

The Heroes That Middle School Students Want to Know in Social Studies Course

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Abstract

In Social Studies course, people can be utilized in the context of many different subjects such as wars, social development, scientific developments, and social activities. In this context, life stories, products or achievements of people can be used as examples in Social Studies courses. This study, which aims to determine the heroes that middle school students want to know in Social Studies course, was designed in the form of basic qualitative research, and the participants of the study were determined through criterion sampling. The research was conducted with 245 middle school students attending schools at different socio-economic levels in the center of Afyonkarahisar province. A semi-structured interview form was used to collect the data. The data were analyzed through descriptive analysis. As a result of the research, the heroes that middle school students want to recognize in the social studies course are discussed under the themes of science, literature, visual art, music, media, economy, sports, history and cartoon / PC game heroes. For almost all of these themes, middle school students stated that the heroes, who are included in the Social Studies lessons in limited numbers, are mentioned superficially, that they would like to get to know these heroes more closely and in detail, and that they would like to know the secret of their success and their inspiring aspects

Keywords: Social Studies, Hereos, Basic Qualitative Research, Middle School Students

Introduction

Social studies is a course directly related to many disciplines. Some of these disciplines are history, geography, sociology, sociology, anthropology, psychology, political science, literature, philosophy, law, economics, archaeology. Martorella (1998) states that art, popular culture, mass communication, data obtained from students' daily lives, laws and rules, school life, society, current events, different societies, science, and consumer relations are also sources that fall within the subject area of social studies. Social studies is a course that enables students to get to know the whole world and different societies, starting from the society in which they live and their immediate surroundings. In this context, the social studies course can only be concretized by giving examples from the society in which we live, different parts of the world and the people living in these places. When the textbooks are examined, it would not be wrong to say that different people in each country are included in the books. Of course, some common names can also be found among them. These people, who are included in the books or whose biographies are used as examples by teachers in lessons, can be called heroes. Students should learn to distinguish between heroes and celebrities and to discover real heroes in their own families, schools, communities and, most importantly, within themselves (Morin & Bernheim, 2005). In this context, it is important to define the concept of hero and draw its boundaries. Hero is defined in many different ways in the literature. For example, in

the dictionary of the Turkish Language Association, it is defined as (a person) who shows usefulness in war or in a dangerous situation, alp, valiant; a person who has an important place in an event. According to Sullivan & Venter (2010), the concept of hero is difficult to define. What is important when choosing a person to be considered a hero is that this person is a person who stands out with important characteristics that need to be understood and grasped today. The three common characteristics of a hero in the definitions are notable achievements, serving as a role model for actions, or serving as a role model for character. In the social studies course, people can be utilized in the context of many different subjects such as wars, social development, scientific developments, and social activities. In this context, when considered with both meanings, these people, whose life stories, products or achievements are used as examples in the social studies course within the scope of this research, can be expressed as “heroes utilized in the social studies course”.

In the social studies course, heroes can be included directly in textbooks or through biographies brought to the classroom by teachers or research assignments given to students. One way of utilizing heroes in social studies is to use their biographies or excerpts from their biographies in the lessons. Biography is not only a genre of literature, but also a literary genre that can be used as a teaching tool in all courses. The subject of biography can be expressed as a person and his/her deeds. This person whose life is analyzed can be a literary figure, historian, geographer, mathematician, physicist, chemist or sometimes a politician, lawyer, soldier or sportsman (Öztürk & Otluoğlu, 2003). Yazıcı and Aslan (2011) determined that a total of 38 heroes were included in the social studies textbooks 73 times; all but one of these 38 heroes were male; 11 sultans / rulers / kings, 1 caliph, 2 presidents, 1 vizier, 1 sailor, 6 scientists, 1 religious scholar, 1 sociologist, 1 traveler, 5 poets / writers, 4 artists, and 4 war heroes of unknown profession or war heroes from among the people were included in the books. Karakuş & Çoksever (2019) stated in their study that 12 female heroes were included in social studies textbooks and that Fatma Bacı, one of these heroes, was mentioned twice in the 6th and 7th grades. They determined that 7.69% of the heroines were included in the 5th grade, 76.92% in the 6th grade, and 15.39% in the 7th grade books, and 69.23% of these heroines were included in the Active Citizenship, 23.07% in the Culture and Heritage, and 7.69% in the Science, Technology and Society learning area. Pramono, Ahmad, & Wijayati (2021), in their study on the inclusion of national heroes in Indonesia to effectively promote national identity in history teaching, found that 186 national heroes were included in Indonesia's textbooks at the beginning of 2020. In addition, he stated that learning the life stories of heroes can inspire students, inspire them to be interested in various fields, empathize with historical figures, understand history in its own context, and develop a humanistic perspective, as well as contributing to the acquisition of virtues such as sacrifice, courage and service for the benefit of society and recognizing cultural diversity, as in Bandura's social learning theory.

In Canadian textbooks, under the title of Canadian heroes, David Suzuki (Environmentalism and Biologist), Jordin Tootoo (Ice Hockey Player), Rick Hansen (the first person who graduated from the physical education department and traveled the world in a wheelchair despite being physically disabled) were included (Despins, 2023). In this context, it can be said that attention was paid to the diversity of the protagonists in terms of their profession, the impact they had on society and the personal characteristics they possessed. All three heroes are recent and

still alive. In this context, heroes can be chosen from historical figures as well as people who are still alive. Analyzing the life stories of the heroes facilitated students to reach a more humanistic and empathetic understanding of history and to understand how historical actors perceive the past. In addition, Yazıcı and Aslan (2011) found that in Turkey, there are 28 (73.6%) national heroes and 10 (26.4%) universal heroes in social studies textbooks. Looking at the New Zealand Social Studies curriculum and textbooks, it is seen that there is a unit titled “Local Heroes” at the 3rd grade level. In this unit, local heroes are defined as cultural leaders, sportsmen, religious leaders, successful teachers working in that region, managers who work or have worked in a local business or institution, citizens who have made a mark with their work in non-governmental organizations, and it is stated that teachers should encourage students to collect information about such local heroes and introduce these people in the classroom (Ratana, 2023). In the light of the results obtained, it is seen that the heroes that students want to be included in social studies textbooks are heroes related to the disciplines of history, science, music, media, sports, painting, literature and economy, cartoon/game hero. When the result is considered in the context of the disciplines that the social studies course is related to, it can be said that heroes from many different disciplines can be included in books and lessons, and practices can be carried out to research local heroes and include them in lessons.

