From Ordinary to Extraordinary: Everyday Heroes from the 1800s

Overview
Students will choose and research an active, engaged person living in the 1800s, who through political or social action fought to positively impact the flawed society in which they lived. Students will apply their learned knowledge by writing a monologue in which this historical hero speaks about his/her life in first person. The project will culminate with students dressing as their chosen person and presenting a 3 minute monologue to an audience. (Teacher Note: The monologue assignment can be applied to any time period covered throughout your curriculum.)

Grade
8

North Carolina Essential Standards
- 8.H.1.1 - Construct charts, graphs, and historical narratives to explain particular events or issues.
- 8.H.1.2 - Summarize the literal meaning of historical documents in order to establish context.
- 8.H.1.3 - Use primary and secondary sources to interpret various historical perspectives.
- 8.H.1.4 - Use historical inquiry to evaluate the validity of sources used to construct historical narratives (e.g. formulate historical questions, gather data from a variety of sources, evaluate and interpret data and support interpretations with historical evidence).
- 8.H.1.5 - Analyze the relationship between historical context and decision-making.
- 8.H.2.2 - Summarize how leadership and citizen actions (e.g. the founding fathers, the Regulators, the Greensboro Four, and participants of the Wilmington Race Riots, 1898) influenced the outcome of key conflicts in North Carolina and the United States.
- 8.H.3.3 - Explain how individuals and groups have influenced economic, political and social change in North Carolina and the United States.
- 8.C&G.1.4 - Analyze access to democratic rights and freedoms among various groups in North Carolina and the United States (e.g. enslaved people, women, wage earners, landless farmers, American Indians, African Americans and other ethnic groups).
- 8.C&G.2.2 - Analyze issues pursued through active citizen campaigns for change (e.g. voting rights and access to education, housing and employment).
- 8.C&G.2.3 - Explain the impact of human and civil rights issues throughout North Carolina and United States history.
- 8.C.1.3 - Summarize the contributions of particular groups to the development of North Carolina and the United States (e.g. women, religious groups, and ethnic minorities such as American Indians, African Americans, and European immigrants).

Essential Questions
- What is an “everyday hero?”
- What does it mean to be an active, engaged member of your community?
- What individuals during the 1800s were active and engaged in bringing about positive change and how did they impact their society?
- How do the actions of people in the past impact us today?

Materials
- From Ordinary to Extraordinary: Everyday Heroes of the 1800s, assignment sheet attached
- Research materials: Internet or library access, books, encyclopedias, etc.
- Audience Response Sheet, attached
Duration

- Time will vary based on the amount of class time teachers choose to provide for completion of the project.
- At the least, teachers are encouraged to devote at least one class period to initial research, helping ensure students are discovering credible sources.
- Teachers should also consider devoting at least a partial class period to a writer’s workshop in which students bring the first draft of their monologue and offer feedback to one another.
- Allotting time for practicing monologues (i.e. in partners or small groups), costume and prop construction, etc. in class is up to the teacher’s discretion.
- Regardless of the amount of in-class time devoted to the project, it is imperative teachers check in routinely with students to ensure they are making progress on the project.
- Performances can be presented on one particular day of class (i.e., one right after another) or can be broken up over several classes (i.e., one or more students present at the start of class each day.)

Procedure

**Exploring “Heroes”**

1. Lead students in a verbal brainstorm of the word “hero.” Encourage them to explore all aspects of the word that comes to mind. As a class, create a common definition.

2. Ask students to silently think of what it means to be a hero. What types of thoughts, traits, characteristics, behaviors, actions, ideas, values, etc. does a hero have? Encourage their thinking by asking:
   - How does a hero act and behave? What might they think and value? What do they do?
   - How does a hero affect where you live (your neighborhood)? Your school? Your community?
   - How does a person become classified as a hero? Can any person be a hero? How? (Discuss with students how we often think of hero’s as “larger than life” people, yet in actuality, any single one of us can be a person who makes a difference. In fact, history is comprised of ordinary people who took it upon themselves to do extraordinary things.)

3. Ask students to brainstorm a list of heroes. Tell them to consider people who have made a difference in their society, historically and current. Chart answers. Encourage students to think beyond famous heroes, and consider people in their own personal lives they would classify in this way. Once a substantial list has been created, ask:
   - In what ways did this person affect his/her society? What actions did they take to “make a difference?”
   - How might our life be different if this person had instead been apathetic to their cause?
   - In what ways are we similar to the people on this list? (Encourage students to compare their ideals, values, humanity, etc. Make sure students understand the humanness of the people on the list, and that many of them were ordinary people, just as we are. However, they had the motivation, drive, and agency to take the time and effort to act on something they cared about, thus making them extraordinary.)

