

大学英语课外自学系列

# Everyday Heroes

## 身边的英雄

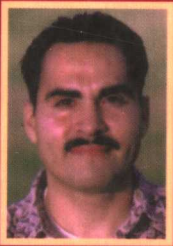
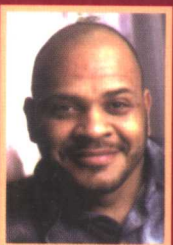
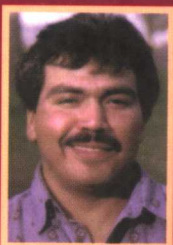
——大学英语读写训练

Beth Johnson



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陈璐 注释



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# 出版前言

本书由我社从 Townsend Press 引进改编后出版,可供大学生和具有相当英语水平的学习者作为阅读和写作训练辅导材料使用。

本书包括二十个感人的故事。除一位主人公在美国较有名望外,其他都是生活中的普通人。他们或是遭受过贫穷、虐待、种族歧视,或是经历过疾病、毒瘾或者暴力,但是,他们没有被打垮,而是凭着无比的勇气、坚强的意志和锲而不舍的精神从困境中崛起,挑战生活,为自己开创了美好的未来。他们可以说是平凡生活中不平凡的英雄。在阅读的过程中,你会感受到他们的挣扎、他们苦干的决心和追寻梦想的执著。

这些故事会激励你在学习和工作中付出自己最大的努力,同时也会帮助你训练重要的阅读、思考和写作技巧。这些技巧既会反过来加深你对故事的理解,同时又会在学习和工作中助你一臂之力。

每个故事前面都有一段简介,并列出故事中出现的重点词汇及其释义;后面都配有词汇检查、阅读理解、问题讨论和写作等四种练习。书后的附录一提供了故事中出现但未列入文前重点词汇、不过仍需要了解的单词或词组。附录二提供练习答案,其中写作部分的答案除了提供范文之外,更重要的是详细提示了“率性写作”(Freewriting)这种写作技巧。提示部分从针对老师的角度出发,学生在自学使用本书的时候,这部分也是重要的参考资料。

你惧怕学英语吗?不要怕,试试这本书。书中主人公的精神会激励你,书中的练习会帮助你。

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# Introduction

## Who Are “Everyday Heroes”?

Nowadays, when you ask people who their heroes are, they often can't think of anyone to name. They shake their heads and say, “It's sad. There are no real heroes anymore.”

If they do come up with a name, it's usually of someone famous. The “hero” they choose might be someone they see on TV or on posters or in magazines. Film and music stars, TV celebrities, sports figures with multi-million-dollar contracts — these are frequently seen as the heroes of today.

Young people in particular get caught up in believing that a hero needs to be a rich, famous, larger-than-life figure. Certainly, it is natural enough to admire the talent of a popular entertainer or the skill of a great athlete, and it is hard not to be impressed by the money that such people make. But do success, riches, and fame really make a person a hero?

To answer that question, we need to define the word “hero.” Is a hero simply someone who has achieved great financial and popular success? Is heroism just about money and fame? If so, any rich celebrity could qualify as a hero.

Or does being a hero have to do with the quality of a person's character? Is it more about courage, determination, and a kind of inner fire that keeps a person going in the face of all kinds of difficulties?

The men and women featured in this book are heroes of the second sort. With one exception, they are not famous. They are the kinds of people who might be your classmates, neighbors, friends, or relatives. Their lives have not been easy. They have faced obstacles that include poverty, racism, abuse, neglect, illness, drugs, and violence.

Sometimes those obstacles have nearly destroyed their dreams. But each of them has found the strength to keep on going, to keep on trying. They have stood up to the challenges of life and said, “You will not defeat me. I will overcome.” Such people are “everyday heroes.”

Maybe you are experiencing some of the problems these men and women have faced. As you read these people’s stories and as you talk and write about their lives, think about your own life. Can their stories teach you anything? Can they motivate you to deal with the obstacles that may stand in your path? Can they help you realize *your* potential to be an everyday hero?

