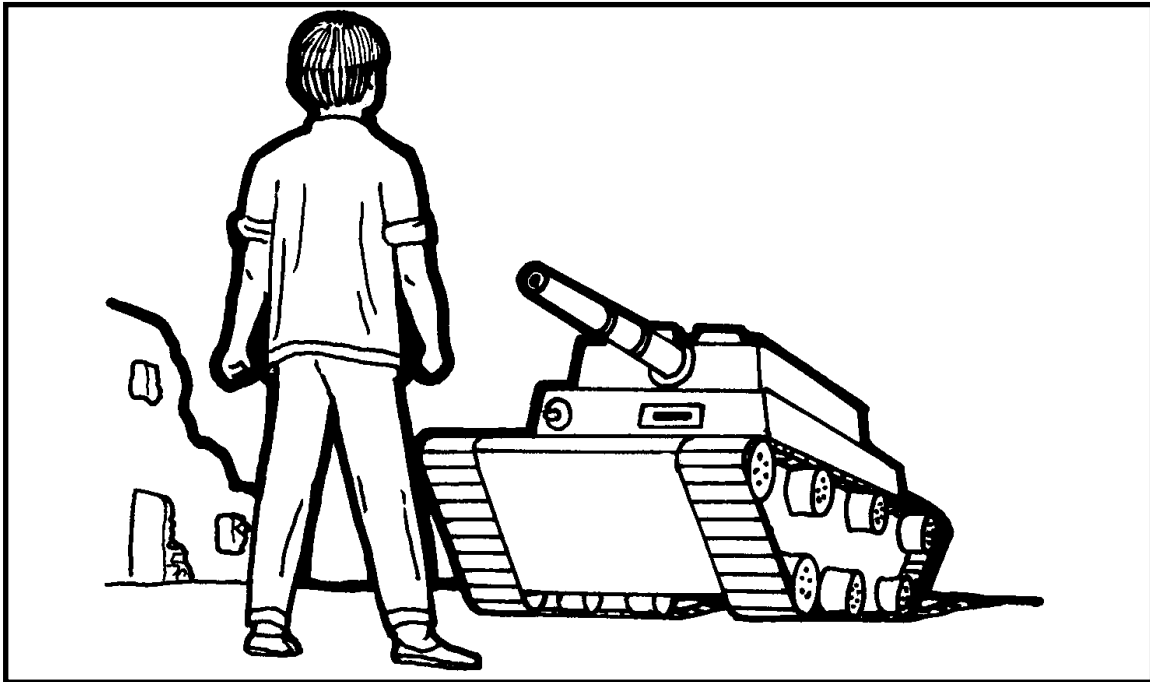


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What Is Courage?

Neil Armstrong, the first astronaut to walk on the moon, had it. Eddie Mabo, the Australian Aborigine, who took on the government and argued a case for 'native title' to his land - and won - had it. The young Chinese man who singlehandedly halted a line of government tanks in Tiananmen Square had it. Today, young people who refuse to submit to peer pressure to join a gang or take drugs most certainly have it.



What is it that these people have in common? In a word, it is courage. Courage is an elusive quality found in the hearts, minds, and spirits of many people. Courage is a quality that knows no racial, religious, or political bounds. Courage comes in many forms, yet it is difficult to define. The concise Oxford Dictionary speaks of courage as “the ability to disregard fear; bravery”, or “the courage to act on one’s beliefs”.

While the dictionary definition equates courage with bravery and fearlessness, it is possible to feel afraid and yet still possess courage. The key is not to become immobilised by one’s fears, but rather to acknowledge the fear and yet act in spite of it. As Eleanor Roosevelt said in her book, *You Learn by Living*, “You must do the thing you think you cannot do.”

Courage can take many forms. For some, courage may mean facing danger on a battlefield. For others, it may mean exploring unknown territories and new frontiers. And for still others, it may mean accepting the daily challenges of growing up in an impoverished neighbourhood. Though philosophers, statesmen, writers, and historians throughout the ages have attempted to define courage, it is perhaps best understood in terms of each person’s individual life experiences.

We hope this book will help you and your students shape unique definitions of courage which apply to your individual situations and to understand how the courage of a single person can affect an entire society. Throughout this book are thought-provoking activities designed to accomplish these goals. We hope you will share our enthusiasm for this topic, and we wish you much success as you begin to explore the theme of courage.

What Is Courage?

Webster's *New World Dictionary* defines courage as "the attitude of facing and dealing with anything recognised as dangerous, difficult, or painful, instead of withdrawing from it." The pages of history are filled with stories of courageous men and women who fit this definition:

| | |
|------------------|------------------|
| ◆ Douglas Mawson | ◆ 'Weary' Dunlop |
| ◆ Neil Armstrong | ◆ Nelson Mandela |
| ◆ Mother Teresa | ◆ Roberta Sykes |

Completing the following activities will help you to begin thinking about courage and what it means to act courageously.

