

Batman. Then ask students to work in groups and choose their top three heroes from the list on the board. Go round the class, asking different groups to tell you about their choices and the reasons for those choices.

## 2

Ask students to work in groups of four and play a game of 'heroic consequences'. Each group has a sheet of paper. The first student writes the name of an imaginary hero at the top of the paper. They then fold the paper over and pass it to the next student. This student writes who the hero rescued, e.g. a baby. Then they fold the paper again and pass it on. The third student writes what the person is saved from, e.g. a burning building. The last student writes the consequence of the heroic action, e.g. the hero became famous all over the world. Finally, students unfold their paper and read out the whole story to the class.

### Exercise 1 1•02 page 8

- Focus attention on the three questions and tell students to take notes about the answers as they listen to the recording. Remind them that they should just listen for the answers to the questions and not try to understand every word of the recording.
- Play the recording once for students to find the answers.
- Check answers as a class. Then give students, in pairs, two minutes to discuss what they guess the people on the platform did.

### Audio script

It was a normal afternoon on the New York subway. The platform was crowded with people as they waited for the Number 1 train to arrive. There was an old man sitting down reading a newspaper; a couple of teenagers leaning against the wall, listening to their MP3 players; a young mother carrying her small baby in one arm and a bag of shopping in the other. There was also a construction worker called Wesley Autrey, who was taking his four-year-old and six-year-old daughters home before going to work. Just another ordinary day on the subway ... until the unthinkable happened. A young man moved too close to the edge of the platform and, just as the headlights of the train appeared in the tunnel, fell onto the tracks.

- 1 It took place on the New York subway.
- 2 There was an old man reading the newspaper, two teenagers listening to their MP3 players, a young woman with a baby and some shopping, and a construction worker taking his daughters home.
- 3 A young man fell onto the tracks.

### Exercise 2 1•03 page 8

- Tell students they are going to listen to the rest of the story. Play the recording once and ask students if their ideas in exercise 1 were correct. Check that students understand who took action to help the young man (Wesley, the construction worker).

### Audio script

'I had to make a split decision,' Wesley said later. So he jumped. The man had fallen between the two rails, so Wesley lay on top of him, pushing him down into a 35 cm-deep space. The train was too close to stop, and five carriages rolled overhead as people on the platform screamed in horror. 'We're OK down here,' shouted Wesley once the train had stopped, 'but I've got

two daughters up there. Let them know their father's OK.' That's when the cries of wonder started, and the applause. That's when Wesley became known as The Subway Superhero.

### Exercise 3 1•04 page 8

- Give students a few minutes to discuss the questions in pairs.
- Write two headings on the board:  
*Why some people help*  
*Why some people do nothing*  
Elicit students' ideas and write them on the board under each heading. If students are struggling to think of ideas, you could give them some prompts, e.g.  
*some people help: because they are brave; because they have experience of such situations*  
*some people do nothing: because they are scared; because they are thinking about something else*
- Play the recording so that students can compare their ideas with those in the discussion.

### Audio script

**Presenter** The question many people ask themselves after hearing The Subway Superhero's story is: Would I have acted in the same way? Then they might ask: What made Wesley Autrey risk his life to save a stranger? What was going through his mind? Didn't he think about his children? Was it a heroic act or was it thoughtless and irresponsible? Today on *Story of the Week*, psychologist Mindy Manson is going to give some answers.

**Psychologist** I think most of us will recognize it as a heroic act, but for me the real question is: why was it Wesley who reacted rather than anyone else? Several years ago there was a similar incident in a bank. During an armed robbery, a customer jumped on the gunman – he was shot in the leg (he survived), but he helped to stop a robbery.

**Presenter** That's extraordinarily brave.

**Psychologist** True, but what was really interesting about this event was not what the hero did, but what other people did. On the CCTV recording, when the armed robber walked into the bank with his gun, the other customers didn't react. They simply carried on with their business. One man continued to drink his coffee while another filled out a loan application form.

**Presenter** Perhaps they didn't see the robber.

**Psychologist** Maybe, although I think what was happening was a typical first reaction to unexpected, dangerous situations. In these situations, our brains find it difficult to accept that something is wrong. We try to rationalize what we're seeing; in effect, we're refusing to acknowledge the threat. It's a problem, as it can waste time.

**Presenter** That's interesting.

**Psychologist** Another typical reaction is 'freezing'. When there is great danger, our stress hormones react, making it difficult for our brains to process information and make decisions. So people 'freeze' ... They literally move and think more slowly. This probably happened to people on the platform when the passenger fell onto the track.

**Presenter** But why do some people take the lead? What makes people become heroes?

**Psychologist** In the case of the bank robbery, the customer who stopped the robber was threatened directly. In this situation, his brain had no choice but to accept the situation immediately – it was self-preservation, and his actions were partly in self-defence. But it's also true to say that some people are better-prepared mentally than others.