**From Ordinary to Extraordinary: Everyday “Heroes” from the 1800s**

4. Hand out the assignment, *From Ordinary to Extraordinary: Everyday Heroes of the 1800s*, and explain to students that they will explore someone who lived in the 1800s who made a difference in their society. Make sure students understand what is meant by a first-person monologue and highlight the importance of putting research into their own words. Also, you may wish to clarify your expectations in terms of the costume required when they present. (It is recommended that students are instructed to show effort in representing historical costume, but are not required to buy, rent, or sow extravagant outfits.)

5. It is also recommended to share a monologue example with students, either by the teacher doing a reading, or by pulling a clip from a movie of an actor delivering a monologue. Several good examples can be found on the Crafting Freedom website [http://www.craftingfreedom.org](http://www.craftingfreedom.org) including:
• David Walker: http://craftingfreedom.org/walker/video.php
• Harriet Jacobs: http://craftingfreedom.org/jacobs/video.php

Pulling a sample from Unchained Memories: Readings from the Slave Narratives can also show students how to deliver a dramatic presentation without memorizing the monologue or having an elaborate costume. The majority of these narratives are presented by actors without costumes as the read from a paper. This is likely available for rental in your local library or video store.

6. Allow for time at the end of class for students to ask questions, brainstorm, and do preliminary research to determine their top three choices of people they would like to portray. (Teachers can also allow students to choose historical figures not on the list with pre-approval.) Teachers can then assign students their requests.

7. Teachers should determine and let students know how much class time will be provided for completion of this project, as well as how much homework time should be devoted to its completion. At the least, teachers are encouraged to devote at least one class period to initial research, helping ensure students are discovering credible sources. Teachers should also consider devoting at least a partial class period to a writer’s workshop in which students bring the first draft of their monologue and offer feedback to one another. Allotting time for practicing monologues, costume and prop construction, etc. in class is up to the teacher’s discretion. Regardless of the amount of in-class time devoted to the project, it is imperative teachers check in routinely with students to ensure they are making progress on the project.

Presentation of Monologues

8. Make sure to review respectful audience expectations before presentations. It is also advised that student audience members take notes on their classmate’s presentations, detailing the name of the person portrayed, what he/she did to affect society, as well as positive comments regarding the presentation as a whole (example note-taking sheet attached.) After each presentation, allow the class to ask questions and offer positive comments to the actor (“What I liked/What I learned”).

9. When finished with the presentations, culminate with a discussion:
• Which historical figure did you find most interesting and why? Which person were you most impressed with and why?
• Which people do you feel faced and overcome the greatest challenges? Explain.
• How would you characterize these people overall? In what ways were they ordinary and extraordinary? Why can we call them “everyday heroes”? In what ways did they engage themselves and others to bring about change in their societies?
• Why is it important for us, as individuals today, to be active and engaged in our community, and in making a positive difference, as well?
• We honor our ancestors by learning about and caring about the history they endured. What are other ways we can honor them? What are our responsibilities as youth today to ensure history and injustice does not repeat itself?

Additional Activities
• Host a dramatic presentation of student monologues for families and school staff. Allow audience members to interview students “in character” after the performances.
• Either before or after the monologue presentations, allow students to participate in a “Meet and Greet” or reception in which they all attend in character and learn about one another
• Arrange a fundraising evening such as “Night of the Notables” at Barnes and Noble, where student’s present monologues in public; stores will often donate a portion of sales the evening of the presentations to the school.
Name: __________________________________________

**From Ordinary to Extraordinary: Everyday Heroes of the 1800s**

I. Assignment:
Choose an historical figure from the list below who fought to make a difference in their 1800s society by being an active, engaged member of society. Many of these diverse individuals, through social and/or political action, strove for equality, worked to make society a better place, and stood up for the rights of all individuals.

You will start by researching this individual, learning about all aspects of his/her life. Of specific importance are the actions the person took to challenge the flawed society in which they lived. Using your learned information, you will write a monologue in which this historical figure speaks about their life in first person. You will culminate this project by dressing as the historical figure, and presenting your 3-5 minute monologue to class in character.

*Please note that all research must be put into YOUR OWN WORDS. Cutting and pasting any information, or only changing pronouns and nothing else, will be considered PLAGERISM.