It is clear that the opinions and interests of the students taking this course are also important in determining the heroes that should be included in social studies courses or textbooks. As a result of the literature review, no research was found to determine the heroes that middle school students want to know in the social studies course. In this sense, it is hoped that this research will contribute to both practitioners in terms of the textbooks to be written in the future, to help students identify role models with some aspects of themselves, to associate social studies lessons with daily life and real people, to make them more interesting, and to researchers in terms of eliminating the deficiency in the literature. The main purpose of this study is to determine the heroes that middle school students want to know in the Social Studies course based on their opinions.

Method

This section of the study consists of the research model, participants, data collection and data analysis.

Research Model

This research, which aims to determine the heroes that middle school students want to recognize in the social studies course, was designed in the form of basic qualitative research. This research was conducted using a basic interpretive qualitative study design. Merriam (2002) defined interpretive qualitative research as the construction of meaning and stated that symbolic interactionism, which advocates seeing the world from the other person's perspective and that people's interpretations are based on everyday experiences that have meaning for them, guides this type of research.

Participants

The participants of the study were determined according to criterion sampling. The basic understanding of the criterion sampling method is to study all situations that meet a predetermined set of criteria (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). The study was conducted with 245 secondary school students attending schools at different socio-economic levels in the center of Afyonkarahisar province. The characteristics of the participants are given in Table 1 as follows:

Table 1. Characteristics of Participants

		f
Class Level	5 th grade	80
	6 th grade	80
	7 th grade	85
Gender	Female	125
	Male	120
Socio-Economic Level of the School	Bottom	80
	Middle	85
	Top	80

As seen in Table 1, in determining the participants, attention was paid to reaching a close number of students from each branch, to ensure that the distribution according to socio-economic level (lower, middle, upper) was close to each other, and to ensure a balanced distribution of gender.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data of the study were obtained from 245 middle school students attending the 5th, 6th and 7th grades of three public schools in Afyonkarahisar city center between September 30 and October 28, 2024. In the collection of data in the study, some categories were given by asking the students which heroes (people) they would like to recognize in social studies lessons and social studies textbooks. These categories were scientist, painter, historical figure, musician, writer/poet, media, sports, cartoon/game, economy and other. The relevant literature was taken into consideration in determining the categories. For example, in the context of heroism, Kinsella, Ritchie & Igou (2015) emphasized leaders, role models, sports stars and celebrities; Franco, Blau & Zimbardo (2011) emphasized martyrs (war heroes), politics and media; many researchers (Johnson, 1996; Lyons, 2005) emphasized being a warrior and savior; Keczer, Orosz, Zimbardo (2016) included some professions (doctor, ambulance driver, firefighter) in this category in terms of showing heroic characteristics. Students wrote which heroes they would like to know in these categories with their reasons.

The prepared form was presented to the opinions of 5 experts in the field of social studies education, and it was discussed whether this form was sufficient to collect the data; the form was finalized in line with the suggestions made. The data were analyzed through descriptive analysis. In descriptive analysis, data are summarized and interpreted in line with predetermined themes. These data can be organized according to the research questions, or they can be presented by considering the questions and dimensions used in the observation and interview stages (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). In the process of analyzing the data, descriptive analysis was performed by a field expert other than the researchers and the percentage of agreement was determined as 94%.

Findings and Interpretation

In this part of the study, the opinions of middle school students were presented in the form of tables and supported by direct quotations from the students' opinions. Considering the social studies course in terms of both the disciplines it is directly related to and the disciplines it is related to in an interdisciplinary context, middle school students were asked about the heroes they would like to recognize in social studies courses and social studies textbooks and the reasons for wanting to recognize these heroes. In this context, the distribution of the themes including the heroes that middle school students would like to recognize is given in Figure 1 as follows:

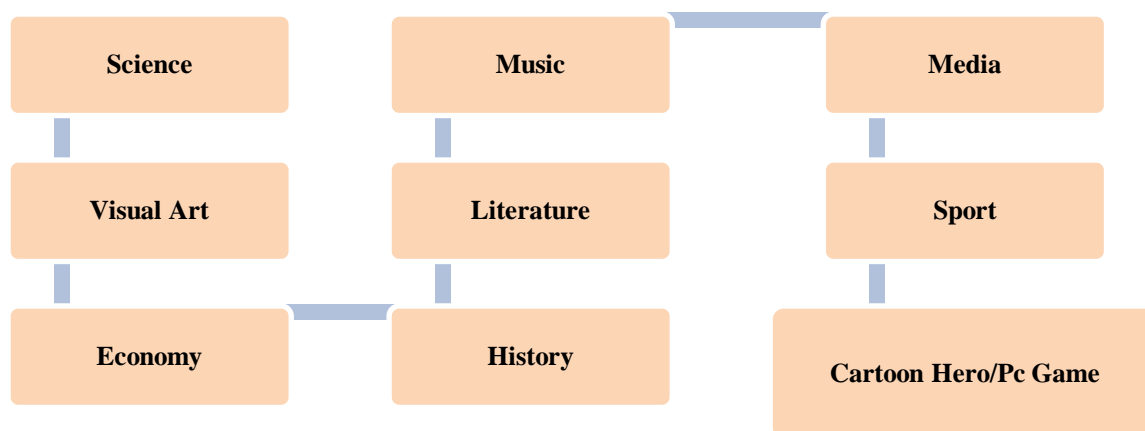


Figure 1. Distribution of Middle School Students According to the Themes of the Heroes They Want to Know

As can be seen in Figure 1, the heroes that middle school students want to get to know in the social studies course are discussed under the themes of science, literature, visual art, music, history, economy, media, sports and cartoon/pc game heroes. The heroes that middle school students want to recognize in the science theme are as follows:

Table 2. Heroes that Middle School Students Want to Recognize in the “Science” Theme

	Aziz Sancar
	Hezarfen Ahmet Çelebi

Turkish-Islamic Business People	Scientists	and	Ali Kuşçu İbn-i Sina Piri Reis Farabi Mimar Sinan Cahit Arf Harezmi Kemal Sayar Dündar Altay İbn-i Firnas Oktay Sinanoğlu Celal Şengör
Foreign Scientists			Albert Einstein Thomas Alva Edison Nicola Tesla Arşimet Yuri Gagarin Graham Bell Galileo Galilei Aristoteles

