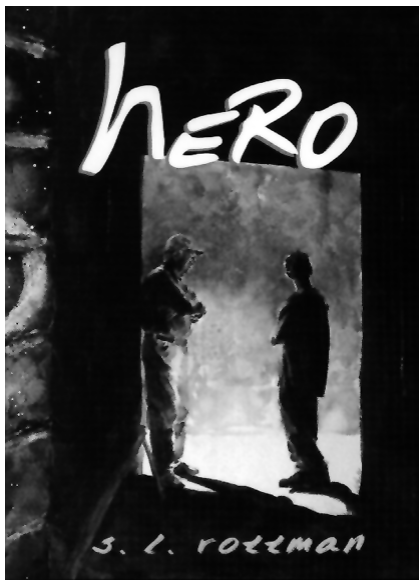


Peachtree Pointers

☞ SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS AND LIBRARIANS ☞

PEACHTREE PUBLISHERS, LTD. 1700 Chattahoochee Avenue Atlanta, Georgia 30318-2112



HERO

Written by S. L. Rottman

ISBN: 1-56145-159-2 / Hardcover / \$14.95
Young Adult Fiction, Ages 12-16 / Fall 1997



A Freestone Publication

About the Book

Heroes are hard to find, especially for Sean, an angry and confused fifteen year old. Abused by his mother, estranged from his father, and plagued by academic and disciplinary problems at school, Sean is on a path to destruction.

Then Sean is sentenced to community service on Mr. Hassler's farm. Challenged and befriended by World War II veteran Dave Hassler, Sean is assigned heavy chores on the farm and given responsibility for caring for some of the horses. Working through crises, both emotional and physical, forces Sean to confront his fears and take charge of his own life. Through a new self-understanding he learns what makes a hero.

Themes

- Responsibility
- What makes a hero
- Working through problems
- Therapeutic nature of animals
- Child abuse

Praise for HERO

"A heart-wrenching tale. Buy it."

— VOYA

"Through Sean, [Rottman] gives readers a convincing and difficult protagonist and a fresh perspective on what it means to be a hero."

— *School Library Journal*

"Rottman makes a promising debut.... Sean[s] message is a powerful one for adolescents."

— *Publisher's Weekly*

Awards

- 1998 Oklahoma Book Award/Oklahoma Center for the Book-Winner
- 1998 New York Public Library Books for the Teen Age
- 1999-00 South Carolina Association of School Librarians/Young Adult Book Award (nominee)
- 1999 YALSA (ALA) Best Books for Young Adults
- 1999 YALSA (ALA) Quick Picks for Reluctant YA Readers (nominee)
- 1999-00 Black-Eyed Susan Book Award (Maryland) (nominee)
- 1999-00 Oklahoma Library Association/Sequoyah Book Award Young Adult (nominee)
- 2000-01 TAYSHAS High School Reading List/Texas Library Association
- 2001 Nevada Young Readers' Award - Winner/Young Adult Category

Before You Read

- What do you know about World War II? Where were the main battles fought? When did the fighting occur? Who was involved in the fighting (both general [countries] and specific [who was the average soldier])?
- Why are pets so popular? Sometimes pets are considered “therapeutic.” What does this mean? Do you have examples where an animal can be therapeutic?
- Why have gangs become so prevalent in today's society? What are gang members seeking that they don't find elsewhere?
- What makes a hero? Do heroes exist today? Why do we have heroes? What happens when there are no heroes?
- What is responsibility? Why is it important to oneself, family, friends, and society?

As You Read

- Which characters seem the most real (dynamic)? Which seem to be stereotypes (flat)?
- What heroic traits are identified in the story? Which characters possess heroic traits?
- Many traditional heroes have a flaw to make them more human, more reachable. Does Sean have flaws? Does Mr. H. have flaws? What are their flaws? Can/do they overcome their flaws?
- Does Sean find a hero? If so, who is it?
- Sean and Mr. H. both have a lot of pride. Do they have the same kind of pride? Is pride a good or bad thing for Sean to have?

After Reading

- Mr. Hassler says that “Sometimes we need to be able to give people a second chance. Animals are no different.” Do people always deserve a second chance?

- Could the outcome in HERO have been different? What could the characters have to have done to avoid the violent ending?
- Who is the hero in HERO?
- Would you want to be someone's hero? Why or why not?
- What kinds of responsibilities do Sean, Mr. H., and Mrs. Walker have? How do those responsibilities change?

Interdisciplinary Connections

Health—Child Abuse

- Why do so many cases of child abuse go unreported every year? Where is the line between discipline and child abuse (after all, Mr. H. washes Sean's mouth out with soap)?
- Why wouldn't a 15-year-old boy fight back against the abuse? What is the cycle of feelings that a victim goes through?

- Is it possible to love someone who doesn't love you back?

History—World Wars

Mr. Hassler was a veteran of World War II. Compare World War II with more recent wars, such as those fought in Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf, and even Bosnia.