To be a hero does not take money or fame. It does not take superhuman athletic ability or a Grammy-award-winning voice. As you will see in these stories, what it takes is the determination to work hard and pursue dreams no matter what stands in the way. That’s the most exciting challenge that any of us can face.

## How to Use This Book

The purpose of this book is to inspire you to do your best — and to help you develop important reading, thinking, and writing skills. The skills will deepen your appreciation of the stories. They can also make you more successful in school and at work.

Before each story are a **preview** and a **word list**. Then comes the story. Some stories are *written by* the person. For example, one story begins, “When I was a kid in Nevada, Missouri, I suffered from a speech disorder.” Other stories are *written about* the person. For instance, another story begins, “In a rare moment of rest in the living room of his crowded trailer home, Juan Angel smiles as he watches his children play.”

Each story includes photographs so that you will get an even better sense of the person in question. The photographs show that person going about daily routines at work, at school, at home, and with special people in his or her life. Given the fact that each person has been through difficult times, it is inspiring to see so many smiles in the photos and to have such strong visual evidence that, “Yes, this person has made it.”

Each story is followed by **vocabulary**, **reading**, and **discussion questions** as well as **writing assignments**. Starting on the next page is a brief version of the kind of story that appears in the book, along with sample activities and explanatory notes. Reading the story and going through the notes and activities will give you a good idea of how *Everyday Heroes* works.

*A childhood illness left Elda Sara Morgan with a frightening medical condition. Her health problems made it unlikely that she would have many friends, do well in school, or pursue a satisfying career. Yet today she has accomplished all this and more. Her story shows what can happen when a person is determined to succeed.*

- **Note:** The preview that introduces each story is set off in a shaded box. Read it to get a quick idea of what the story is about.

# Elda Sara Morgan

## Words to Watch

**thrashing** (4): moving wildly

The turtle lay on its back, its legs *thrashing* as it tried to turn over.

**implied** (8): suggested without saying directly

The teacher's expression *implied* that she did not believe my excuse for being late.

- **Note:** “Words to Watch” is a list of some of the more difficult words in the story and their meanings. The numbers in parentheses refer to the paragraphs in the story where the words first appear. For example, *thrashing* is in paragraph 4 of the story. A sentence is then given using each word to help you better understand its meaning. Each of the “Words to Watch” is

marked in the story by a small raised circle(°).

When I was two years old, I caught 1 the German measles. I got over the measles, but my high fever at the time led to another problem. I developed the disorder called epilepsy.

In a normal brain, nerve cells con- 2 stantly fire off tiny electrical signals that tell the body what to do. When a person has epilepsy, those signals go wild. Instead of sending small, controlled signals, the nerve cells produce wild electrical storms of activity.

When one of those epileptic storms 3 went off in my brain, I would have an attack known as a seizure. If it was a small seizure, I would simply lose track of what was happening around me for a few sec-

onds. For example, if my teacher was saying, "The farmer gave the horses some hay," I might hear only, "The farmer hay." To people around me, it would look as though I had spaced out for a few seconds.

4 A major seizure was very different and was frightening to watch. I would fall to the floor, my face turning blue from lack of oxygen. My body would shake violently, with my arms and legs thrashing° in strange positions. My family knew that the seizure would soon pass and that all they could do was put something in my mouth, like a spoon, to keep me from choking on my tongue. When a seizure happened in the classroom, another student would run to get my older sister to help me.

5 I was fortunate to have a family who loved me and parents who saw me as more than just an epileptic. To my parents I was always Elda Sara, their daughter, and I was able to achieve anything I put my mind to. "You're only disabled if you choose to be." my father would say. "Never say 'I can't.' There is no such thing as 'can't' in this house."

6 My family's attitude helped me fight the limitations of epilepsy. Unfortunately, the rest of my world was less supportive. Many students, and even some teachers, were afraid of me. I was "accidentally" pushed down a flight of stairs on one occasion. Students tripped me, pushed me, and knocked books out of my hands. One

teacher called me a "stupid retard" in front of the other students. I still remember how my heart hurt when she said those words.