As seen in Table 2, two sub-themes, Turkish-Islamic science-business people and foreign scientists, were obtained from the “science” theme obtained from the analysis of the heroes that middle school students want to get to know in the social studies course. When the people mentioned by middle school students in the science theme were analyzed, it was seen that the majority of the students expressed Turkish-Islamic science and business people. In addition, the fact that business and scientists such as Kemal Sayar, Dündar Altay, Celal Şengör and Archimedes are not included in the social studies textbooks can be expressed as a limitation regarding the diversity of scientists in the textbooks. Direct quotations from the opinions of middle school students under the sub-theme of “Turkish-Islamic science and business people” in the social studies course are as follows:

“Aziz Sancar is a scientist who won the Nobel Prize. Our country's name was heard all over the world. We are proud. What is the secret of his success? How does he spend a day? I would like to get to know him better (Aziz Sancar / p. 156).”

“He proved many things in mathematics and astronomy and I would like to learn this information from him (Ali Kuşçu / p. 59).”

“I would like to know what kind of life he had. I would like to know what he did in his daily life (Mimar Sinan / p. 69).”

“He worked tirelessly on the sea to map the world and made history (Piri Reis/ p. 33).”

“He has a mathematical equation called Arf theory in his name and this is a great thing (Cahit Arf/ p. 46).”

“I have done research on him. He is someone I care a lot about who has been involved in many branches of science (Harezmi/ p. 56).”

Direct quotations from the opinions of middle school students under the sub-theme of “foreign scientists” are as follows:

“I want to know how he made the light bulb, because it was a very important invention for us. He enlightened the world (Thomas Alva Edison /p. 211).”

“I am very curious about his gadgets and I want to use the gadgets he made (Nicola Tesla /p. 84).”

“He is the first astronaut (Yuri Gagarin /p. 54).”

Table 3. The Heroes that Secondary School Students Want to Recognize in the “Literature” Theme

Poets	Mehmet Akif Ersoy
	Orhan Veli Kanık
	Yunus Emre
	Hasan Nail Canat
	Yahya Kemal Beyatlı
	Jules Verne
	Osman Zeki Üngör
	Atilla İlhan
	Özdemir Asaf
	Cahit Sıtkı Tarancı
Authors	Mustafa Kemal Atatürk
	Behiç AK
	Celal Şengör
	J.K. Rowling
	Sevim Ak
	Özgür Balpınar
	Ömer Seyfettin
	Elif Şafak
	İlber Ortaylı
	Aziz Sancar
	Andrew Clements
	Mustafa Elbir
	Bayram Yaman
	Şermin Yaşar

As seen in Table 3, two sub-themes, poet and writer, were obtained from the “literature” theme obtained from the analysis of the heroes that middle school students wanted to get to know in the social studies course. When the poets and writers that middle school students are interested in under the literature theme are analyzed, Mehmet Akif Ersoy in the poet sub-theme and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in the writer sub-theme draw attention. The reason why students include both names can be stated as the fact that both names have left a deep impact

on Turkey's history and culture. In addition, the fact that the versions of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's "Nutuk" adapted to the level of children have been recommended and taught in schools in recent years may have been effective in Atatürk being one of the heroes included in the author category. In addition, the presence of foreign authors such as Jules Verne and J.K. Rowling shows that students are influenced by different cultures and have an awareness of world literature. Direct quotations from the opinions of middle school students under the sub-theme of "Poet" are as follows:

"The most important poet for the Turkish nation is Mehmet Akif Ersoy. Because he wrote our National Anthem. He did not accept the prize money in the competition. He is honorable and talented. I would like to get to know him and learn about him in social studies class (Mahmet Akif Ersoy/s. 200)."

"I like his poems very much (Orhan Veli Kanık/s. 31)."

"His poems penetrate you (Özdemir Asaf/s. 40)."

"He writes poems by understanding himself and there are great meanings in every line of his poems (Cahit Sıtkı Tarancı/s. 42)."

Direct quotations from the opinions of middle school students under the sub-theme of "Author" are as follows:

"He is very successful and I would like to ask him how he achieved this success. I would also like to ask him what inspires his books (Mustafa Elbir/. 52)."

"I was very interested in his book Zaman and Zingo and I would like to ask him my questions (Bayram Yaman/s. 15)."

"I have read and admired almost all of his books. I would like to write a book with him (Şermin Yaşar/s. 37)."

Table 4. The Heroes that Middle School Students Want to Recognize in the "Visual Art" Theme

Local	Osman Hamdi Bey
	İbrahim Çallı
	Mimar Sinan
	Hüseyin Avni Lifij
Foreigner	Leonardo Da Vinci
	Picasso
	Salvador Dali
	Vincent Van Gogh
	Bryan Charnley
	Gustav Klimt
	Frida Kahlo
	Adolf Hitler

As seen in Table 4, two sub-themes, local and foreign, were obtained from the "Visual Art" theme obtained from the analysis of the heroes that middle school students want to get to know in the social studies course. When the names given by middle school students in the visual art theme are examined, it is seen that they know important names in Turkish culture

and art such as Osman Hamdi Bey, İbrahim Çallı and Mimar Sinan. In addition, it is noteworthy that although İbrahim Çallı and Hüseyin Avni Lifij are not included in social studies textbooks, students know them. The names that middle school students included in the foreign sub-theme are among the world-famous painters. However, it is noteworthy that Adolf Hitler is known as a painter in addition to his role as a historical figure. Direct quotations from the opinions of middle school students under the “domestic” sub-theme are as follows:

“I like his painting The Turtle Trainer. His paintings are very meaningful and beautiful (Osman Hamdi Bey, p. 67).”

“His paintings are so perfect and thought-provoking that I wonder what his inspiration is and where he gets these ideas from (İbrahim Çallı, p. 46).”

Direct quotations from the opinions of middle school students under the sub-theme of “foreign” are as follows:

“I don't understand why Mona Lisa is so famous, for example. I would like to see other works. If pictures of paintings were put in books, we would see them all. I would also like to learn how they go to the exhibition and talk about the paintings in the movies. I think social studies books would be more fun then (Leonardo Da Vinci, p. 183).”

