## Méthode de la synthèse : Mythes et Héros

Introduction : Although it may not seem like it at first sight, myths and heroes play a tremendous part in our society. A myth can be defined as a fictitious story which can convey the ideals of a given society, and which creates or perpetuates inspiring heroic figures. A hero or heroine can be defined as mythical or legendary figure, often endowed with great strength, or a person admired for his or her achievements, noble qualities or courage. We can thus wonder to what extent myths and heroes influence our everyday lives. I will use documents studied in class in order to show the role they play nowadays. First, I will focus on the importance of myths and heroes in popular culture; then, I will deal with the role played by myths and heroes in politics; finally, I will evoke the essential part played by anonymous heroes.

I. Myths and heroes in popular culture

* Peter Parker -> defined in the text “Look up in the sky! (and right next door): popular heroes in America” (by Kevin Lausé, 1992) as an ordinary man, a superhero and an American hero at the same time. Ordinary man = someone we can identify with, so that we can also imagine ourselves as heroes. American hero = he embodies American values, the “rags to riches” story, the myth of the self-made man.
* The cowboy -> founding myth of US history through its presentation in books and movies (westerns from the 1950s/1960s). Helped conquer the wild west by herding vast herds. Solitary, self-sufficient, fearless, loyal, sometimes bordering on unlawfulness, he embodies values Americans feel proud of and want to believe they are typically American. This representation is mostly romanticized and does not really represent the hard and ungrateful lives of real cowboys.
* American Gothic (Spaces and Exchanges) -> Although this document was studied as related to the notion Spaces and Exchanges, it can also relate to the notion Myths and heroes, as the painting American Gothic (by Grant Wood, completed in 1930) has come to embody the myth of the brave American farmer who helped built his country through his life-long efforts and his sacrifice to the bigger picture. The photograph Mexican American Gothic (by Santiago Forero, 2010) can be interpreted as an homage to the courage of migrants, who brave many hardships and dangers to make their dream of a better life come true.

-> All these inspirational characters, mostly fictional or mythical, can help us shape our lives and show us the path to a better life and a better us.

Transition : However, myths and heroes are not only fictional, they can also be real-life heroes, and help changing our world.

II. Myths and heroes and their influence on politics and policies

* Emma Watson -> a role model for the young generation/the new generation of feminists, can convey her message to a wider audience because of her status as a celebrity
* Muhammad Ali - > a conscientious objector, who opposed Vietnam War and segregation in the USA. A hero for his political fights and the risks he took (which almost cost him his career), as a boxing myth (nicknamed “the greatest”, awarded sportsman of the 20th century by the BBC). Also a great philanthropist who keeps fighting for a better world.
* Gandhi (1869-1948)-> has come to embody pacifist protest and civil disobedience, he is remembered for it more than for the causes he fought for. He was decisive in the granting of India’s independence. He is now recognized as India’s founding father, and his birthday is the Indian national holiday. He can be considered a hero for his actions, but he has also become a myth, as he became greater than the actions which earned him this recognition.

Transition : Real-life heroes can be celebrities, using their fame to promote a cause, but they can also be anonymous, and heroic all the same.

III. Anonymous heroes

Anonymous heroes may be those easier to relate to: a good Samaritan who saves someone from a car accident, a fireman who rescues a family from their house on fire, a policeman who retrieves a possession stolen from an old lady. Although some occupations are more likely to make you a hero (I have personally never heard of a heroic dentist), we can all dream of being there at the right time and at the right place to save someone's life. These people are just like us, there is nothing supernatural or godly about them. As a consequence, it is easier for all of us to identify with them, and to imagine ourselves as potential heroes, and maybe make the decision that will turn any of us into a hero.

And it is also true that we all have in our lives someone we admire, someone we consider a hero, someone we look up to and would like to emulate. My personal role model is [talk about your personal hero]. He/she had a great influence on my life, because of the way he/she…

Conclusion: Myths and heroes help define our societies and our lives. As heroes, whether fictional or real, they can serve as role models for activists or for the younger generations. As myths, they can shape a country, or at least the image we have of it. Myths and heroes are inspirational and can help us change our lives, by the image they convey. However, we cannot overlook the fact that myths and heroes entail a great power: they can convince people and steer them in different directions. As a consequence, we could consider them a form of power, as a founding myth can have the power to influence a whole nation and trigger hard-fought debates.

**/!!!\ Attention** : La synthèse et la problématique doivent être **personnelles** ! N’allez pas récupérer quelque chose de tout prêt sur internet et ne prenez pas celles de votre voisin. Il est évident qu’internet peut être une source d’inspiration, mais assurez-vous bien de personnaliser ce que vous pourriez trouver. Si vous n’arrivez pas à défendre ou expliquer votre point de vue par la suite, vous serez fortement pénalisé.