My seizures stopped when I was 13 7 years old and in seventh grade. But many students still continued to ignore me or be mean to me. My way of reacting to other students' abuse was to withdraw into my schoolwork. I became an outstanding student, especially in the sciences. In fact, my science teacher, Mr. Thomas Fisher, asked me to tutor some of my classmates in biology. I was only a sophomore, and some of the people I was tutoring were seniors. I became friends with some of the students I tutored. That, and a lot of compliments from Mr. Fisher, gave my self-confidence a real boost. Finally, school began to be a place that I liked to be.

I started thinking about becoming a 8 science teacher or a nurse. However, my guidance counselor told me that epileptics couldn't do those things. He continually discouraged me from taking advanced science classes. He implied° that, despite my straight A's, I was not smart enough to succeed in them.

I'll never forget my last visit to this 9 guidance counselor. When I finished high school, I was on the honor roll and had earned many more credits than I needed to graduate. I went into his office and showed him my report card and transcript. "I made it through high school,

without too much help from you,” I told him. “You decided a long time ago that I couldn’t ever amount to anything. I think I’ve proved you wrong. And you haven’t heard the last of me yet.” He just stared at me, open-mouthed. But another counselor who heard me started applauding. I left the office feeling pretty great.

10 I’m in my senior year now at American International College in Springfield, Massachusetts, preparing to be a special-education teacher. I’m doing student teaching in a first-grade class. I think of my twenty-eight students as flowers in a garden, each of them different, but each of them precious and beautiful and needing my help to blossom.

While my seizures have stopped, my 11 health problems have not. Some days I have to deal with severe pain in my legs that makes it hard to walk. Sometimes I have muscle weakness which affects the strength in my hands. The doctors say that within ten years I may not be able to walk or hold anything.

But maybe the doctors are wrong. Or 12 maybe there will be a medical breakthrough that will help me. Even if I do lose the use of my hands and legs, I know that I’ll deal with it. I teach Bible study classes to a group of inner-city girls. I tell them, “No, life isn’t a bed of roses. But there are paths out of the thorns and into places of great beauty.”

- **Note:** Now that you have read the story, work through the sample vocabulary and reading questions that follow. Then think about the discussion question and look at the suggested answer. Finally, read the writing assignment and one student’s response.



- **Note:** There are several “Vocabulary Check” questions for each reading. The opening questions give practice in the “Words to Watch” that appear before the story. In the question below, use the “Words to Watch” definition on page 3 for *thrashing* to figure out which sentence would make sense with the word. Circle the letter of your answer.

1. In which sentence would the word **thrashing** make sense?
  - a. My cousin got a ticket for driving through a \_\_\_\_\_ red light.
  - b. On a calm day like this, it is pleasant to hear the waves \_\_\_\_\_ gently on the beach.

- c. The children's \_\_\_\_\_ in the bathtub left the floor soaking wet.

**Explanation:**

To answer this question, you had to either remember or check the meaning of *thrashing* in “Words to Watch.” There you are told that *thrashing* means “moving wildly.” The only sentence in the question in which that meaning fits is *c*: The children’s thrashing [*moving wildly*] in the bathtub left the floor soaking wet.

- **Note:** The closing “Vocabulary Check” questions give you practice in figuring out the meaning of a word by looking at its **context** — the other words in the sentence. Figure out from the context what *severe* means in the sentence below, and circle the letter of your answer.

2. In the sentence below, the word **severe** means
- extreme.
  - helpful.
  - noisy.

“some days I have to deal with severe pain in my legs that makes it hard to walk.” (Paragraph 11)

**Explanation:**

To answer this question, you had to look at the context of the word *severe*. That context suggests that the pain is so extreme that Elda Sara has trouble walking. So the answer to question 2 is *a*.

