

Finding a Narrative

Heroic Qualities	Heroic Image	Organizing Content into Story Form
<p>What “heroic” qualities or values are central to the topic? What makes the characters in this story full of wonder?</p> <p>The main heroic quality is that of the resilience of ‘everyday’ people in the face of disaster. Resiliency is manifest in endurance, perseverance, selflessness, leadership, courage, love, ability to face loss/ pain and strength of character.</p> <p>Another wonder can be found in the power of technology to destroy.</p>	<p>What image captures the heroic qualities of the topic?</p> <p>An image that captures this affectively is that of ‘everyday’ people acting heroically when faced with a catastrophe.</p> <p>The image of the harbour explosion demonstrates the awesome power of technology</p>	<p>What “heroic narrative” will allow us to integrate the content we wish to cover?</p> <p>As this is a historical event, the story can be told as it unfolds chronologically. After the initial image is delivered to affect response, we will want to talk about the place and time in which the explosion took place: Why was a ship full of explosives in the harbour to begin with? What was the original destiny of the cargo? It is important to set this tragedy in the context of an even greater tragedy, that of war.</p> <p>The problem around which the unit revolves is the way in which people recovered from the Explosion. How did people use ingenuity and resiliency to rebuild their homes and their lives? To explore this, students could become investigative reporters, reading newspaper articles, letters, journals, etc. written at the time, or viewing movies made about the event. They could produce a feature focusing on one element of the Explosion (“Acts of Courage” or “Who’s to Blame?”).</p> <p>Students could also explore the technology of the time, and note the ingenuity required for its invention. (The technology used in everyday life for the cleanup, as well as that used for warfare, could be explored.)</p>

Developing Cognitive Tools

Resiliency after the Halifax Explosion

Exploring Human Strengths & Emotions	Extremes of Reality	Collecting & Organizing	Teacher-led/structured ↕ Student-led/open-ended
<p>How can students understand the human hopes, fears, passions or struggles that have shaped our knowledge of this topic?</p> <p>Examples of letters, telegrams and journals written at the time of the event can serve to help students appreciate the human emotions of those affected: shock, fear, grief, depression, confusion, insecurity, anger, hope and, of course, love and courage manifest in resiliency. Students could use these sources in their investigative reporting, to make recreations of interviews with individuals involved in the Explosion. Reporters could videotape various members of the community (costumed classmates) to explore the events and the predominant feelings that resulted.</p> <p>Specific manifestations of resiliency could be focused on. For example, the State of Massachusetts exemplified generosity when it supplied numerous volunteers and donated \$750,000 in money and goods. (To this day, the city of Halifax sends a Christmas tree to Boston every year as a symbol of gratitude.) Students could write thank you letters to the State of Massachusetts from various members of the community (e.g. an elderly citizen, a school child) highlighting the way the volunteers have helped them.</p> <p>Anti-heroic qualities of selfish, unkind decisions/ actions could also be examined in order to add perspective and show the full range of human capabilities in response to tragedies. Examples of robberies, looting, food hoarding, and assigning of blame might be considered. Students could write letters to the editor about the lawless behaviour, complaining, or offering suggestions for solutions.</p>	<p>What extremes of reality are related to the topic – biggest, hottest, oldest, richest?</p> <p>What was the second largest human-made explosion, prior to the nuclear age? (The Halifax Explosion was the largest.) How many acres of the city were leveled? (325) How many people were killed? (2000) How many were injured? (9000) How far away did windows shatter? (50 miles) How far away did pieces of the ship fly? (31/2 miles) How quickly were temporary apartments built the January following the Explosion? (one every hour) Of the people who survived, how many suffered blindness or eye damage from flying glass? (nearly 1000) How many newspaper articles were written about the Explosion? How much did it cost for the city's recovery?</p>	<p>What parts of the topic can students best explore in exhaustive detail? How can students present their knowledge in some systematic form?</p> <p>Research the types of explosives which were on board the boat/ used in the war, and make charts to show their various materials, cost, destructive capacities, etc.</p> <p>Interview a maritime expert to find out why Halifax was such an important port and what kind of ships were built at the time. Create a historical infomercial to share the findings.</p> <p>Investigate the security features/ regulations which changed as a result of the Explosion and present these findings in graph or chart form.</p> <p>Explore all the ways this event has been represented in the arts (e.g. novels, sculpture) and give critiques of the various artistic representations.</p> <p>Complete a photo/ map project showing the changes to Halifax since the time of the Explosion</p> <p>Investigate the largest explosions in human history and write comparative descriptions (e.g. volcanic, chemical).</p> <p>Explore other calamities that humans face (e.g. hurricanes, earthquakes) and make a poster showing the ways humans use resiliency to recover.</p>	

Looking Forward and Concluding

Resiliency after the Halifax Explosion

Towards Further Understanding	A Celebratory Ending	Assessment
<p><i>How can the unit develop embryonic forms of Philosophic and Ironic understanding? What cognitive tools characteristic of the disciplines or embodied self-awareness can be introduced here?</i></p> <p><i>(Note: teachers should be sparing in their use of these additional tools, only introducing them when they believe a strong Romantic understanding of the topic has been developed.)</i></p> <p>Why aren't people usually so heroic in their everyday lives? What do such breaks with convention allow us to understand about humanity?</p> <p>Why do some people exercise their altruism and others their selfishness? What circumstances might influence an individual to choose one path rather than the other?</p> <p>What is war good for?</p>	<p><i>What is the best way of resolving the dramatic tension inherent in the unit? What communal project or activity will enable the students to experience and share this resolution?</i></p> <p>Students could interview (either in person or via email) individuals who have survived or helped survivors of similar tragedies (such as the Hiroshima/ Nagasaki bombings, or the 9/11 disaster). Students could write their narratives and compile a class book, or make videos (docudramas) to share with the class.</p> <p>Students could research a survivor of the Halifax Explosion (or another similar disaster) and create a magazine page profiling her or him as "Hero/ Heroine of the Year," including photo or drawing, personal information, noteworthy acts of ingenuity and resiliency, etc. They could present their Hero/ Heroine at an Awards ceremony, in which each character receives an honorary badge for her or his outstanding qualities.</p> <p>The teacher could create an imposed 'tragedy' in which the class has to use ingenuity and resiliency to help each other and solve problems.</p> <p>If the unit has focused around investigative reporting, then the natural celebratory ending would be a News Hour, with each student's feature (whether in visual or written form) showcased.</p>	<p><i>How can one know whether the topic has been understood, its importance grasped and the content learned?</i></p> <p>Does the student understand the causes and effects of the Explosion?</p> <p>Does the student understand the shaping influence of war in the context of the disaster?</p> <p>Does the student recognize specific manifestations of resiliency that were apparent in the tragedy, as well as in other, similar, disasters?</p> <p>Does the student demonstrate empathy in imagining the thoughts and feelings of survivors?</p> <p>Does the student participate effectively in the final project, demonstrating both ingenuity and resiliency in problem-solving and commitment to goals?</p>