

Unsung Heroes

Topic

Women who have achieved something remarkable

Aims

- To raise awareness of some relatively unknown remarkable women, for International Women's Day
- To develop reading and speaking skills through a jigsaw reading activity
- To build learners' vocabulary related to social issues
- To revise relative clauses

Age / level

Older teenagers and adults, B1+

Time

50–60 minutes

Materials

Worksheet 1: one per student, Worksheets 2 and 3: one per student or one per two students

Introduction

This lesson, devised for International Women's Day, will help to raise awareness of some not very famous, but nonetheless important, women. The lesson begins by asking students to think of well-known people that they consider to be heroes. It is likely that many of these will be men, so the students then go on to learn about five remarkable women in a jigsaw reading activity.

The students discuss these women's achievements, and learn some useful vocabulary for talking about social issues. There is then a focus on relative clauses, before the final task of writing about another female hero, using the vocabulary and relative clauses where appropriate. For a 50–60 minute class the writing stage could be done at home.

Procedure

1. Lead in (5–10 minutes)	<p>Write the word Heroes on the board. (Do not mention International Women’s Day at this point) Ask students to write down the names of at least five people they would regard as heroes. Set a time limit of 2–3 minutes.</p> <p>Then ask students to compare their list with a partner, and explain why they chose the people they did.</p> <p>Elicit some names and explanations from the class. Then ask how many people on their list were women. If not at least 50% of the names, ask them why not. Discuss as a class. For example, women were/are expected to give up work when they got/get married.</p>
2. Jigsaw reading (10 minutes)	<p>Write the names of the five women on the worksheet up on the board [Mary Seacole, Mary Anning, Dr Megan Coffee, Irena Sendler, Hilary Lister] Ask students if they have heard of them. If someone knows quite a lot about one or more of them, ask them not to tell the class just yet.</p> <p>Explain that all these women are ‘unsung heroes’ (or heroines), which means heroes that not many people know about, or make a fuss about.</p> <p>Tell the class that they are going to find out about these women. Divide the class into groups of five and allocate one of the five texts to each group member. (You could have smaller groups and allocate more than one text to stronger students, or larger groups and have more than one person reading a text)</p> <p>Give students 3–5 minutes to read ‘their’ text, and then ask them to turn over the worksheet, so they can’t read it.</p> <p>Students then tell the others in their group about the woman in their text.</p> <p>Briefly feedback as a class. Why are these women considered heroes?</p>
3. Vocabulary and further comprehension work (10–15 minutes)	<p>Tell students they are going to learn some vocabulary to talk about social issues.</p> <p>Individually ask them to complete the gaps with the correct name (worksheet 2, exercise 1). They should try to do it from what they heard at the previous stage first, but can go back and read the other texts to check their ideas.</p> <p>Students then match the words in bold with the definitions (worksheet 2, exercise 2).</p> <p>Check in pairs and as a class.</p>
4. Speaking (10 minutes)	<p>Put students in pairs or small groups and ask them to decide together which woman they think is the biggest hero.</p> <p>Then either discuss as a class or put two smaller groups together to repeat the task before discussing as a whole class.</p> <p>Encourage students to use the vocabulary from the previous stage where appropriate.</p>

5. Grammar focus – relative clauses (15 minutes)	Individually, ask students to complete the extracts from the texts, using a relative pronoun (who, which, where, whose, that) (worksheet 3) Check as a class Ask students to read the rules about defining and non-defining clauses, and check understanding. At this level, this should be revision. Students identify which sentences contain defining or non-defining relative clauses.
6. Writing (Homework) (20–30m)	Ask students to either choose a female hero of their own, or choose from a list that the teacher provides them with. They should find out about their chosen person and write a short text about her. Remind them to include some of the vocabulary, and to use relative clauses correctly. This could be set for homework.

Contributed by

Rachael Roberts