## Reading Check

- **Note:** Each “Reading Check” contains ten reading-skill questions. The questions deal with the central point, main ideas, supporting details, and conclusions.

### Central Point

- **Note:** The **central point** is what the whole reading is about. It is the main idea of the entire story. To find it, ask yourself, “Which statement best summarizes the entire story?”

There is one central-point question for each story. Circle the letter of your answer for the central-point question below.

1. What is the central point of this reading?
  - a. Elda Sara had a disorder called epilepsy that caused her to have minor and major seizures.
  - b. Some students and teachers in her school were cruel to Elda Sara.
  - c. With the help of her parents and a teacher, Elda Sara rose above the problems of epilepsy.

**Explanation:**

- The information in answer *a* is accurate, but it is too limited to be the central point. The story tells us much more than the fact that Elda Sara had epilepsy. Remember that the central point must cover the *entire* reading.
- The information in answer *b* is accurate as well. But it tells us only about the negative attitudes towards Elda Sara. It does not cover other parts of the reading, such as Elda Sara's success.
- Only answer *c* gives the central point of the reading: Elda Sara, with the help of others, has been able to rise above the problems of epilepsy.

**Main Ideas**

- **Note:** The **main idea** is the chief point of the paragraph. Everything, or almost everything, in the paragraph is about that one point. To find the main idea, ask yourself, "Which statement best summarizes the entire paragraph?"

There are usually three main-idea questions for each story. Circle the letter of your answer for the main-idea question below.

2. What is the main idea of paragraph 8?
  - a. Elda Sara wanted to become a science teacher or a nurse.
  - b. Elda Sara earned straight A's in her science courses.
  - c. The guidance counselor discouraged Elda Sara from aiming for her career choices despite her good grades.

**Explanation:**

- The information in answers *a* and *b* is true, but each answer is too limited to be the main idea. Neither mentions the key point about Elda Sara's guidance counselor. Remember, the main idea should summarize all or most of the paragraph.

- Only answer *c* summarizes the whole paragraph: The counselor discouraged Elda Sara from pursuing teaching or nursing despite her good grades.

### *Supporting Details*

- **Note:** **Supporting details** explain or develop the central point and main ideas of a story. To find key supporting details, you must read a story carefully.

There are usually three supporting-detail questions for each story. Circle the letter of your answer for the supporting-detail question below.

3. When Elda Sara was a sophomore in high school, her science teacher asked her to
  - a. drop out of biology.
  - b. give a talk on epilepsy to the class.
  - c. tutor other students in biology.

#### ***Explanation:***

- Answers *a* and *b* are nowhere in the story.
- The correct answer, *c*, can be found in paragraph 7 of the story.

### *Conclusions*

- **Note:** A **conclusion** is an idea that is not stated directly but that is hinted at or suggested. You draw conclusions in everyday life all the time. For example, let's say you are looking for your new English class, and you walk into a room full of musical instruments. You will quickly conclude that you are in the wrong room. You can draw conclusions about what you read in the same way. Using your own experience and common sense, you can think about what is suggested indirectly in a reading.

There are usually three conclusion questions for each story. Circle the letter of your answer for the conclusion question below.

4. You can conclude from paragraph 9 that
  - a. the guidance counselor was not at all surprised that Elda Sara spoke to him so strongly.
  - b. Elda Sara found it satisfying to show the guidance counselor that he

had been wrong about her.

- c. Elda Sara had always been an extremely shy person.

**Explanation:**

- Answer *a* could not be correct. The guidance counselor was “open-mouthed,” which tells us he was surprised by Elda Sara’s words.
- Answer *c* is also incorrect. A very shy person would not be likely to march into the counselor’s office and tell him forcefully that he had been wrong.
- Only answer *b* can be right. Elda Sara’s comment that she felt “pretty great” as she left the office tells us that she found the experience satisfying.

## Questions for Thinking and Discussion

- **Note:** These questions help you to think about ideas raised by the story and to make connections between the story and your own life. Each reading includes three of these questions. Take several minutes to think and talk about the question below.

