

# ORIGIN OF THE PURPLE HEART

**LEVEL:**

Elementary School

**TIME:**

Approximately three class sessions

**OBJECTIVES:**

Students will research the origins of the Purple Heart and its modern use.

Students will present to the class personal stories of friends, family members, and/or recipients who have received the Purple Heart.

Students will create their own medal for the armed forces with accompanying essay explain their design choices and the award criteria.

**STANDARDS:**

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|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| - Reading and Writing Literacy in | - Evaluating Data        |
| History/Social Studies            | - Speaking and Listening |
| - Developing Research Skills      | - American Revolution    |

**PROCEDURE:**

1. Introduce the Purple Heart to the class and discuss the honor of receiving this important military award.
2. Have students visit the following web sites to research the Purple Heart:
  - United States Department of Veterans Affairs  
<http://www.va.gov/opa/publications/celebrate/purple-heart.pdf>
  - Military Order of the Purple Heart of the USA  
<http://www.purpleheart.org>
3. Ask students to answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper:
  - Who created the Purple Heart Award?
  - What was the award originally called?
  - Who were the first recipients of the Purple Heart Award?
  - Who is eligible for this award?
  - What is the difference between the original award and the current Purple Heart?
4. Have students locate a friend, family member, or neighbor who has received the Purple Heart. For students who do not know a recipient, contact a local veteran's organization for help in identifying a local recipient of the award. Interview the recipient (or someone who knew him/her if the recipient is deceased) to find out what receiving the award meant to him/her.
5. Instruct students to prepare a 2-3 slide presentation on the Purple Heart awardee they researched to present in class.

6. Have students write thank-you letters to the Purple Heart awardees or their families. The letters should thank the veteran, or their family, for the interview, his or her service to the country, and tell him or her what the student learned about the Purple Heart and George Washington. Students should research how to write a formal thank you letter for guidance.
7. Ask students to draw an original armed forces medal and write a brief essay explaining their design choices and the criteria for their award.

**Optional Extension Activities:**

1. Host a “Hometown Heroes” reception at your school. Invite local Purple Heart winners, as well as their families and other area veterans, to a reception at your school. Display student-created military awards and essays and have students present information they researched during the lesson to those gathered.