Heroes and Sidekicks

Topic
Heroes and their sidekicks

Aims
• To help learners talk about familiar fictional characters
• To develop learners’ reading skills
• To develop learners’ pronunciation skills
• To develop learners’ communication skills

Age group
Teens

Level
B1 / B2

Time
60+ minutes

Materials
• Heroes and sidekicks Student worksheet

Introduction
This lesson asks students to talk about international heroes and sidekicks as well as similar characters from local popular culture. It includes pronunciation work on adjectives to describe personality and question formation practice.

Procedure
1. Lead-in: v (5 minutes)
   • Write *Batman* on the board or display a picture of him. Ask the students what they know about him. Do they know the name of his sidekick? (Robin). Tell the students that they are going to talk more about heroes and sidekicks in
2. **Task 1: Heroes and sidekicks mingle and match** (10 minutes)

- Cut out the strips and hand out one to each student. If you don’t have a conveniently sized class of 12 see *Not 12 students?* below for suggestions.
- Students mingle with their classmates to find their partner. Demonstrate how to do this with a student and elicit useful language onto the board before they start, e.g., *I’m Sherlock Holmes. What’s your name?/ My name’s Sherlock. Who are you?* When partners have found each other they should write their paired up character names on the board and then sit down.

- Ask students which of these characters they have seen on TV/ at the cinema/ in books and ask what they know (if anything) about the characters. Can they say which is the hero and which is the sidekick?
- If you can, show some pictures of the characters on the computer / board.

*Not 12 students?* If there is an even number of students, do enough copies so that everyone ends up with a partner. If there is an uneven number you can join in or join two students together to function as one character. With a class of less than 12, you could repeat the activity with the unused strips to pair up all the characters.

**Answers Task 1**
- *Bart Simpson – Milhouse Van Houten (From ‘The Simpsons’ tv show)*
- *Wallace - Gromit (from ‘Wallace and Gromit’ animation)*
- *Harry Potter – Ron Weasely (From the ‘Harry Potter’ books/films)*
- *SpongeBob Squarepants – Patrick Star (From the ‘SpongeBob Squarepants’ tv show)*
- *Sherlock Holmes – Dr Watson (From the books by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle)*
- *Katniss Evergreen - Rue (From film ‘The Hunger Games’)*

3. **Task 2: Reading task** (5 minutes)

- Handout the worksheet for task 2 and ask students to scan the text and say which heroes and sidekicks from the list on the board are mentioned.

**Answer task 2:**
- *Sherlock & Dr Watson, Wallace and Gromit, Bart & Milhouse*

4. **Task 3: Information about heroes** (10 minutes)

- Now ask students to read the text in more detail and complete the chart in task 3. Ask students to work in pairs and then compare answers in small groups. If necessary deal with vocabulary now by asking students to underline new words before looking them up in a dictionary or asking other students/the teacher. Personality adjectives are dealt with in the next task.

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5. Task 4: Pronunciation (5-10 minutes)

- **Task 4** looks at pronunciation (number of syllables and word stress) of adjectives to describe personality. Tell students to turn over their papers for a moment and ask them if they can remember any of the adjectives used to describe the characters in the text.

- Have students look at the box of adjectives in task 4 and tell them that they have to put the words in the right column according to the number of syllables. Get students started by counting syllables of the first few adjectives on your fingers with the class (an-gry, ath-let-ic). Students can continue in pairs. Monitor and make sure students are saying the words to help them count syllables. Students could use dictionaries to help them. Check answers as a class.

- Now ask students to underline the stressed syllable of each adjective. If this is an unfamiliar activity, you could do this a class. Students who are used to identifying word stress can work in pairs. Read out the words and exaggerate the stress to check answers.

- In pairs students say which adjectives from the chart describe the characters from the text. Monitor and praise correct word stress and help with pronunciation.

- About meaning: If your students know the characters then this should help them understand the adjectives. You could quickly clarify meaning with dictionaries/translation.

**Answers task 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 syllable</th>
<th>2 syllables</th>
<th>3 syllables</th>
<th>4 syllables</th>
<th>5 syllables</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cool</td>
<td>angry</td>
<td>athletic</td>
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<td>enthusiastic</td>
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<td>friendly</td>
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<td>eccentric</td>
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<td>nerdy</td>
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<td>rebellious</td>
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<td>untidy</td>
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<td>well-behaved</td>
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<td>ordinary</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
See task 3 answers to check which adjectives describe which character.

| 6. Task 5: 20 questions (5-10 minutes) | • Ask students to complete the missing words in the game of 20 questions in **task 5**. They can do this very easily by looking at the adjectives in task 4.

• Elicit or explain the rules of 20 questions: Student B thinks of a person (in this case a hero or sidekick from the lesson). Student A can then ask a maximum of 20 questions to find out the mystery person. B can only answer ‘yes’ or ‘no’.

• Demonstrate the game to the class with a student before students continue playing in pairs. Monitor and insist on correct word order for questions. Encourage students to use the information in the charts from tasks 3 and 4.

  **Answers task 5:**
  A: Are you **eccentric** and **untidy**?
  B: No
  A: Are you **cool** and **rebellious**?
  A: Yes
  B: Are you Bart?
  A: Yes!

| 7. Task 6: Invent and describe a superhero and sidekick (10-15 minutes) | • Ask students to make a list of more heroes and sidekicks on the board. Ask them for more information about them (where do they come from? Are they from a book / film / cartoon? What are their special skills and do they have a catchphrase? Then ask students to do this task in pairs. They could make a poster to display, describing their heroes and sidekicks, or do a mini-presentation to the class.

| 8. Task 7: Discussion (10 minutes) | • **Task 7** is a discussion activity. Students could read and make notes before they give their opinions in small groups.

| 9. Song (optional) | • You could finish with a **song about heroes**. Find and print the lyrics online. Chop up the verses and ask the students to order them as they listen. Here are a few suggestions:

  ‘No more heroes’ by the Stranglers. Watch them live on Top of the pops 1977 here:

  [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6yTRq_rJg4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6yTRq_rJg4)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Lesson plan</strong></th>
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| ‘Heroes’ by David Bowie:  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KxT8KJGzzM4&feature=related |
| ‘I need a hero’ By Jennifer Saunders in Shrek 2:  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iovcnjuf2WU |

**Contributed by**

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