

LISTENING

Task 1. Listen to the talk on national heroes and for questions 1 to 10 choose the correct answer for each question. You will hear the recording twice. You have sixty seconds to study the questions below. (Pause) Listen carefully. The talk starts now.

Recently there was a national poll on the radio in the UK in which listeners voted for who was the greatest British person. The poll created quite a stir and people took it seriously. Every morning on the news show they spent two or three minutes talking about it and urging listeners to vote. This led me to think firstly, as I happen to be British, who I thought was the greatest Briton and, secondly, why, in a country not given overmuch to patriotic displays and where it's rare to see the national flag flying anywhere else except on some government buildings, everyone seemed to be so involved. I think that's the key, you don't see overt displays, but there is a strong sense of national identity among the people that comes out on occasions. One of the ways you express national identity is through national heroes. Every country has them, real or imaginary. I mention imaginary because there is at least one country I know where the national hero has turned out, after thorough historical research, to be a myth, which is not a little disconcerting for the people living there!

It is through heroes that the country differentiates itself from other countries. Take a British hero (who didn't win the poll), Lord Nelson, a British admiral who won a crucial sea battle against a certain neighbouring country two hundred years ago, and got killed in the process. This is exactly what a country wants in a national hero. A man already a household name, not only beats an enemy at a critical moment, but -and this is the extra factor- also dies. In winning at the right time Nelson was believed to have saved the country. That seems to be the other essential ingredient for a national hero, that they saved the country or, at least, with some newer countries, established its freedom. The second ingredient is sacrifice, Nelson died. This is highly symbolic. The nation celebrated and grieved at the same time and, although, I may sound a little uninvolved here, to tell the truth, I was brought up on this story and it has meaning for me.

In getting killed Nelson had the edge on Wellington, who was a British general, perhaps equally talented though not as appealing, in the same war. Wellington won a crucial victory but did not get killed. He is not a national hero - anywhere.

Having national heroes is a consequence of nationhood. An interesting line of thought is what type of hero different nations have. The ancient Greeks said, 'Tell me who you admire and I'll tell you who you are.' This is true not only for individuals, but also for nations. A lot of British heroes are sailors. The British love the sea and ships, and the country is an island.

A lot of established heroes fought wars. Does that mean that the British are warlike seafarers? If the cap fits, wear it. I am happy to report, however, that in the radio poll - remember that? - Most of the front runners had civilian rather than military careers. My own hero was popular. The remarkable engineer Brunel (who was half French, in point of fact) a true all-rounder. Another popular choice was the scientist Newton, with the playwright Shakespeare eventually coming out on top. Tell me who you admire, and I'll tell you who you are. Maybe, on the basis of the eventual result, the British cannot be entirely judged by having Nelson as a hero.

You will now hear the talk again (the recording repeats)

This is the end of the listening task.