“His paintings are excellent, so I would like to meet him (Picasso, p. 70).”

“I am very interested in his paintings (Salvador Dali, p. 32).”

“I am curious about the story of a foreign painter (Bryan Charnley, p. 35).”

“Many of his paintings inspire me and I try to draw pictures like him (Gustav Klimbt, p. 59).”

Table 5. The Heroes that Middle School Students Want to Recognize in the Theme of “Music”

Turkish Folk Music	Neşet Ertaş
	Aşık Veysel
	Gururbey
Rap	Sefo
	Lvbel C5
	Blok 3
	Slay
	Çakal
	Ceza
	Ahmet Can Dünder
	Ben Fero
	Alizade
	Sezen Aksu
	Murat Boz
	Hadise
	Aleyna Tilki
	Tarkan
	Yaşar
	Emir Can İğrek

Pop	Edis Melis Fis Simge Hande Yener Seda Sayan Mabel Matiz İrem Derici Zeynep Bastık Semicenk Katy Perry Black Pink Stray Kids Enhypen Michael Jackson Ariana Grande
Rock	Barış Manço Mavi Işıklar Dolu Kadehi Ters Tut Emre Fel Duman
Arabesque	Müslüm Gürses İbrahim Tatlıses Mahsun Kırmızıgül Cengiz Kurtoğlu İsmail YK

As seen in Table 5, five sub-themes, namely Turkish folk music, rap, pop, rock and arabesque, were obtained from the “Music” theme obtained from the analysis of the heroes that middle school students want to get to know in the social studies course. When the people in the field of music that middle school students want to get to know are analyzed, it is seen that they include many local and foreign popular names, the music genre they listen to most is pop, and they do not include any names from Turkish art music and classical music genres. Direct quotations from the opinions of middle school students under the sub-theme of “Turkish Folk Music” are as follows:

“He sings very beautiful folk songs, I would like to know him (Neşet Ertaş, p. 76)”

“He sings his folk songs very beautifully and I love the long thin road (Aşık Veysel, p. 72).”

Direct quotations from the opinions of middle school students under the sub-theme of “rap” are as follows:

“I like his songs very much. I am curious about his life (Sefo, p. 51).”

“He is a Fenerbahçe fan and his music excites and motivates me (Ben Fero, p. 47.)”

"Listening to his songs is good. I would like to be photographed with him once, I would like him to sign autographs, his voice is very beautiful, he has many songs (Lvbel C5, p. 69)."

Direct quotations from the opinions of middle school students under the "Pop" sub-theme are as follows:

"I like his songs, my favorite song of his is doymadım doyamadım (Sezen Aksu, p. 151)."

"He has very good songs and he is very handsome, I would like to meet him (Tarkan, p. 81)"

"Their songs and dances are really beautiful, they have songs for all tastes. Rock, rap, vocals, jazz, they are a very nice group and I would especially like to get to know Niki, their youngest member. She has a beautiful voice and is an excellent dancer (Enhypen, p. 68)."

"They have beautiful songs and their music is very good (Katty Perry, p. 45)."

"Edis has a beautiful voice and I wonder how he can use it so well. I would like to meet him (Edis, p. 42)."

Direct quotations from the opinions of middle school students under the sub-theme "Rock" are as follows:

"Many people in history loved him (Barış Manço, p. 52)."

"I wonder what kind of a studio he has. I wonder what kind of a singer he is (Emre Fel, p. 21)."

Direct quotations from the opinions of middle school students under the sub-theme of "Arabesque" are as follows:

"I listen to their music very much (Müslüm Gürses, p. 192)."

"I listen to his songs very much and his songs are very beautiful (Mahsun Kırmızıgül, p. 43)."

Table 6. The Heroes that Secondary School Students Want to Recognize in the "History" Theme

Religion Leader	Hız. Muhammet
	Hız. Nuh
State Governance	Mustafa Kemal Atatürk
	Metehan
	Ertuğrul Gazi
	Osman Bey
	Yavuz Sultan Selim
	Fatih Sultan Mehmet
	Kanuni Sultan Süleyman
	2. Abdülhamid
War Hero	Battal Gazi
	Sütçü İmam
	Seyit Onbaşı
	Mimar Sinan

Scientist	Ali Kuşçu
	Hezarfen Ahmet Çelebi
	Galileo Galilei
	Harezmi

As seen in Table 6, the heroes that middle school students want to know under the theme of “History” in the social studies course are divided into four sub-themes: religion leader, state governance, war hero and scientist. When the names given by middle school students in the history theme are examined, the names expressed are among the expected results since the names expressed in the sub-themes of state of governance, war hero and scientist are also included in the textbooks when the learning areas of Culture and Heritage and Science, Technology and Society in the 2018 Social Studies curriculum are examined. Direct quotations from the opinions of middle school students under the sub-theme of “History” are as follows:

“I wonder how he separated the two seas (Noah, p. 66).”

“I would like to know Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, for protecting us and for loving us children (Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, p. 98)”

“The founder of the Ottoman Empire (Osman Bey, p. 73).”

“No other sultan could have made the conquests he made in eighty years in the Ottoman Empire, they are all my ancestors, but I find Yavuz Sultan Selim right (Yavuz Sultan Selim, p. 47).”

“I would like to learn what he did from him, not from the internet (Fatih Sultan Mehmet, p. 72).”

“He also fought for our country (Sütçü İmam, p. 19).”

“Seyit Onbaşı, because he helped a lot in the battle of Çanakkale, to learn how he carried bullets (p. 89).”

“He managed to fly by working hard. He managed to make this feature that only birds have (Hazerfan Ahmet Çelebi, p. 43).”