- When and where did each war take place? Why was it fought?
- How was each war fought? That is, what kinds of weapons and tactics were used?
- Who was the average soldier in each war?
- Consider what acts might have been considered heroic in each war? How might these acts differ from one war to the next? Why do they differ?

■ Has our definition of a hero changed over time? If so, why? If not, why not?

Science—Horses / animals

■ Do animals really reject their young? What causes this to happen?

■ What is the success rate for saving orphaned animals (domestic and wild)?

■ What is the gestational period for a horse?

■ What is the growth development for a foal? How long is a foal dependent on its mother?

Classroom Activities

■ **What is heroism?** Ask the class to name and discuss some different kinds of heroism. Why were these heroic acts admired, and what does society's admiration about these acts tell about the culture? Have them give examples of specific persons and heroic acts.

■ **Write a hero paper.** Before reading, have students brainstorm their own individual list of what makes a hero for them. Collect the lists and save to use at the end of the unit.

While reading, have them take notes about the heroic qualities they see in the different characters. After reading, give them back their own heroic list and have them compare the two lists. Then give them the same assignment Sean had: Write a two page paper about who your hero is and why.

■ **Do research on a hero.** What act or series of acts made this person a hero? How does this person's heroic behavior differ from the acts of other heroes? What is or was the hero like as a person? What is or was society like at the time of the heroic behavior? If the hero is dead, is he or she still admired? Have any unheroic behaviors come to light about the hero? To what degree do these behaviors tarnish the hero's luster?

If students are having a hard time deciding which hero to study, you might want to suggest any of the following persons, to start with: Susan

B. Anthony, Joan of Arc, Neil Armstrong, Cesar Chavez, Winston Churchill, Madame Marie Curie, Joe DiMaggio, Martin Luther King, Jr., Dalai Lama, Robert E. Lee, Abraham Lincoln, Mother Teresa, Eddie Rickenbacker, Sally Ride, Jackie Robinson, Eleanor Roosevelt, Wilma Rudolph, Jonas Salk, or Bishop Desmond Tutu.

■ **Do a research paper on the success or failure of different types of discipline.** Does physical discipline (corporal punishment) cause more harm than good? Does the "time out" method work better? Does suspension get through to the chronic behavior problems in school?

■ **What is responsibility?** Ask the class to name and discuss different kinds of responsibilities (personal, family, friends, society). How do our responsibilities change? What kinds are assigned to us, and by whom? What kinds do we take upon ourselves, and why?

■ **Creative response:** We learn a lot about who Sean is, and how he became the angry young man he was before he started to become a hopeful young man at the end of the book. But we don't learn much about Rick.

What do you think his story is? What has made him a "big gang member wannabe"? What do you think will happen to him after the story ends?

Write a chapter about Rick that would either fit at the beginning of the novel, explaining his character, or the next chapter for the novel, explaining how these events will affect his life.

Notes

About the Author

A junior high school English teacher, **S. L. Rottman** wrote *HERO*, her first novel, at age twenty-four. She has published two other novels: *ROUGH WATERS* in 1998 and *HEAD ABOVE WATER* in 1999.

Rottman graduated from Colorado State University, has taught in Colorado and Oklahoma, and now lives in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Peachtree Pointers for *HERO* prepared by S. L. Rottman

Also by S. L. Rottman

ROUGH WATERS

- 1999 YALSA (ALA) Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Readers
- 1999 Oklahoma Book Awards/Oklahoma Center for the Book (finalist)
 - 1999 New York Public Library/Books for the Teen-Age
 - 2000 Colorado Blue Spruce (nominee)
 - 2000 IRA Young Adult Choice
- 2000-1 South Carolina Young Adult Book Award (nominee)
- 2001 Children's Literature Association of Utah (nominee)

HEAD ABOVE WATER

- 1999 YALSA (ALA) Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Readers
- 2000 Oklahoma Library Assoc/Sequoyah Book Award (finalist)
- 2000 Colorado Book Award/Colorado Center for the Book (finalist)
- 2000 Oklahoma Book Award/Oklahoma Center for the Book (finalist)
 - 2000 YALSA (ALA) Best Book for Young Adults
- 2000 YALSA (ALA) Quick Pick for Reluctant Young Readers (nominee)
- 2000-2001 TAYSHAS High School Reading List, Texas Library Association
 - 2001 Kentucky Bluegrass Awards (nominee)

Questions? Comments?

SRottman@aol.com



PEACHTREE PUBLISHERS, LTD.

1700 Chattahoochee Avenue, Atlanta, GA 30318

phone (404) 876-8761 / (800) 241-0113 sales phone

fax (404) 875-2578 / (800) 875-2578 sales fax

<http://www.peachtree-online.com>

Peachtree Pointers order no. 1-56145-159-2TG. Copyright © 1998 by Peachtree Publishers, Ltd. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for the printing of complete pages, with the copyright notice, for instructional use and not for resale. **Requests for permission to make copies** of any part of the work should be mailed to Permissions Department, Peachtree Publishers, Ltd., 1700 Chattahoochee Ave, Atlanta, GA 30318.