II. Time Line for Completion:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students receive assignment and should determine their top three choices of figures to research and “become.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Choice 1: ____________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Choice 2: ____________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Choice 3: ____________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students will be assigned their historical figure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In-class research days (all other research must be conducted outside of class time!)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First draft of monologue due! In-class writing workshop day to improve first draft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Final draft of monologue and time appropriate costume sketch (detailing how you will dress) due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Final performance (students will present their monologue in costume to classmates)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The person I have been assigned to research, write a monologue about, then act out and dress like is:

______________________________________

III. Requirements/Grading: This will count as TWO project grades.
**Grade One** will be based on the written monologue; 100 possible points based on:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research/accuracy</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Format/Grammar Mechanics</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(points will not be taken off if improper English is appropriate for your character)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(should be focused on the ways this person attempted to change society and make a difference)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Grade Two** will be based on the performance of the 3-5 minute monologue; 100 possible points based on:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participation/Effort</strong></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(rehearsed, took performance seriously, maintained character, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Costume/Props</strong></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Volume/Clarity of Speaking</strong></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Creativity</strong></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(showed emotion, used an accent if appropriate, attempted acting, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**IV. Parent Signature**

I have reviewed this assignment with my child and understand the expectations and requirements. If I have any questions, I will e-mail the teacher at ______________________. I will check in with my child periodically to ensure he/she is abiding to all due dates. I will read over my child’s first draft before its due date on ___________, and will review the final draft, and ensure he/she turns in their final monologue on ___________. Finally, I will assist my child at home in practicing the monologue out loud in preparation for performances on ___________.

_________________________________  ___________________________________
Parent/guardian Signature e-mail or phone number

**V. Choices of historical figures**

This list contains examples of historical figures from a broad range of race, gender, culture, background, etc. that you may present in a monologue. Since the list is not exhaustive of all the people who made a difference during the 1800s, you are welcome to select others not on the list. However, make sure you consult with your teacher for approval.
Richard Allen:
 founded the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church and the Free African Society (1787)

Benjamin Banneker:
 first African American scientist

Clara Barton:
 known as the “Angel of the Battlefield” during the Civil War; helped start the American Red Cross

Colonel James C. Beecher:
 in charge of the “First Regiment of NC Colored Solgiers/35th Regiment of US Colored Troops” during the Civil War

Harriet Beecher Stowe:
 Northern abolitionist who wrote Uncle Tom’s Cabin to inspire people to resist the Fugitive Slave Act

Mary Elizabeth Bowser:
 former slave who served as a spy for the Union Army during the Civil War

Henry “Box” Brown:
 Arranged to mail himself to a free state in order to escape slavery

John Brown:
 Militant Caucasian abolitionist who lead the “Raid on Harpers Ferry”

Andrew Bryan:
 founder of the First African Baptist Church

George Washington Carver:
 1864-1943; African American scientist who discovered new ways that peanuts, soybeans, and sweet potatoes could be used as money making crops in the South

John Chavis:
 Early 19th century minister and teacher, he fought in the Revolutionary War. Opened a private school in Raleigh where he taught black and white children, specializing in Latin and Greek.

Henry Plummer Cheatham:
 Republican Congressman from 1888 – 1892. Superintendent of the African-American orphanage he had co-founded two decades earlier.

Charles Waddell Chesnutt:
 Teacher, lawyer, businessman, and author acclaimed for portraying blacks realistically and challenging the usual sympathetic portrayals of slavery.

Paul Cuffe:
 Free black businessman in Boston who fought for voting rights in 1780

Levi Coffin:
 Guilford County, NC Quaker who opposed slavery; helped many former slaves escape to freedom by participating in the Underground Railroad in Indiana.
Anna Julia Haywood Cooper:  
Civil and women’s rights pioneer. Earliest Black woman activist in the realm of higher education. She served as school principal for 39 years.

Thomas Day:  
famous African American furniture maker in Milton, NC

Dorthea Dix:  
social reformer who visited North Carolina in 1848; lobbied legislature to fund hospitals for the mentally ill

Frederick Douglas:  
escaped from Baltimore slavery in 1838; used his exceptional speaking skills to fight for social reform and abolition of slavery

William Edward Burghardt DuBois:  
WEB DuBois was a harbinger of Black nationalism and Pan-Africanism; died in self-imposed exile in Africa

James Benson Dudley:  
Born into slavery in 1859, he became President of North Carolina Agricultural and Mechanical College, predecessor institution of North Carolina A & T State University.

