

Monthly Reading List

September 2014 – Hero Hurrah!

By Michelle Miller

One of the caring moms in my library recently asked for books about true heroes, not the kinds who wear undies on the outside! Her idea was so good that we should share it here!

The importance of children “experiencing” heroism cannot be overstated. They must sense not only its stirrings in their own hearts, but see that heroes are simply ones who did more than they first thought possible. A child can then know that God can empower him likewise!

A different woman once assured me that her sons needn’t bother reading about anyone in the past. My heart ached for the boys. How will they ever taste the joy of heroism or so easily discover that they too can do brave and important things for others when needed?

Let’s enjoy a first sampling of heroes—and heroines—in different spheres of life. Because you can easily find books in your local library about these folks, I will do something different this time. I will focus more on citing rare retro “living book” gems which you might not otherwise find. Perhaps you can seek these, if you wish, either through purchase (there are oodles of online sellers of older books) or borrow through interlibrary loan, an area homeschool library, local private or parochial school libraries (which tend to have more precious older collections), or even in the archives of a nearby college’s Education Department’s collection of children’s lit. So, while scores of books could be cited, this seems like a special opportunity to highlight some of the lesser-known vintage gems. You can start building your own library (other homeschoolers would love to share your treasures) or you can simply find something else about these great heroes and heroines.

There are many more such folks than are listed here, so we’ll make more trips through the wonderful “buffet line” in later months!

MESHACH

Twelve Hidden Heroes: Book Two, by Rebecca Parkinson

Grades 3-7

Meet Meshach (as well as Hur, Baruch, Mephibosheth, etc.) in these interesting chapter biographies about brave men and women who helped those who are more well-known.

www.books.google.com/books?isbn=1846252733

SPARTACUS

They Marched with Spartacus, by Eric Houghton

Grades 5-12

This historical fiction book shows the epic efforts of Spartacus to free fellow slaves, as seen through the eyes of a couple of young men who assisted him.

Lucius: Adventures of a Roman Boy, by Alfred J. Church

Grades 7-12

In this rare vintage book from a noted author, you will experience many real, impactful Roman events through the eyes of a fictional boy (Spartacus, Pompey, etc.). Thankfully, it is also currently available online from the Baldwin Project!

[http://www.mainlesson.com/display.php?author=church&book=lucius&story= contents](http://www.mainlesson.com/display.php?author=church&book=lucius&story=contents)
www.books.google.com/books?isbn=081960108X

KING ARTHUR

Sword in the Tree, by Clyde Robert Bulla

Grades 1-5

Don't miss this absolute gem! I don't think there has ever been a boy who hasn't thrilled to this story of a young (fictional) boy who resolves to save the family castle from an evil uncle in his father's absence and decides to seek help from King Arthur!

www.books.google.com/books?isbn=0062290657

King Arthur and His Knights, edited by William Kottmeyer (Webster Everyreader)

Grades 1-6

I have seen previously resistant boys fall in love with reading...with this book which vividly retells the story of King Arthur! It is a wonderful example of a "living book" in the wonderful retro heart-drawing style. The whole series is absolutely precious!

Story of Young King Arthur, by Clifton Fadiman

Grades 1-7

Another wonderful version which shares the King Arthur legend with young adventure-loving readers. This, along with the King Arthur book written by Mr. Kottmeyer, is another gem! If only they published books like this still today.

Squire for King Arthur, by Eugenia Stone

Grades 3-8

In this handsome, sturdy, retro book, a young medieval boy goes through the process of training to be a knight for King Arthur!

Glastonbury: The Novel of Christian England, by Donna Fletcher Crow

Grades 8-12

Marvelous novel of Christianity coming to early England (when it was under Roman rule) and gradually spreading, as it brings to life each of the various ages of English history from the time that the first word of Christ came to the island through the Middle Ages. It will not only inspire by showing the great impact of believers, but will make real England's history. Excellent! See also the two related novels (about Scotland and Ireland) by this same author. My husband loved this too, since it includes King Arthur, Alfred the Great, and other heroes of the faith.

www.books.google.com/books?isbn=1581341628

EL CID

The Legend of the Cid, by Robert Goldston

Grades 6-12

Powerfully and narratively told legend of the great medieval Spanish knight, El Cid, by an American author who lived on an island off Spain's coast.

El Cid, a 1961 film starring Charlton Heston and Sofia Loren

It is almost impossible to overstate the epic nature of this film, especially its portrayal of true heroism: self-sacrifice, perseverance, commitment, and more. Parents will need to decide age-appropriateness of the various war scenes (filmed when standards were better).

http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0054847/?ref=fn_al_tt_1

SQUANTO

Legend of Squanto, dramatized audio from Focus on the Family

All ages!

