



HEROES

Heroes. Every culture has them. Hero(in)es today are seen as people who despite terrible situations, enormous odds, and/or heinous opposition still manage to show bravery and courage, often putting themselves at risk for the good of others. Sometimes these brave individuals take on physical opponents, such as beasts or an advancing enemy army. Other times, they tackle an idea or cultural stance.

In the Classical age, heroes and heroines were often demigods who afforded their own cults, the worship of these individuals serving an important role in the rich, spiritual practices of the Ancient Greeks. Heracles (aka Kevin Sorbo), Achilles, and Perseus were all heroes, and each had their own cult. Their stories have persisted through time, culture, and mediums, told and retold for numerous generations. Catholic Saints can be seen as heroes, garnering their own adoration throughout the ages, entire religious orders founded on their individual teachings and doings.

Not every hero is said to have the blood of gods in their veins or the divine on their side. Nowadays, our heroes are individuals who rescue people from burning buildings, stand up for the rights of groups of individuals, teach children how to read, build homes for those whose lives have been destroyed, aid people in escaping from war ravaged homes, or stand up and fight those who would take their rights by force. Sometimes a person is a hero to only a handful of people. Sometimes

a whole nation might recognize an individual as being somewhat more special than everyone else, one who molded the future of many with their hands when others would crush it. And other times individuals honored with holidays and parades are derided or hated by others. Many of the Europeans who “discovered” the New World have holidays and/or statues of their likenesses erected in various locations, their faces put on stamps, their exploits lauded in history books, despite the protests from those indigenous Americans calling them out for their savagery and greed. Someone praised for their wartime efforts might be hated by pacifists or others who don’t agree with their political or social views.

The adventurers in our games are often (supposed to be) the heroes and heroines of their campaigns, but what does that mean? What traits and virtues do their cultures extol? Who inspired them to take up the life of an adventurer? The trails yesterday’s heroes have blazed can make steadier or more awkward footing for today’s heroes in the making.

FOR GMs

- Who are the national heroes? Regional heroes? Religious Heroes? Social/Cultural heroes? Why are they famous?
- How are heroes honored? With holidays? Statues? Do people name their children after them? Are schools named after them? Are living heroes bestowed special ranks or titles? Granted audience with important officials/rulers/religious figures?
- What virtues do heroes exemplify? What makes the heroes of this nation different from the heroes of the neighboring countries?
- Is there unknown history behind the heroes?
- Who decides who is a hero? Is a single report of a heroic action enough? Or are there special requirements?
- Who keeps the records regarding the stories of heroes? Who has access to them? Who spreads the stories through the land and who makes sure the version being spread is the one they want people to hear?
- What is expected of heroes who are still living? What is expected of heroes long dead?

- How are the tales of heroic exploits transferred from person to person? Word of mouth? Written down? Painted on buildings? Reenacted in plays?
- Are there any people who dispute the heroics of any lauded individuals?
- Are heroes secular entities or are their strong characters ascribed to religious conviction?
- What political clout do heroes have, if any?
- How do the common people see heroes? As people just like them who exhibited bravery? Or specially inspired individuals?

PLOT HOOKS

- The party returns from a mission having succeeded in their task, but not without loss: one of their party members died in the undertaking. The ruling political or religious party seeks to make the fallen comrade a hero, putting the deceased individual on a platform to inspire the populace. However, not everything being said is entirely true. Why is this being done? How do the party members feel about their friend being made into a hero? How are the living party members seen and treated by the government, as well as the rest of the population?
- An individual performs a great act, saving their village/town/city from a great threat. The PCs are all members of a religious order who are sent to try and recruit/convert this person to their cause/religion. Why does the order believe the person in question is a good fit for their religion? What are the spiritual beliefs of their intended target? What inspired them to protect their friends and family? What does the order the PCs belong to have to gain if they successfully convert the newly celebrated hero? What means will the PCs take to get this person on their side?
- The PCs are all servants of a living legend hero who goes from town to town, solving problems and retelling the (exaggerated) tales of their exploits. When the hero dies rather unceremoniously in the middle of the night, the PCs realize their meal ticket and employer is gone. What do they do with the dead hero? Do they try to keep up the ruse of the hero being

alive so they can keep on living comfortably, without the burden of the terrible stories and overshadowing? Do they lie about the cause of death? Does the death have any repercussions the PCs are now forced to deal with (a will, debts, posthumous revenge)?

- After a strange natural phenomenon the PCs all find themselves in possession of the belongings of the Founding Heroes. When they go to return the items (and perhaps all meet each other for the first time), they are told the items being transferred to them must be a sign from the deities, as the country is secretly in a crisis which must be avoided. The PCs are charged with performing a task which will prevent the nation from war, disaster, etc. Was it really divine intervention? How do the PCs feel about the Founding Heroes? The Heroes who have 'chosen' them? Is it a dream come true? A nightmare? Do they receive just the items or special abilities as well?
- When a hero to a small cultural group dies, those belonging to the group seek to have the individual recognized by the state. The PCs are sent with the evidence confirming the greatness of the individual, as well as their own personal accounts of the person. How has the deceased hero changed the culture at large? Have people beyond the group benefited from the strides made? Which politicians/individuals are supportive of the cause? Who is against it and why? What would it mean for their people if this individual was recognized by the state as being a hero?
- All the statues of a particular hero are being defaced or destroyed. With their national holiday fast approaching, the PCs must find out who is doing this and why. Is it a single individual? A group? A network? Will the offenders stop at the statues or are there other parts of a much larger plan unfolding and going unnoticed?

FOR PCs

- What do you consider a hero to be?
- Do you have a favorite hero? A story regarding them?
- Did heroes encourage you to take up the life of an adventurer? Did it prepare you?

- Are your heroes similar to the heroes of your fellow PCs? Does your culture extol different virtues than others?
- How are your spiritual beliefs tied to your belief in heroes?
- What would you have to achieve in order to consider yourself a hero?
- Do you adventure for yourself? For your family? For your country?
- If you are regarded as a hero by anyone, have you changed in any way? Do you watch what you say or do more now that you are in the public eye?
- When you recount tales of your deeds, do you embellish them or tell it like it was? Do your friends do the same? Do you call your friends out when they stretch the truth?