Table 7. Heroes that Middle School Students Want to Recognize in the Theme of “Economy”

Today's business people	Vehbi Koç
	Ali Koç
	Kâmil Koç
	Sakıp Sabancı
	Elon Musk
	Bill Gates
	Acun Ilıcalı
	Dursun Özbek
	Mr. Beast
	Selçuk Bayraktar
	Nuri Demirağ
	Haluk Bayraktar
	Şakir Zümre
Historical character	Vecihi Hürkuş

Nikola Tesla

As seen in Table 7, the heroes that middle school students want to get to know in the “Economy” theme in the social studies course are divided into two sub-themes: contemporary business people and historical characters. The sub-theme of today's business people: Vehbi Koç, Ali Koç, Kâmil Koç, Sakıp Sabancı, Elon Musk, Bill Gates, Acun Ilıcalı, Dursun Özbek, Mr. Beast, Selçuk Bayraktar, Nuri Demirağ, Haluk Bayraktar, Vecihi Hürkuş, Şakir Zümre; historical character sub-theme: Thomas Edison, Nikola Tesla. When the names mentioned by middle school students in the economy theme are examined, it is seen that there are business people such as Vehbi Koç, Sakıp Sabancı, Elon Musk, Bill Gates and Mr. Beast, who are well-known for their success in Turkey and internationally. Direct quotations from the opinions of middle school students under the sub-theme of “Today's business people” are as follows:

“Because he owns Arçelik, Vestel and Beko (Ali Koç, p. 48).”

“He is a very rich businessman and the owner of twitter. (Elon Musk, p. 39).”

“He owns his own chocolate factory and has more than one room (Mr. Beast, p. 40).”

“He made parachutes for airplanes, I would like to see how he did it and I would like to meet him. I would like to see how he made them and what he went through (Nuri Demirağ, p. 69).”

“Because he is very rich and he owns microsoft, he has produced a lot of things; windows 8, 10, 11 (Bill Gates, p. 49).”

“He is a good businessman, he does his job well and he founded survivor (Acun Ilıcalı, p. 29).”

Direct quotations from the opinions of middle school students under the sub-theme of “Historical Character” are as follows:

“He designed an airplane under very difficult conditions, I wonder what materials he used while designing the airplane and how he obtained those materials (Vecihi Hürkuş, p. 167).”

Table 8. Heroes that Middle School Students Want to Recognize in the “Media” Theme

Orkun Işıtmak
Mr. Beast
Sıla Dünder
Duygu Köseoğlu
Feride Özding
Rukiye Çetinkaya
Süleyman Kılınç
Dila Kent
Sıla Güler
Enes Batur
Ahmet Can Dünder
Meryem Can
İsmail Fidan

Youtuber/Influencer	Doğukan Adal Ecrin Su Çoban Toprak Yozgatlıoğlu Eylül Lal Sempatuco Ozan Kuşçu Sefa Kingir Mete Kayagil Furkan Yaman Ali Deniz Şentopuk Alper Rende Yeliz Korkmaz YZF Ali Yaren Alaca Doğukan Bunny Raeneer
Digital platforms/Channels	Noluyo Ya (What is happening?) Samimiokur (Damla Archeon) Gezen Timsah Kayzer Tarih Kafalar
Artist (Actor/Musician/Singer)	Cihat Süvarioğlu Müge Anlı Ebru Yaşar Afra Saraçoğlu Su Burcu Yazgı Coşkun Melis Fis Berk Çakmak

As seen in Table 8, the heroes that middle school students want to recognize in the “Media” theme in the social studies course are divided into three sub-themes: youtuber/influencer, digital platforms/channels, artist (actor/musician/singer). It is seen that middle school students want to know people such as youtuber, musician, football player, singer, actor in the media category. When the heroes that middle school students want to know in the media category are examined, it is seen that they have difficulty in distinguishing the concepts of hero and celebrity. In accepting a person as a hero, the main criterion is that this individual stands out with important features such as remarkable achievements that should be understood and adopted today, and being a role model in the actions he/she performs. However, when the opinions of middle school students under this theme are analyzed, it is seen that most of the people they mentioned do not have hero characteristics and therefore cannot be considered as heroes in the real sense. Direct quotations from the opinions of middle school students under the sub-theme of “Youtuber/influencer” are as follows:

“He is trying to make the world a better place by helping people (Mr. Beast, p. 55).”

"My favorite influencer, I would love to meet him. He is a very nice youtuber (Sıla Güler, p. 29)."

"Because he makes informative videos that I like (Alper Rende, p. 48)."

"He has been trying to realize his dream since he was six years old and he finally succeeded and became the first in the world. I would like to follow my dreams too (Toprak Yozgatlıoğlu, p. 33)."

"He has many subscribers, likes and many videos comedy funny (Enes Batur, p. 41)."

Direct quotations from the opinions of middle school students under the sub-theme of "digital platforms/program" are as follows:

"They have a very good sense of humor and are very fun to watch (Noluyo ya, p. 53)."

"His history videos are very good (Kayzer Tarih, p. 27)."

Direct quotations from the opinions of middle school students under the sub-theme "Artist (actor/musician/singer)" are as follows:

"I would like to get to know him because his songs are very beautiful (Melis Fis, p. 98)."

"I watch her TV series on Trt 1, she is very funny, I would like to meet her (Cahit Süvarioğlu, p. 102)."

"She is very beautiful, I like her very much, I wonder how she became an actress (Afra Saraçoğlu, p. 93)."

Table 9. Heroes that Middle School Students Want to Recognize in the Theme of "Sports"

Football	Cristiano Ronaldo
	Lionel Messi
	Kenan Yıldız
	Neymar De Silva Santes
	Fernando Muslera
	Hakan Çalhanoğlu
	Felipe Melo
	Taffarel Drogba
	Ciro Immobile
	Ferdi Kadioğlu
	Arda Güler
	Mauro Icardi
	Kylein Mbappe
	Wesley Sneijder
	Dries Mertens
	Pele
	Erenay Kadioğlu
	Muhammed Kerem Aktürkoğlu
	Mesut Özil
	Emre Mor

	<p>Pascal Nouma</p> <p>Alexandru Maxim</p> <p>Anderson Talisca</p> <p>Barış Alper Yılmaz</p> <p>Rafa Silva</p> <p>Ricardo Quaresma</p> <p>Talisca</p> <p>Paul Pogba</p>
Volleyball	<p>Melisa Vargas</p> <p>Zehra Güneş</p> <p>Ebrar Karakurt</p> <p>Hande Baladin</p> <p>Eda Erdem</p> <p>Saliha Şahin</p> <p>Gülşah Durbay</p> <p>Gizem Öрге</p> <p>İlkin Aydın</p>
Others	<p>Alperen Şengün (basketball)</p> <p>Usain Bolt (athlete)</p> <p>Şahika Ercümen (diver)</p> <p>Mete Gazoz (arrow)</p> <p>Naim Süleymanoğlu (weightlifting)</p> <p>Yusuf Dikeç (shooting)</p> <p>Kübra Kocakuş (muaythai)</p>

As can be seen in Table 9, sub-themes in the form of football, volleyball and other were obtained from the analysis of the heroes that middle school students wanted to get to know in the “Sports” theme in the social studies course. When the people that middle school students want to get to know in the sports theme are examined, it is seen that there are world-class football players, football players who have taken part in big teams, national athletes who successfully represent our country in the field of volleyball, athletes who represent our country by breaking world records and athletes who represent our country internationally. Direct quotations from the opinions of middle school students under the “Football” sub-theme are as follows:

“He was the first to score 900 goals and half the world loves him and the other half loves Messi (Cristiano Ronaldo and Messi p.72)”

“I think he is the best soccer player ever. I always watch his videos with my dad on YouTube. I want to be a soccer player too (Lionel Messi, p. 165).”