Don't miss, don't miss, don't miss this powerful, God-honoring, and well-done dramatization of the miraculous return of Squanto from kidnapping and slavery in Spain and England which resulted in him being back in the New World, capable of speaking English, and ready to provide absolutely crucial help to the newly landed Pilgrims...at just the right location! You will admire the courage and endurance of Squanto and the warmth of his heart even after mistreatment.

http://family.christianbook.com/Christian/Books/easy_find?Ntt=Legend+of+Squanto&N=0&Ntk=keywords&action=Search&Ne=0&event=ESRCG&nav_search=1&cms=1&search=

Squanto and the Miracle of Thanksgiving, by Eric Metaxes

Grades 1-3

God's miraculous hand is revealed as the real reason for Thanksgiving, as seen through the providential experience and heart of the great American Indian, Squanto, and as told by an author who is noted for his grasp of Christian worldview truths.

www.books.google.com/books?isbn=1400321409

John Billington: Friend of Squanto, by Clyde Robert Bulla (Gr. 1-5)

Delightful, engaging, fact-based story of a mischievous Pilgrim boy who thoroughly enjoyed the privilege of being friend to Squanto, and ended up benefiting the colony as a result. Don't miss this one!

NATHAN HALE

Nathan Hale, by Virginia Voight (See & Read)

Grades 1-3

Very easy biography of brave Revolutionary War spy who offered his very life for liberty...and part of one of the most precious older biographies series for the earliest readers with tender text and drawings, a larger font, and plenty of peaceful white space between the words.

Namesake for Nathan, by F.N. Monjo

Grades 4-12

Richly narrative look at Nathan Hale's life, as "told" by his sister.

PAUL CUFFEE

Paul Cuffee: America's First Black Captain, by Johanna Johnston

Grades 4-10

This narrative biography of amazing Mr. Cuffee (son of African-American and Wampanoag Indian parents) will astound you: supporting his family at age 13 when both parents passed, his yearning for education, his self-teaching, his hard work to learn shipping, being the first captain of a whaling ship, expansion to ownership of a fleet, his strong Quaker and abolitionist beliefs, and his efforts to help former slaves return to Africa.

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE

He Freed Britain's Slaves, by Charles Ludwig

Grades 6-12

Readable Christian biography of William Wilberforce who overcame great difficulties to abolish slavery in England and crusaded to end other social ills, showing the benefit to society from an earnest commitment to Christ and His principles.

Amazing Grace, a 2006 film, starring Ioan Gruffudd, Albert Finney, Benedict Cumberbatch
Family

I cannot express the wonder of this film, as it relates the excruciating pressure on William Wilberforce as he fought to free slaves while ill and strongly opposed. This is so ennobling and inspiring!

www.books.google.com/books?isbn=1854248227

HARRIET TUBMAN

Minty: A Story of Young Harriet Tubman, by Alan Schroeder

Grades 1-4

Picture-biography of the early years of Harriet Tubman, showing the budding character and intense desire for freedom which would later inspire not only her own escape from slavery, but her stunningly dangerous return, time after time, to rescue 300 other slaves on the Underground Railroad.

www.books.google.com/books?isbn=143955398X

Listen for the Whippoorwill: Harriet Tubman, by Dave & Neta Jackson

Trailblazer Books

Grades 3-10

A "fictional" slave girl experiences the much-deserved thrill of being rescued from slavery by Harriet Tubman, giving readers a chance to vicariously "meet" this great and God-fearing woman. Enjoy the whole series, which will introduce you to many thrilling heroes of the faith!

www.books.google.com/books?isbn=1556612729

DAVID LIVINGSTONE

David Livingstone: Africa's Trailblazer, by Janet & Geoff Benge

Christian Heroes

Grades 4-12

A thrilling look at the true, stirring story of the Scottish missionary/doctor/explorer who cared so much about the African people.

www.books.google.com/books?isbn=1576581535

CORRIE TEN BOOM

The Hiding Place, by Corrie ten Boom

Grades 6-Adult (parents should determine if suffering is too intense)

The true, moving story of a Dutch woman who lived out her Christian faith by helping the suffering Jews of World War II...and paid the price when being sent to a concentration camp along with her beloved sister and father. There is also a fine film version (which does include some scenes of suffering), as well as audio versions.

www.books.google.com/books?isbn=1441232885

The Hiding Place, a 1975 film about Corrie ten Boom and her sister, starring Julie Harris

http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0073109/?ref =nv_sr_1

JACKIE ROBINSON

Teammates, by Peter Golenbock

Grades K-3

Picture-book biography of amazing Jackie Robinson who suffered much as first African-American allowed into baseball's big league, and Pee Wee Reese, a white teammate who rightly defended him.

www.books.google.com/books?isbn=1442005912

BANG FOR YOUR BUCK (Group Biographies covering multiple heroes)

A Book of Heroes, by Dorothy Heiderstadt

Grades 3-9

This very handsome older book has short, highly readable, inspiring chapters on many European heroes, such as St. Patrick, El Cid, Joan of Arc, Father Damien, and Fridtjof Nansen. Enjoy this rich treasure if you can find it! (A cheaper/paperback version was reprinted by Weekly Reader; it doesn't have the same handsome heft but would have the readable content.)

