahead of time.

Process for early elementary students

1. Start by generating a list of personality traits that could be attributed to a hero. Each student can create a list or it can be a group effort. For example, a hero might be brave, strong, kind, hard-working, caring, giving, etc.



Materials (required)

Twisteez Wires, Bulk pack, box of 200 (33407-1009); share one across class

DAS Junior Air Dry Clay, White (34353-1020) 3.53 oz pkg ; share one between 8 students

Creativity Street Craft Sticks, Bag of 150, natural (60401-1500); need two per student

Crayola Colors of the World Markers, Set of 24 (21218-1024); share four sets across class

Blick White Glue, 4 oz, (23882-1004); share one bottle between two students

Fiskars Kids Scissors, Blunt, pkg of 24 (57085-1009); share one across class

Recommended Materials for Embellishment:

Roylco All Kinds of Fabrics Paper, 200 sheet pkg, 8.5" x 5.5" (12651-1058); share one across class

Pacon Tru-Ray Color Wheel Assortment Construction Paper, 9" x 12", assorted colors, 144 sheets (11406-1004); share one across class

Creativity Street Felt Sheet Assortment, 9" x 12", 12 colors (61753-1023); share one across class

Papier Mâché Mini Boxes, assorted shapes (60001-); share one between two students

Optional Materials

Blick Sculpture Wire, 14-gauge, 350 ft spool (33400-1435)

Blick Matte Acrylic Paint, assorted colors (00727-)

Ready to order materials?

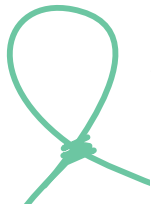
Go to www.DickBlick.com/lesson-plans/hero-figures to access a product bundle for your convenience.

Process, continued

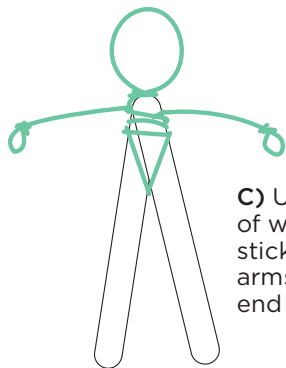
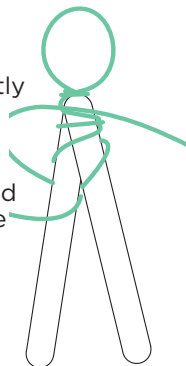
Let this list serve as a prompt for students to select someone that they know — an everyday hero — who shows one or more of these characteristics.

2. Form a figure using the following simple process:

A) Start with a full size wire. Bring the ends together so that they are evenly spaced. Form a loop about the size of a quarter and twist to form the head.



B) Place craft sticks just beneath the loop and move apart slightly to form legs. Twist wire around top of sticks, then between the sticks, then around each one. Legs will be secure, yet flexible.



C) Use a half wire to finish figure. Insert one end of wire between wrapped wire at the top of the sticks to secure, then wrap around 2-3 times until arms are proportionate. Make small loops at the end of the wire to indicate hands.

3. Craftsticks can be colored with markers to represent skin tones.
4. Form feet or a base for the figure using air dry clay and insert the craftsticks so that the figure stands upright. Adjust position of arms and legs to desired pose. For best results, allow time for the clay to dry before moving on to the next step. Depending on thickness, it may require several hours or overnight.
5. Design elements of hair, clothing, and accessories to make it look like the person who is being honored. Cut paper, fabrics, yarn, string, felt, foam shapes, etc. Attach to the wire figure by gluing, wrapping or tying. Test frequently to make sure the figure doesn't become unbalanced and is still able to stand.
6. Paint a small box (or the lid for the box), allow it to dry, and glue the feet so that the figure stands on top of it as a pedestal. Use a marker or small paintbrush and contrasting color of paint to label the pedestal with the name of the hero and their heroic occupation or traits.

Option for Grades 4-8

— Higher grade levels can use 14 gauge aluminum sculpture wire, a more rigid, supportive medium that is still very easy to bend. Eliminate the craft sticks in the figure process (B) and simply twist the wire back on itself to create legs

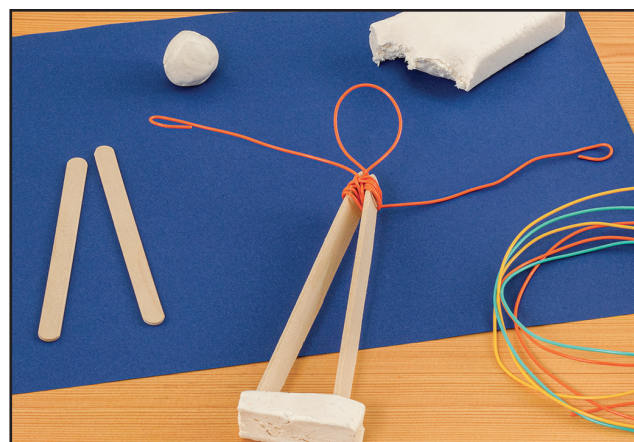
National Core Arts Standards - Visual Arts

Creating

Anchor Standard 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

Connecting

Anchor Standard 10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.



Step 1: Generate a list of words that describes the traits of a hero. Select an everyday hero who fits one or more of the traits, then design a simple wire figure.



Step 2: Embellish the figure with a variety of materials to make it look like the hero who is being honored with a sculpture. Use air-dry clay to form feet or an attachable base.

Step 3: Design a pedestal using a small cardboard box or lid and glue the figure's feet to it so that they are standing. Label the pedestal with the hero's name and heroic occupation or traits.



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