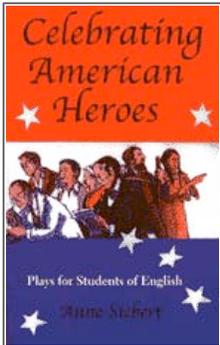


<i>Celebrating American Heroes: Plays for Students of English</i>			
Author:	Anne Siebert		
Publisher:	Brattleboro, Vermont, USA: Pro Lingua Associates		
Title	Pages	ISBN	Price
Student Play Book	Pp. vi + 74	0-86647-127-8	\$13.50
Teacher's Guide	Pp. xii + 64	0-86647-128-6	\$12.00
Cassette		0-86647-141-3	\$16.50



This review focuses on the book *Celebrating American Heroes* (including a teacher's guide), whose target is advanced beginners, proficient students and multilevel classes (as it is stated in the introduction of the book). The book actually targets practicing of English via short plays, which are rooted in real events in American history.

No specific method of teaching for the instructor to follow is suggested. Yet, it is particularly mentioned that the teacher should explain and discuss the topic and go over the new vocabulary and work on pronunciation: "Good pronunciation is important, though it doesn't have to be perfect. If the speaking is unintelligible, the play dies. So take your time and do what needs to be done to make it work for your class" (p. vii, *Teacher's Guide*).

Celebrating American Heroes consists of thirteen plays for students of English; each play comprises two to four pages. There is no activity section in the student text; however, the teacher's guide includes for each play six activities under the titles:

1. pronunciation practice
2. true-false comprehension check
3. vocabulary
4. grammar
5. conversation
6. writing

The pronunciation practice section is divided into three subtitles. The first item is "say these words." This activity contains a number of specific keywords related to the text. For instance, in the first play, "Making the First American Flag," words such as *George Washington, Philadelphia, the United States, the White House, American, and British* are introduced. The second direction, "Mark each word with a '^' over the loudest part of

the word," is a stress and intonation activity for students to do with the teacher's guidance. The last item is, "Say these words and sentences." The meanings of some words are given and they are used in sentences. For example, "Stars and Stripes: the American flag / The Stars and Stripes fly over the White House."

The true-false comprehension check section consists of ten statements which are syntactically very simple and understandable, for example: "The story of Betsy Ross is a legend." The vocabulary section includes a fill-in-the-blanks activity with twelve sentences consolidating the new vocabulary. The grammar section also contains a fill-in-the-blanks activity with ten sentences teaching prepositions, singular and plural forms, past and past participle forms, Wh- questions, antonyms, possessive forms, and negative sentences. The conversation section is made up of discussions and activities concerning the cultural and historical values of the students' own countries and nationalities. That is, the instructions guide students to give examples of similar situations studied in the texts. For instance, "Name some famous patriots in your country, and what did they do?" The final section, writing, has two optional activities for students. The first one is writing a letter to a friend telling about what they have learned in the lesson; the other is writing a paragraph about their own countries' famous people in comparison to American Heroes.

There are five appendices in the Teacher's Guide. These are historical notes, some simple stage directions, prop suggestions, a pronunciation guide, and a note on the summary activity. Included here are some brief historical facts and debates about the characters in the plays, some notes to the teacher while producing a play, possible costumes and set tips, a pronunciation guide for unusual names and words, and lastly, notes on the summary activity, which may be done with the help of the pictures at the end of the student text when the book is finished.

The book has many strong features. The most significant of all is using the power of drama while teaching English as a Foreign Language. Next, it is also important that students have a chance to interact in the classroom environment by using L2 in a social context by means of easy-to-understand plays. It will be fairly easy to create the interest and supply the motivation as students are experiencing new costumes, sets and other visual materials during the production of a play. Therefore, the activities are student-centered; and only the instructions need to be given by the supervising teacher. However, the trouble comes with the content. When you look at the cover page, images like the Stars and Stripes, a bald eagle, and representations of national symbols seem to be placed in the text in order to create an enthusiasm towards American culture. Of course, learning a foreign language requires an understanding of the culture of its people to some extent, but some teachers and students who are not in the United States might find this approach rather one-sided. The writer's tone is certainly one which demonstrates pride in America's history (hence the title of the book). Before adopting this book, teachers should take this into consideration. This seems like the only pedagogical problem with the book, despite its useful dramatic activities that can be used in language classrooms.

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