Twelve Hidden Heroes, by Rebecca Parkinson

Grades 3-7

Also cited earlier, the books in this series look at Old and New Testament heroes that few rarely consider. The short chapters make for quick, easy, inspiring glimpses that we all can contribute to the Lord's kingdom.

www.books.google.com/books?isbn=1846252113

Picture Book of Revolutionary War Heroes, by Leonard Everett Fisher

Grades 4-12

Brief biographies of fifty men and women who acted bravely and impacted our War for Independence, with a strongly etched portrait for each.

Character Counts, by Os Guinness

Grades 9-12

Insightful and trustworthy Christian analysis of crucial leadership qualities in George Washington, William Wilberforce, Abraham Lincoln, and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.

www.books.google.com/books?id=3TgQAQAIAAJ

DON'T-MISS BOOKS!

Pink and Say, by Patricia Polacco

Grades 1-4

Don't miss this incredibly moving, fact-based, and noble story of two boys (black and white) in the Civil War, as the African-American boy first cares for the injured white boy and gives him the benefit of his mother's kind and godly ministry, and then as they sacrifice and bless each other even after capture and suffering at Andersonville. It is tenderly told for youngsters.

www.books.google.com/books?id=75LhAAAAMAAJ

The Spy and General Washington, by William Wise

Grades 2-8...but no one will want to miss it!

What else can I say! FIND THIS BOOK! It will thrill everyone in your home, and they will still be inspired by it years later. (The true story of John Honeyman and his sacrifice during the Revolutionary War, all wonderfully told.)

Silence Over Dunkerque, by John Tunis

Grades 4-12

Wonderful, gripping, inspiring tale (historical fiction) of the emergency evacuation of trapped Allied troops from Dunkirk/Dunkerque with the Nazis at their back and the stormy ocean in their face. This is one of the most vivid books I remember from my own childhood.

ATHLETIC/OLYMPIC HEROES

Lou Gehrig: The Luckiest Man, by David Adler

Grades 1-4

Moving picture-biography of stricken baseball hero, who showed such grace when succumbing to the disease that still bears his name.

www.books.google.com/books?isbn=0152024832

Wilma Unlimited: How Wilma Rudolph Became the World's Fastest Woman, by Kathleen Krull
Grades 1-6

Powerful picture-book biography of the amazing young African-American woman, Wilma Rudolph, who had to face paralysis from polio...but who courageously labored to become an outstanding Olympic champion! What an inspiring story!

www.books.google.com/books?isbn=0152020985

Lou Gehrig: Boy of the Sand Lots, by Guernsey Van Riper, Jr.
Childhood of Famous American
Grades 2-6

Warm look at the loving, humble, value-laden, hard-working childhood of famous baseball player, Lou Gehrig, born to immigrants, who would later have his career cut short by the tragic disease, but whose character and spirit of thankfulness is still admired. (The reissued version is titled: *Lou Gehrig: One of Baseball's Greatest.*)

www.books.google.com/books?isbn=0020419309

Pride of the Yankees, an outstanding 1942 film about Lou Gehrig, starring Gary Cooper
All ages!

http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0035211/?ref=fn_al_tt_1

ANIMAL HEROES

The Bravest Dog Ever: The True Story of Balto, by Natalie Standiford (Step into Reading)
Grades K-2

The true, easy-to-read story of the heroic sled dog that did so much to get medicine through impossible conditions to desperately ill children in Nome, Alaska, in the 1920s. (The famed Iditarod Sled Dog Race in Alaska honors the journey each year.)

www.books.google.com/books?isbn=0833545361

The Saga of Pelorus Jack, by Ross Hutchins
Grades 1-6

The true story of an amazing dolphin who guided ships through dangerous, rocky waters in New Zealand.

Animals Who Have Won Our Hearts, by Jean Craighead George
Grades 3-9

Several short, true stories of famous animals, such as Balto, Scannon (a dog on the Lewis & Clark Expedition), etc.

Race Against Death, by Seymour Reit
Grades 3-12

The true moving story of the brave sled dog, Balto, and his key role in the race to get serum to children who were very sick during an epidemic in Nome, Alaska.

www.books.google.com/books?isbn=0396072933

Balto, a 1995 animated film, with main voice provided by Kevin Bacon

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0112453/>