**Presenter** You mean people like firefighters and soldiers?

**Psychologist** Yes, these people are trained to deal with life-and-death situations, so react a lot better. But the way ordinary people perform often depends on their attitude. If people have a lot of self-assurance, if they feel they are in control of their destiny and can change things, then they usually react more effectively. People who tend to feel helpless and at the mercy of fate are less likely to take action.

**Presenter** So having self-belief and confidence are qualities a hero might have.

**Psychologist** That's right. Another explanation is that heroes tend to be natural risk-takers and produce lower levels of the stress hormone, so they aren't overwhelmed or 'frozen' with fear. They have more self-control.

**Presenter** That makes sense.

**Psychologist** And interestingly, they are usually more involved with people and the society around them, and not particularly motivated by self-interest. A study in 2005 found that heroes interacted with friends and family more frequently, and were more aware of the needs of others.

**Presenter** So are heroes pretty rare?

**Psychologist** Not really. Heroism happens more often than we think, and it doesn't only occur in life-and-death situations. Look at the aftermath of disasters where people share resources and look after those who need assistance, or a person who donates a kidney to a relative, or a single mother working all hours to pay for her child to go to college. We can find these examples of selflessness and self-sacrifice everywhere we look; all these people are putting others' needs before their own and they don't think they're doing anything special. As Wesley Autrey said, 'I don't feel like I did something spectacular. I just saw someone who needed help. I did what I felt was right.'

**Reasons some people help: they are threatened directly; they are trained to deal with life-and-death situations; they have a lot of self-assurance / self-belief and confidence; they produce less of the stress hormone; they are more involved with the people and world around them.**

**Reasons some people stand back and do nothing: they don't believe anything bad is actually happening; they produce more stress hormones so they 'freeze'.**

#### Exercise 4 1•04 page 8

- Tell students to read through the questions first. With a **stronger class**, ask students to decide if the sentences are true or false before listening again. With a **weaker class**, you can play the recording in short chunks, stopping after each section and allowing students to compare their answers in pairs.
- Check answers as a class. Play the recording again, if necessary.

1 F 2 F 3 F 4 F 5 T 6 T 7 F 8 T 9 F

#### Extra activity

Ask students to work in groups and write a newspaper article about Wesley's heroic act. Tell them to think of a good headline, invent some quotes from witnesses and use a range of past narrative tenses.

#### **V insight** Words with *self-*

Ask students if they already know any words beginning with *self-*. (They should know *selfish* and *unselfish*.) Remind them that we also use *self-* with reflexive verbs, and elicit some examples: *to wash yourself*; *to hurt yourself*.

#### Exercise 5 page 8

- Play the recording again if necessary, pausing after each example of a word with *self-* in it. Ask students to identify two examples of words with a negative meaning (*self-interest*, *self-obsession*) and four examples of words with a positive meaning (*self-control*, *selflessness*, *self-assurance*, *self-sacrifice*).
- Students work individually to complete the text.
- Check answers as a class by asking different students to read out sentences from the text.

- |                     |                  |
|---------------------|------------------|
| 1 self-preservation | 5 self-defence   |
| 2 self-interest     | 6 self-sacrifice |
| 3 selflessness      | 7 self-control   |
| 4 self-obsession    | 8 self-assurance |

#### Exercise 6 page 9

- Go through the qualities with students and check they remember the meanings of all the words. If necessary, refer them back to exercise 7 on page 6.
- Students discuss their ideas in pairs or groups.
- Write the words on the board. Read them out one at a time and get students to vote on which quality is the most important for a hero.

#### Exercise 7 1•05 page 9

- Ask different students to read out the five options and check that students understand the different scenarios. If necessary, explain the meaning of *underprivileged* and *terminal*.
- Play the recording.
- Check answers as a class.

#### Audio script

**Boy** It's going to be really difficult to decide. There are so many people here who I'd say are real heroes.

**Girl 1** True, but I think we can cross the sports star off the list, can't we? What she did wasn't particularly heroic.

**Girl 2** What do you mean exactly?

**Girl 1** Well, I don't think that giving away free tickets cost her anything in particular.

**Boy** Although it was a nice thing to do ... The kids loved the match.

**Girl 2** What about the pilot? It was pretty amazing that he kept calm and managed to save the lives of so many people.

**Boy** Yes, but he was saving his own life, too, so there was a bit of self-interest involved. And, you know, it is his job. He's been trained to stay calm and save lives in that sort of situation.

**Girl 2** OK, I see where you're coming from.

**Boy** My view is that we have to look for an action that was totally selfless.

**Girl 2** What about the teenage carer who looked after her disabled father? She lives on her own with her dad and does everything for him, and she managed to pass her exams as well.

**Boy** That's impressive.