



*Celebrating the Outstanding Work of our Students*

**“Heroes and Role Models:  
Barbara Walters”  
by Yoela Koplow  
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The dictionary defines a role model as somebody we want to look up to and who is often an example to emulate. A hero is defined as somebody who is admired and looked up to for outstanding qualities or achievements.

I think the difference between a hero and role model is that a role model is somebody you identify with, look up to and try to be like in a certain way, while a hero is someone you admire for an achievement, even though you may not identify with the person. I think that someone can be a role model or hero even if they have flaws. A good example is someone that I didn't choose to be my role model for this assignment, Miley Cyrus. She is a famous singer and actress. Miley has had many rumors and scandals swirl around her and many pictures of her using bad judgment, and yet, lots of people still consider her a role model. I think she is a great person, but a lot of times fame just gets the best of her. That happens to many celebrities at least once or twice. I consider Miley to be one of my role models because she is really good at what she does and she loves it and works hard at it. She inspires me to pursue my dream of acting.

My mom told me who her role models were when she was a kid. She told me that her 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher Mrs. Singer and her 7<sup>th</sup> grade teacher Mrs. Rabinsky were her role models because they were both really creative, really strong women, and very responsive to her and the rest of the class. When my mom first began her career she became a teacher like them, before she became a therapist.

I guess my criteria for role models are that they have to be in the entertainment business and they have to believe in equality and justice. They also have to be honest and trustworthy as people. Barbara Walters is a good example of someone who fits these criteria. I chose her because she was the first female news anchor in America. She has a very successful career on TV, which I hope to have, as I get older. Since she is a reporter she is committed to finding the truth and letting people know about it. She also is an example of the ways that women and men are equal and deserve the same opportunities since she has had jobs that only men used to have, and she was really good at those jobs.

Barbara Walters was born on September 25<sup>th</sup>, 1929. Her parents were Lou Walters and Dena Seletsky. Her brother died of pneumonia when he was 3, and Barbara and her sister were born 3 and 4 years later. Her sister, Jacqueline, was diagnosed with a mental disorder as a child, and died around 1984. At one point, Barbara's father owned the nightclub "The Latin Quarter", but he had trouble in business so the family moved around a lot. Barbara would attend a new school at least twice a year. She always tried to fit in, but never really managed to. I desperately wanted playmates," she wrote, "to have friends over to my house, to belong instead of always feeling like an outsider". She tried to be friends with some of the girls, but since she was always the new girl, she never really was accepted. The Walters' financial status changed often. While her family moved, she moved in and out of celebrity circles. She once told a gossip columnist that "We were rich on Mondays, and we would lose it all on Tuesdays."

Barbara Walters originally worked at NBC as a writer. She then became the "Today Girl", the girl who did the weather. Finally Walters became a reporter in the 1960s. She got the position as a co-anchor on NBC after the Civil Rights and Women's movements. These social changes allowed women to start getting the same jobs as men. She once said "Back in 1976 you could freely attack a woman for wanting to attempt to do a so-called man's job, especially in the holier-than-thou men-only news departments. Many people still believed that women were supposed to know their place -- and stay in it ... Today, that same attitude would not only be politically incorrect, but the backlash would be enormous."

One highlight of Walter's career is when she interviewed Cuba's former dictator, Fidel Castro, in 1977. Another major highlight of her career is when she broadcast Princess Diana's funeral. She was the main reporter bringing that event to millions of people in America.

When Walters first met Barack Obama as a potential candidate for president, she asked him to appear on her talk show, "The View." Obama told Walters that he'd already appeared on the show in 2004 to promote his book "Dreams for My Father." "I'm so sorry I wasn't on the program that day," she recalls telling him, to which he responded, "Oh ... but you were." Months later, Barbara Walters had the opportunity to interview President Elect Obama and the future First Lady, allowing Obama to share his ideas about the economy with all of America.

I chose Barbara Walters because if you are the first female news anchor, you have to believe in gender equality. I myself totally believe in gender equality. I want to become an actress, and I hope that I can use my mad acting skills to make an impact with that message. I could play a role that shows how women can have power as well as men, and could handle it differently or even better than a man. For example, I could play a congresswoman who becomes the first female president of the United States of America.

Some people are not aware that Barbara Walters' parents were both Jewish. However, Barbara Walters' father later turned to atheism. The result was that Walters was raised with no religion in her home. Still, she is Jewish by heritage and culture. I guess you could say that Barbara Walters' way of being Jewish is compatible with humanistic Judaism. She is not religious, but uses her power in the world for tikkun olam, making the world a better place. Barbara Walters has earned a lot of money, and is known to be generous to charities and causes, and started a foundation to help people with mental disorders, like her sister.

Barbara Walters and I have some things in common; an interest in celebrities, a belief in gender equality, and a desire to follow our dreams. She followed hers, and she inspires me to follow mine.