
☐ I can explore the meaning of courage through the example of August Landmesser.

Unknown. Hamburg, Germany. 1936.

Directions: Use details in the picture, as well as what you know about history, to answer the following questions.

1. Describe the people in the photograph. Who do you see?
   a. Observe various individuals’ posture and gestures. What does this tell you about what is happening?
   b. Based on what you see in the photograph (clothing, hats, etc), your existing knowledge of history, and inferences based on

mybri.org >> Heroes and Villains >> August Landmesser and Courage >> Primary Source
both, identify the historical period during which this photograph was taken.
c. Given your response to the question above, identify the general place (region, country) where you believe it could have been taken.

2. What do you already know about the historical period this photograph depicts?

3. One person in the photograph is doing something different from everyone else. Find that person in the photograph. Describe what that individual is doing.

4. What statement might he be making?

5. Given your knowledge of the historical context, what risk is this person taking? Does that action, and that risk, require him to make a judgment? If so, what is your opinion of the judgment he has made?

6. How does this photograph illustrate courage?
Background Information

The picture you just analyzed is believed to show shipyard worker August Landmesser (1910 –1944) refusing to perform the Nazi salute at the launch of a naval training vessel in June 1936 in Hamburg, Germany. Landmesser joined the Nazi Party in 1931 but was expelled in 1935 and served jail time for his crime of Rassenschande (dishonoring the race) when he married a Jewish woman. He was later drafted to serve in World War II after being released, and was killed in action in 1944. His wife was taken by the Gestapo (Nazi political police) and sent to three different concentration camps. She is believed to have been killed at the Bernburg Euthanasia Center. The Landmessers’ two children survived the war.

Analysis Questions

• In the photograph, what are most of the people doing? From this photograph, what might we infer about which of these people we may actually be most like?
• When most of us look back at this period in history and at this picture, with whom are we more likely to identify — the people performing the Nazi salute or the individual refusing to salute?
• Have you ever personally witnessed someone standing up for what they knew to be right when no one else was doing so?
• Have you ever stood up for what you knew to be right when you could not see anyone else doing so?
• Thinking of one or both of the questions above, describe the courage this requires.
• Why is the virtue of courage especially important for citizens living in a society built on democratic principles?