“He represents our country in a team like Juventus and is very successful (Kenan Yıldız, p. 68).”

“He played for Fenerbahçe for seven years and became the hero of Fenerbahçe and after all these years he left Fenerbahçe crying, he loved Fenerbahçe that much (Ferdî Kadioğlu, p. 47).”

"He plays football very well, I would like him to teach me football and I love him very much (Barış Alper Yıldız, p. 221)."

Direct quotations from the opinions of middle school students under the "Volleyball" sub-theme are as follows:

"I would like to ask how she achieved her success in volleyball (Melisa Vargas, p. 52)."

"An excellent spiker and our group (Hande Baladın, p.64)."

Direct quotations from the opinions of middle school students under the "Others" sub-theme are as follows:

"I like basketball and he plays very well (Alperen Şengün, p. 69)."

"Naim Süleymanoğlu and Mete Gazoz represent our country very well and I would like to know them both (Mete Gazoz, Naim Süleymanoğlu, p. 73)."

Table 10. Heroes that Middle School Students Want to Know in the Theme of "Cartoon Hero/Pc Game"

Cartoon (local/foreign)	National	Maşa ve Koca Ayı Karagöz ve Hacivat Elif ve Arkadaşları Keloğlan Pepe Kukuli Niloya Nasreddin Hoca Kral Şakir İbi Rafadan Tayfa
	Foreign	Şirinler Tom ve Jerry Harry Potter Kung Fu Panda Heidi Iron Man Uğur Böceği ile Kara Kedi Mickey Mouse
Animations		Örümcek Adam Çizmeli Kedi Koyun Shaun Pamuk Prenses Mutlu Oyuncak Dükkânı Buggs Bunny Batman Spiderman Iron Man

	Süngerbob
	Elsa (Karlar Ülkesi)
	Pubg Mobile
	Süper Mario
	Valorant
Pc Games	Mycraft
	Süper Dino
	Crow
	Brawl Stars

As seen in Table 10, the sub-themes of cartoon, animation and PC games were obtained from the analysis of the heroes that middle school students wanted to recognize in the theme of “Cartoon hero/Pc game” in the social studies course. When the characters that middle school students want to get to know in the theme of cartoon hero / PC game are examined, it is seen that the cartoons and animations they watch include values such as friendship, friendship, cooperation, courage, justice, responsibility, solidarity, pursuit of dreams, love of nature, goodwill, and skills such as problem solving and cooperation. When the PC games they played are analyzed, it is seen that they develop creativity and imagination (Brawl Stars and Mycraft), teamwork and problem solving skills (Pubg Mobile, Volarant and Super Mario). However, harmful role models such as violence tendency and normalization of violence (Batman, Spiderman, PUBG Mobile, Volarant), anger and selfishness may negatively affect children's character development. If children cannot distinguish between real and unrealistic animated characters, they may exhibit dangerous behaviors, become addicted, have time management problems and become asocial. In this context, using cartoons, animations and computer games in social studies courses may have the risk of causing undesirable behaviors in students despite their contributions such as internalizing social values, developing cooperation and problem solving skills. In this context, the careful use and selection of cartoons and computer games in social studies courses can both enable students to acquire social values and contribute to their personal development. Direct quotations from the opinions of middle school students under the sub-theme of “cartoons” are as follows:

“Because it is a fun cartoon (Tom and Jerry, p.65).”

“I used to watch and love İbi on TRT Çocuk a lot and I used to wonder how patient he was (İbi, p. 50).”

“They are very sweet, they never left their friends alone (Smurfs, p. 33).”

“How many mysteries are true in the characters and how many I would like to know (Kral Şakir, p. 41).”

“In the cartoon, he learns karate and he does not harm anyone, so I like the cartoon very much (Kung Fu Panda, p. 42).”

Direct quotations from the opinions of middle school students under the sub-theme of “Animation” are as follows:

“I would ask how it feels to fly between houses (Spiderman, p. 38).”

“I would like to get to know Spiderman and I have a costume. If there was a social studies lesson, I would wear my costume (Spiderman, p. 99).”

Direct quotations from the opinions of middle school students under the sub-theme of “PC games” are as follows:

“I would like to get to know it because it is a very good game and it has virtual heroes (Pubg, p. 100).”

“I would like to know the Brawl Star character Leon and he is very beautiful (Brawl Stars, p. 210).”

Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendations

The heroes that middle school students would like to get to know in the Social Studies course were discussed under the themes of science, literature, visual art, music, media, economy, sports, history and cartoon/pc game heroes. For almost all of these themes, middle school students stated that the heroes, who are given limited space in social studies lessons, are mentioned superficially, that they would like to get to know these heroes more closely and in detail, and that they would like to know the secret of their success and their inspiring aspects. However, when the people mentioned in the themes of media, music, cartoons/pc games were analyzed, it was seen that most of these figures did not have hero characteristics, and therefore, middle school students were not yet able to distinguish between the concepts of hero and celebrity.

According to Meyers, Holbrook & May (2009), all children imagine that one day they will be able to achieve important things as adults, but most of the students hardly make any connection with important historical figures. These figures can be expressed as heroes or role models. However, in the lessons, these heroes are only mentioned superficially, and the only thing that is mentioned is the characteristic that stands out in history or today. However, the main guidance or inspiration for students is to provide them with information about how these heroes have developed themselves throughout their lives and to enable them to make inferences about how the choices in their lives can shed light on themselves. In this context, the aforementioned results are consistent with the students' views that they would like to get to know the heroes more closely.