1. Elda Sara said that most students reacted to her epilepsy by either ignoring her or being cruel to her. Have you ever seen people reacting this way to someone with a disability? Why, in your opinion, do people at times respond cruelly to someone who is “different”?

**Explanation:**

Answers to this question will vary, of course. Probably all of us can tell a story about someone who seemed different in some way, and how other people responded. Perhaps people pick on a disabled person out of fear. Maybe they are afraid that the disability will somehow “rub off” on them. Maybe they are afraid that if they are nice to the disabled person, they will be picked on too. Maybe if they put down another person, they make themselves feel a little more important.

## Ideas for Writing

- **Note:** After each story in the book, there are two writing assignments. The assignments give you a chance to explore further some of the inter-

esting ideas in the story. They also help you look more closely at what you value, whom you respect, and how you react to people and situations.

On the next page are a writing assignment and a sample paper written in response to the assignment. After you read the paper, read the explanation that follows. The explanation first discusses the sample paper. Then it tells about some methods you can use when writing your own papers.

1. Elda Sara's attitudes suggest that she will become a good teacher. What qualities do you feel make a teacher good? Think about a teacher you liked and respected. Then write a paper explaining a few qualities that made him or her such a fine teacher. Give examples from your own experience that show why he or she was so good.

***A Sample Paper:***

A Good Teacher

My third-grade teacher, Mrs. Latimore, was one of the best teachers I have ever known. For one thing, she had a sense of humor. When she read stories out loud, she got us to laugh by making up funny voices for the characters in the story. Sometimes when a student would go up to her desk for help, she'd say, "What's up, Doc?" like Bugs Bunny. Mrs. Latimore was also patient. If students had trouble understanding a math problem or a grammar point, she would take the time needed to explain it again. If we were a little noisy at the start of a class, she waited a couple of minutes for us to calm down. Finally, Mrs. Latimore was a kind person. She was always saying positive things, like "Martha really likes to help other people" or "Edward has a lot of musical talent." Whenever someone had a birthday, she would announce it, and the class would sing "Happy Birthday" to that person and then applaud. Even years later, other students and I still talked about how much we enjoyed Mrs. Latimore as a teacher.

***Explanation:***

The above paper is an effective one. It begins by making a clear point — that Mrs. Latimore was a good teacher. It then supports that point by naming three qualities that made her a good teacher — a sense of humor, patience, and kindness. We are given examples of each of those

qualities. The examples show how Mrs. Latimore behaved, what she said, and how she reacted. The details let us see clearly for ourselves that Mrs. Latimore was a good teacher. The writer has truly supplied the evidence needed to back up her opening point.

When writing a paper, it is often a good idea to make your main point near the beginning. Then develop that point with plenty of supporting details.

You can often find your main point and supporting details by using one or more useful methods. One is simply to *write down without stopping* as many ideas about your topic as you can think of. Don't worry yet about spelling or punctuation or grammar. Just get your thoughts down on paper. Doing this kind of "freewriting" for a while will help you decide on a point for your paper. It will also provide you with ideas for supporting details.

Another way to think about your paper is to *make lists*. For instance, to prepare for the above paper, the writer could have written the names of two or three of her favorite teachers. She could then have listed the qualities that make each one so good and some examples of those qualities. At some point she could have selected the teacher that seemed like the best subject for the paper.

A third approach is to *ask yourself questions* about your topic. Writing down your questions and answers will give you a good start on a paper. For instance, the writer of the paper about Mrs. Latimore could have asked herself such questions as, "Why was she popular? What did she do that I liked? What did she say? When was she helpful to me?"

Writing down your thoughts, making lists, asking yourself questions — all these methods can help you get started when it comes time to write a paper.

## A Final Word

By now you have a sense of *Everyday Heroes* and how it is organized. You have learned about the stories and the activities that follow them. The activities can help you become a stronger reader, thinker, and writer. But they are not the most important part of the book. The twenty stories are. Read and enjoy the stories. Get to know the people they describe. Study