

May 4-8, 2020

Seventh graders,

Your lesson for this week is to read the short story "Heroes", and answer the 3 questions that follow the story.

Stay safe and well.
Mrs. Martin

HEROES

Erma Bombeck



On the first Saturday of last month, a 22-year-old U.S. tennis player hoisted¹ a silver bowl over his head at Centre Court at Wimbledon.

The day before, five blind mountain climbers, a man with an artificial leg, an epileptic, and two deaf adventurers stood atop the snowcapped summit of Mount Rainier.

¹ *Hoisted* is another word for *raised* or *lifted*.

Vocabulary

summit (sum'it) *n.* the top, or highest point

It was a noisy victory for the tennis player, who shared it with thousands of fans, some of whom had slept on the sidewalks outside the club for six nights waiting for tickets.

It was a quiet victory for the climbers, who led their own cheering, punctuated by a shout from one of them that echoed on the winds: "There's one for the epileptics!"

There was a lot of rhetoric² exchanged at Wimbledon regarding "bad calls."

At Mount Rainier they learned to live with life's bad calls a long time ago. The first man to reach the mountaintop tore up his artificial leg to get there.

Somehow, I see a parallel here that all Americans are going to have to come to grips with. In our search for heroes and heroines, we often lose our perspective.

We applaud beauty pageant winners; we ignore the woman without arms who paints pictures with a brush in her teeth. We extol³ the courage of a man who will sail over 10 cars on a motorcycle; we give no thought (or parking place) to the man who threads his way through life in a world of darkness or silence.

The care and feeding of heroes is solely in the hands of the public. Not all winners are heroes. Not all people with disabilities are heroes. "Hero" is a term that should be awarded to those who, given a set of circumstances, will react with courage, dignity, decency, and compassion—people who make us feel better for having seen or touched them.

I think the crowds went to the wrong summit and cheered the wrong champion. 🙄

² **Rhetoric** refers to skill in speaking. Bombeck is referring to how John McEnroe argued with the tennis judges about their calls.

³ When you **extol** someone, you praise that person highly.

Vocabulary

punctuated (pungk'chōō āt'ed) *v.* emphasized

perspective (pər spek'tiv) *n.* the ability to see things in their relative, or comparative, importance

pageant (paj'ənt) *n.* a show or exhibition

Meet Erma Bombeck



Talented Humorist Erma Bombeck was born in Dayton, Ohio. Her writing career began in junior high school, where she wrote newspaper columns. While attending college, Bombeck worked at a local newspaper and later wrote a humorous column about life as a newlywed. Bombeck used satire to share her views of suburban life. Her writings include newspaper columns, magazine articles, and books such as *At Wit's End* and *The Grass Is Always Greener Over the Septic Tank*.

Erma Bombeck was born in 1927 and died in 1996.

Questions from "Heroes" by Erma Bombeck

1. Who is John McEnroe, and for what is he known?

2. What event happened on Mount Rainier in 1981? Why was it significant?

3. Which achievement would you choose as the most worthy of praise?