When the names mentioned by middle school students and categorized under 9 themes are classified according to the themes, it is seen that they mostly mentioned names in the field of media (f=48), followed by sports (f=45), music (f=44), cartoon hero/pc game (f=37), literature (f=24), science (f=22), history (f=18), economy (f=14), visual art (f=12), respectively. Er & Şahin (2012) also aimed to determine students' opinions on the use of “biography” in the social studies course and found that 4th grade middle school students were mostly in the categories of scientist, artist, writer and athlete. In this context, the results of the research are compatible with each other.

In the theme of “science” in the social studies course, 14 of the heroes that middle school students want to get to know are Turkish scientists and business people and eight are scientists from different countries. The names mentioned by middle school students under this theme are Aziz Sancar, Hezarfen Ahmet Çelebi, Ali Kuşçu, İbn-i Sina, Piri Reis, Farabi, Mimar Sinan, Cahit Arf, Harezmi, Kemal Sayar, Dündar Altay, İbn-i Firnas, Oktay Sinanoğlu, Celal Şengör, Albert Einstein, Thomas Alva Edison, Nicola Tesla, Archimedes, Yuri Gagarin, Graham Bell, Galileo Galilei, Aristotle. When the names expressed by middle school students

are analyzed, it is seen that most of the heroes are included in textbooks and are people who have achieved great success in their fields. In addition, the fact that Prof. Dr. Aziz Sancar is the most frequently mentioned name can be explained by the pride he brought to our country with his great success by receiving the Nobel Prize in Chemistry, the fact that this situation is widely covered in the media and that he is also included in most textbooks. In addition to these reasons, most of the secondary school students express Aziz Sancar as a person who grew up with difficulties and as a great success he achieved with his perseverance. Hume (2000) also emphasized that a hero is not a royal person, a privileged person or a person with divine qualities, but rather an ordinary person who has reached the highest place that can be reached by struggling with difficulties. In this context, middle school students' reasons for expressing Aziz Sancar as a hero they would like to know in the science category are consistent with this research. When the heroes addressed by middle school students in the theme of "Science" in the context of gender are examined, it is seen that all of the names expressed are male, and they do not include female scientists at all. It is possible to mention many studies (Gounsoulin, 2001; Nuhoglu & Afacan, 2007; Buldu, 2006; Özsoy & Ahi, 2014) that can explain this situation. In all of these studies, children's perception of scientists is that they are male. In this study, the fact that all of the names mentioned in the science category were male reveals that the results are compatible with each other. However, this situation is also an important indicator of how important it is to include female scientists in books. Doğan & Er Tuna (2023) conducted a study to examine the use of biographies in social studies student textbooks taught to 5th, 6th, and 7th graders in 2022-2023 and found that one female biography (Dilhan Eryurt) was included in the 5th grade textbooks in the learning area of Science, Technology and Society, and a total of six female biographies (Süreyya Ağaoğlu, Türkan Akyol, Gül Esin, Kara Fatma, Halide Edip Adıvar and Canan Dağdeviren) were included in the 6th grade textbooks on the place of democracy in our social life. In this study, it is seen that the majority of the heroines mentioned by the students are included in the textbooks. The heroes that middle school students want to get to know in the "literature" theme in the social studies course are Mehmet Akif Ersoy, Orhan Veli Kanık, Yunus Emre, Hasan Nail Canat, Yahya Kemal Beyatlı, Jules Verne, Osman Zeki Üngör, Atilla İlhan, Özdemir Asaf, Cahit Sıtkı Tarancı, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Behiç AK, Celal Şengör, J. K. Rowling, Sevim Ak, Özgür Balpınar, Ömer Seyfettin, Elif Şafak, İlber Ortaylı, Aziz Sancar, Andrew Clements, Mustafa Elbir, Bayram Yaman, Şermin Yaşar. The fact that Rowling attracts the attention of middle school students in the field of literature can be explained by the fact that she is the author of a bestselling series (Harry Potter). The fact that Mehmet Akif Ersoy, who was expressed in the first place, is the author of our National Anthem can be interpreted as the high awareness of middle school students in the dimension of national consciousness. The fact that middle school students also included Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in the "literature" category can also be explained by influences such as the "Nutuk for Children", which has been adapted and published in recent years in accordance with the student level. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, whom most of the children wanted to get to know with admiration, was also a name expressed by middle school students in the field of literature. Temizyürek and Karagöl (2016), in their research titled "Investigation of Mehmet Akif Ersoy Biographies with a Target Audience of Children in Terms of Values Education", stated that Mehmet Akif Ersoy's life story is inspiring in many dimensions, can be used as a tool in the acquisition of values and Mehmet Akif Ersoy

can be shown as a role model for children. In this study, the researches support each other as Mehmet Akif Ersoy is the name most frequently mentioned by middle school students in the literature category.

The heroes that middle school students want to get to know in the theme of “visual art” in the social studies course are Osman Hamdi Bey, İbrahim Çallı, Mimar Sinan, Hüseyin Avni Lifij, Leonardo Da Vinci, Picasso, Salvador Dali, Vincent Van Gogh, Bryan Charnley, Gustav Klimt, Frida Kahlo, Adolf Hitler, four Turkish painters and eight foreign painters. It is striking that the first names that come to mind when middle school students think of painters are Leonardo Da Vinci and Picasso. In addition, it is also seen that they know painters such as İbrahim Çallı and Hüseyin Avni Lifij, Salvador Dali, who are not included in the textbooks. It is also noteworthy that Adolf Hitler, who is not included in the 5th, 6th and 7th grade textbooks, is known as a painter in addition to his role as a historical figure. Güneş (2016) aimed to evaluate the visual arts course based on student opinions. 80.43% of the 700 students whose opinions were taken as a result of his research, stated that they wanted to get to know famous painters in the lessons; 51.29% stated that they did not know how to criticize art and that they were not taught enough. In this study, one painter was mentioned in public schools and three in private schools. Secondary school students expressed that they wanted to get to know the painters and interpret their works of art. The results obtained in this context are consistent with each other.