Elizabeth Freeman:  
the first enslaved African American to be freed under the new state constitution

Abraham H. Galloway:  
Fugitive slave and abolitionist from North Carolina; worked as a Union spy and became eastern NC’s most important spokesman for African American rights.

William Lloyd Garrison:  
Leading white abolitionist; wrote for “The Liberator”

Henry Highland Garnet:  
escaped from Maryland slavery in 1825 to New York; attended the New York African Free school and was an outspoken abolitionist; lobbied for boycotting cotton

Thomas Garrett:  
A Quaker, who was strongly opposed to slavery and joined the Pennsylvania Abolition Society; turned his home into an Underground Railroad station

Ulysses S. Grant:  
Famous Union general

Sally Hemmings:  
Enslaved woman who worked for the Jefferson’s; it is believed she fathered children by Thomas Jefferson

George Moses Horton:  
First black slave to protest his bondage in published verse; lived in Chatham County, NC
**Charles Norfleet Hunter:**
Born into slavery in Raleigh, he became a journalist, educator, historian, and voice of the African-American community in North Carolina.

**John Adams Hyman:**
Born into slavery, Hyman was sold eight times for his attempts to educate himself. Freed by the 13th Amendment, he was elected State Senator and U.S. Congressman in 1874.

**Harriet Jacobs:**

**Absaloam Jones:**
Worked along side Richard Allen and was one of the first two black Americans to receive formal ordination in any denomination.

**Elizabeth Keckley:**
Enslaved woman who lived in Hillsborough; worked to save money for purchasing her own freedom.

**John Mercer Langston:**
First Black American elected to public office in the U.S. and was twice suggested as a candidate for vice-president of the United States on the republican ticket.

**Abraham Lincoln:**
United States president during the Civil War; known as the “great emancipator”

**Mary Elizabeth Mahoney:**
America’s first black professional nurse.

**Dred Scott:**
Sued for the Scott families freedom in 1846 in the famous court case, *Dred Scott v. Sanford*.

**Mary Ann Shadd:**
First African American women editor of a newspaper in North America: worked for racial integration in the United States.

**Sequoyah:**
Invented the Cherokee written language.

**Robert Smalls:**
Born a slave in Beaufort in 1839, Robert Smalls lived to serve as a Congressman of the United States.

**Thaddeus Stevens:**
Overcame is disabilities and was elected to congress in 1848 where he worked to oppose slavery.

**Albion W. Tourgée**
Spent his lifetime (1838-1905) dedicated to fighting for equality and justice; served as advisor and counsel in *Plessy v. Ferguson*.
**Sojourner Truth:**
 fought for the desegregation of public transportation (railway trains) in Washington, DC during the Civil War

**Mary Church Terrell:**
 writer, lecturer and educator; she is remembered best for her contribution to the struggle for the rights of women of African descent

**Tsali:**
 elderly Cherokee who lead a revolt against inhumane soldiers during the Trail of Tears evacuation in 1838

**Harriet Tubman:**
 escaped from Maryland slavery; worked to free other slaves; Tubman worked to establish a home for the elderly

**Henry McNeal Turner:**
 African American army chaplain, political organizer, magazine editor, college chancellor and preacher…and more!

**Nat Turner:**
 visionary African American religious leader and the architect of the August 1831 Southampton Virginia slave revolt

**David Walker:**
 Wilmington, NC native who fled to Boston in 1829 and presented “Walkers Appeal,” calling for an immediate end to slavery

**Quock Walker:**
 Sued for his freedom from slavery based on the 1780 constitution and was emancipated

**Booker T. Washington:**
 founded Tuskegee Institute in Alabama in 1881 and later became an important and controversial leader of African Americans

**Phyllis Wheatley:**
 the first African American writer to be published; her “Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral, was published on September 1, 1773.

**Daniel Worth:**
 North Carolinian who opposed slavery and preached to people of European and African descent; arrested in 1859 for “inciting enslaved Africans”

**Colonel James H. Young:**
### Everyday Heroes of the 1800s – Audience Response Sheet

While watching your classmates perform their monologue, fill in the chart below. After each presentation, everyone will participate in a feedback section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Historical Figure</th>
<th>List at least three important facts about/accomplishments by this person</th>
<th>What did you like most about your classmate’s presentation of this person?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the people presented, who do you think make the greatest impact on their community and why?