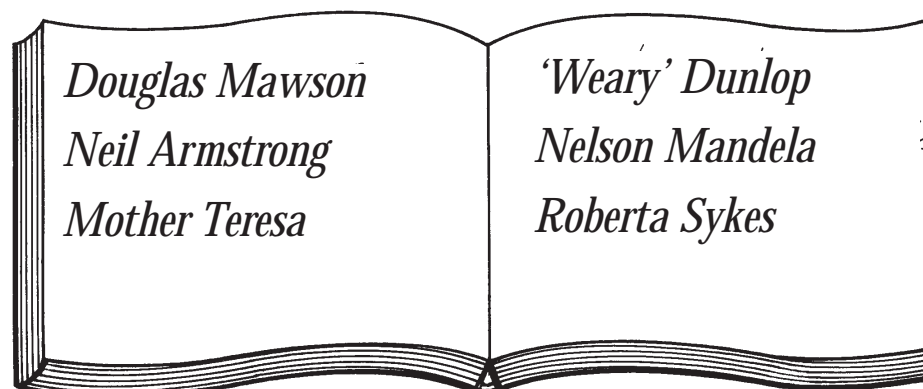
Activity A: Identify and briefly describe each of the individuals listed above with your class. Why is each individual considered courageous?

Activity B: How each one of you defines courage is shaped by your individual life experiences. With this in mind, consider an individual whom you admire for his or her courage—an historical figure, a well-known public figure, or someone whom you personally know. (It may even be you!) Write a brief description of this person, describing what he or she has done that you feel demonstrates courage.

Activity C: After you have completed Activities A and B, create cooperative learning groups of four to five students. Each member is to read his or her written description to the group. Next, from all those individuals presented, each group must select one person who best illustrates Webster's definition of courage. (**Note to instructor:** You may wish to set a time limit on Activity C.) Once your group has reached a consensus, work together to answer the following questions:

1. Why did your group agree upon this particular individual?
2. Did your group have any difficulty reaching a consensus? Why or why not?
3. What conclusions about courage and individual life experience can you draw from this exercise?

Finally, select a representative from your group to report the results of this activity to your class.



Introduction to the Holocaust

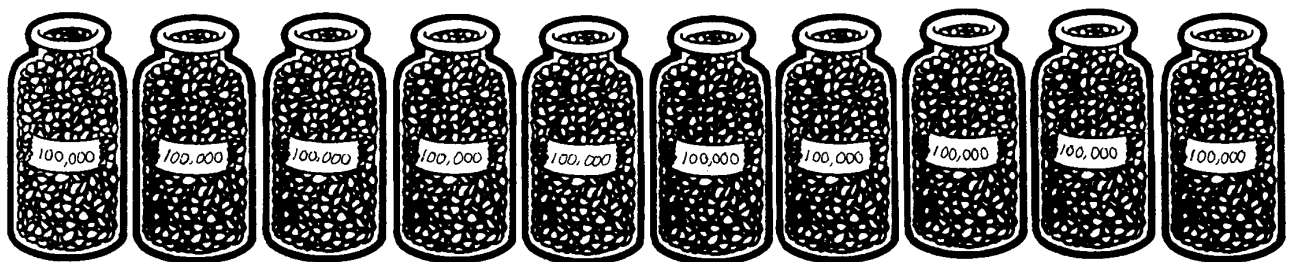
During the Holocaust of World War II, six million Jews and five million non-Jews were murdered by the German Nazis under the leadership of Adolph Hitler. Claiming that people of the Jewish race were inferior to people of the Aryan race, Hitler sought to destroy the entire European Jewish population and create a 'master race' of Germans. The destruction of a specific race of people is called 'genocide,' but Hitler and the Nazis used the code name 'Final Solution' for their plan, referring to the use of death as an answer to what they perceived as problems created by the existence of Jews.

More than one million children, from infants to teenagers, were killed during the Holocaust. While the majority of victims were Jewish, thousands of Gypsies and Polish Catholics were also executed. Some victims were even murdered because they were mentally or physically handicapped. All of these young victims died because Hitler felt they were inferior to his 'master race.'

The Nazis sent their victims to killing centres called death camps. Most of these camps were located in Poland, which was occupied by the German army. Here the Nazis gassed their victims, and then burned their bodies in huge furnaces called crematories. They did this to hide the evidence of their crimes from the outside world. Before the victims were murdered, the Nazis stole their belongings. In two death camps alone, Auschwitz-Burkenau and Majdanek, the Nazis stole 300,000 pairs of shoes. (Bachrach, page 102). Crates of wedding rings, mounds of clothing, and tens of thousands of suitcases all served as evidence of Nazi crimes.

It is almost impossible to understand the magnitude of this tragedy. To try to understand the concept of a million children, picture a football stadium like the Melbourne Cricket Ground, in Victoria, which holds approximately 100,000 people. Then, imagine at least ten stadiums like this, all filled with innocent children. Now you have some idea of how many children died in the Holocaust. These children, however, were more than just numbers. Like you, they were individuals with families and friends and lives.

Completing the following activity will help you get a better idea of the size of the number 'one million.' Try to remember that each unit in the number 'one million' represents a human life that was lost.



Activity: In small groups of four to five students, brainstorm ways that you could visually represent the number 'one million.' Jot down every idea that your group suggests. Then, discuss and choose the idea that would be most practical for your group to do. Complete your project and display it in your classroom or school. With your display, include a brief report about what this number represents.