

## Close Reading Activity: Gino Bartali: The Reluctant Hero

Text Under Discussion	Vocabulary	Directions for Teachers/Guiding Questions for Students
<p>Gino Bartali is well known in the sport of cycling and holds the record for the longest time span between victories at the <b>Tour de France</b> (ten years). Bartali's life provides a powerful lesson in how moral <b>endurance</b> can <b>empower</b> from within.</p> <p>As Bartali attained "super star status" in the sport of cycling, he never lost sight of the fact that it was his inner strength that carried him through the most difficult moments of his life. As he told his son Andrea, "If you're good at a sport, they attach the medals to your shirt and then they shine in some museum. That which is earned by doing good <b>deeds</b> is attached to the soul and shines elsewhere."</p> <p>In 1943, when Italy was under the German army <b>occupation</b>, Archbishop Elia Angelo Dalla Costa and Rabbi Nathan Cassuto organized a resistance network. Bartali was <b>recruited</b> by the network and worked as a courier. In addition, Bartali aided the Assisi <b>resistance movement</b> that was organized by church members from his hometown. He also sheltered a local Jewish family in his home.</p> <p>As part of his job as <b>courier</b>, Bartali hid documents in the handlebar and seat of his bicycle. These documents were primarily export <b>visas</b>, giving numerous Jews the chance to evade deportation to the death camps. Long bike rides were common place for professional cyclists, even during the war. Bartali was able to travel thousands of kilometers around Italy under the <b>guise</b> of training rides, while he <b>smuggled</b> forged identity papers in the frame of his bicycle to Jewish families trying to desperately flee the country.</p>	<p><b>Tour de France</b> - world class cycling competition.</p> <p><b>endurance</b> - persevering to reach a goal.</p> <p><b>empower</b> - to enable or permit.</p> <p><b>deeds</b> - an exploit or feat.</p> <p><b>occupation</b> - to control a nation or territory.</p> <p><b>recruited</b> - to support or become a member.</p> <p><b>resistance movement</b> - an underground organization that fought the Germans.</p> <p><b>courier</b> - one who delivers messages.</p> <p><b>deportation</b> - to expel from a country.</p> <p><b>visas</b> - document permitting one to leave a country.</p> <p><b>guise</b> - to pretend.</p> <p><b>smuggled</b> - to illegally transport items.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Why is Bartali famous?</li>   <li>2. What did Bartali mean when he said, "That which is earned by doing good deeds is attached to the soul and shines elsewhere."</li>   <li>3. How did Bartali become involved in saving Jews?</li>   <li>4. What was Bartali's role in the resistance movement?</li> </ol>

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<p>After the war, Bartali never spoke of his <b>underground</b> activities and refused all attempts at interviews. He simply remarked that “he had been motivated by his conscience and therefore did not want to have his activities <b>documented</b>.” Bartali’s decision to act was heroic not because he felt no fear but rather because he did not let his fear prevent him from doing what he felt was <b>ethically</b> right. He demonstrated moral endurance, <b>forged</b> in a moment of danger that few of us could ever hope to fully understand. Although the exact number of people is unknown due to Bartali’s <b>taciturn</b> nature, he is credited with saving 800 lives.</p> <p><b>Yad Vashem</b> recognized Gino Bartali as a <b>Righteous Among the Nations</b> in 2013. In spite of the heroic title, Bartali never thought of himself as a genuine hero. He once said, “Real heroes are others, those who have suffered in their souls, in their hearts, and their spirit, for their loved ones. Those are the real heroes. I’m just a cyclist.”</p>	<p><b>underground</b> - secret work of an organization.</p> <p><b>documented</b> - record evidence, information, proof.</p> <p><b>ethically</b> - in a way that relates to moral choices.</p> <p><b>forged</b> - brought together.</p> <p><b>taciturn</b> - untalkative, lack of communication.</p> <p><b>Yad Vashem</b> - Israel’s official memorial to victims of the Holocaust.</p> <p><b>Righteous Among the Nations</b> - title of the award given by Yad Vashem on behalf of the state of Israel to non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust.</p>	<p>5. How did Bartali demonstrate his moral endurance?</p> <p>6. Why didn’t Bartali consider himself a hero?</p>

### Essay Assessment:

Write a response to the following question that includes an introduction, at least two body paragraphs and a conclusion.

To what extent was Gino Bartali’s role in the resistance movement in Italy successful?

In your response, be sure to address the following:

- supporting evidence from the reading and website
- individual’s actions/participation
- results of the action taken