In the theme of “music” in the social studies course, there are 44 musicians that middle school students want to get to know. These musicians consist of people in music genres such as Turkish folk music (3), rap (9), pop (22), rock (5), arabesque (5). Under this theme, the musicians that middle school students most want to get to know are in the pop sub-theme, while they have never mentioned musicians performing genres such as Turkish art music and classical music. Kocabaş and Selçioğlu (2006) aimed to determine the level of realization of the music course from the perspective of 4th and 5th graders and the expectations of the students. As a result of their research, Kocabaş and Selçioğlu (2006) concluded that the students reported that the music course was not realized at a sufficient level, but the students had positive opinions about the necessity of the music course. In this study, middle school students could not adequately mention musicians of different music genres. In this context, the results of the research are compatible with each other. Ho (2022) examined the interactional sources of creativity in music education (music genres, music activities) in terms of their impact on students' perceptions and attitudes in developing their creativity. The findings revealed that students believed that their creativity would increase as they became more familiar with music genres and showed a particularly high interest in Chinese popular music. The types of music that students were interested in were ranked from highest to lowest scores as Chinese popular music, contemporary Chinese classical music, popular songs from the United States and the United Kingdom, Western musicals and other world music. No category for other world music was found in this study. Similarly, the category of classical music was not included in this study. In addition to increasing the diversity of the types of music that students listen to, attracting students' interest in Turkish art music and Turkish folk music, which contain many details of Turkish culture, and implementing practices that will increase their creativity and interests, such as classical music and other world music, can not

only increase students' creativity and interests, but also help them develop an interest and awareness in the culture they live in.

The people they want to know in the “history” theme in the social studies course consist of two religious figures, eight statesmen, three war heroes and five scientists. The heroes that middle school students want to know are Prophet Muhammad, Prophet Noah, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Metehan, Ertuğrul Gazi, Osman Bey, Yavuz Sultan Selim, Fatih Sultan Mehmet, Kanuni Sultan Süleyman, Abdülhamid II, Battal Gazi, Sütçü İmam, Seyit Onbaşı, Mimar Sinan, Ali Kuşçu, Hezarfen Ahmet Çelebi, Galileo Galilei, Harezmi. It is an expected result that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey, is the most frequently mentioned hero in the statesman sub-theme. In addition, the names of the heroes of the national struggle are among the expected results due to the fact that they are included in the Culture and Heritage learning area in the 2018 Social Studies curriculum and this situation is reflected in the textbooks. Many researchers (Johnson, 1996; Lyons, 2005) have identified being a warrior and savior as a category of heroism in their studies aiming to categorize heroes or to determine the characteristics of heroes. In this context, it is seen that the national struggle heroes, especially Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who are most frequently expressed by middle school students, have the characteristics of warrior and savior. Pasco (2019) aimed to increase students' awareness of local heroes and contribute to their internalization of heroism and nationalism values. In his study, he provided students with written materials, multimedia activities, and a website that would serve as an information portal about Laguna's local heroes, enabling students to discover local heroes. As a result of the research, he determined that patriotism value, commitment to historical values and citizenship awareness were strengthened in students. In this study, the sub-themes of religion, statesman, scientist, war hero were the heroes that students expressed that they would like to get to know. Including these heroes can contribute to students' acquisition of many religious and national values as well as many universal values such as scientificity and diligence.

In the “economy” theme in the social studies course, the heroes that middle school students wanted to get to know were Vehbi Koç, Ali Koç, Kâmil Koç, Sakıp Sabancı, Elon Musk, Bill Gates, Acun Ilıcalı, Dursun Özbek, Mr. Beast, Selçuk Bayraktar, Nuri Demirağ, Haluk Bayraktar, Şakir Zümre, Vecihi Hürkuş, 12 contemporary business people and two historical characters. When the names expressed by middle school students are examined, it is seen that there are names that are widely covered in the media in Turkey and in the world. In addition, it is seen that there are names that are not included in social studies textbooks. However, Turan (2019) analyzed the 2018 Social Studies curriculum in the context of the disciplines it is related to, and as a result of his research, he determined that the discipline of economics was included in 42.85% of the Social Studies curriculum. In this context, more frequent use of prominent names in the context of the discipline of economics in social studies lessons while including the achievements related to the discipline of economics can serve to establish much more effective interdisciplinary connections and attract students' interest.

In the category of “media” in the social studies course, 29 of the heroes that middle school students want to get to know are youtubers/influencers, 5 of them are digital platforms/programs, 7 of them are actors/musicians/performers and 7 of them are people in other media categories. When we look at the names that middle school students want to know in the media category, it is seen that the majority of them are youtubers, influencers and



digital platforms. This situation can be interpreted as that popular culture is effective in the media field. He stated that people in today's media are a way of giving members of a society an idea about what is seen as heroic; they represent what a society appreciates and express existing cultural values. Sila Dünder, Feride Özding and Orkun Işıtmak are the most frequently mentioned youtubers. Ergen (2019) also aimed to determine the preferences of children aged 10-14 in his research titled "popular role models of popular culture, youtubers". The two most frequently mentioned names in this study are Enes Batur and Orkun Işıtmak. Likewise, sesegel youtube channel is also among the mentioned youtube channels. In this context, the research results are compatible with each other.

In the theme of "sports" in the social studies course, 28 of the heroes that middle school students want to get to know are football players, 9 are volleyball players and 7 are people in other sports themes. When we look at the names that middle school students want to get to know in the media theme, it is seen that all of them are successful people in their fields, they promote Turkey in the international arena and are frequently featured on television. In his doctoral dissertation, Tarhan (2019) also determined the topics that middle school students learned from the news in the country and the world in the form of football, football players, matches; discussions of country leaders and developments related to famous artists, again based on student opinions. In this context, it can be said that the media is effective on the names mentioned. The fact that Naim Süleymanoğlu, an athlete in the field of weightlifting, is mentioned so frequently can also be explained by the movie "Naim", which was released in Turkey in November 2019 and transferred the life of the athlete to the movie screen. In this context, it would not be wrong to say that middle school students are influenced by the agenda and the media in terms of the names they express in the theme of "sports".

In the social studies course, the heroes that middle school students want to know in the theme of "cartoon hero / video game" are Spiderman, Mr. Bean, Harry Potter, Batman, Masha and the Bear, Minions, Mickey Mouse, Iron Man, Karagöz and Hacivat, Ben 10, King Şakir, Elsa (Frozen), Keloğlan, Buggs Bunny, Pepe, Öcük and Böcük, Nasreddin Hoca. In this theme, it is seen that 11 of the 19 cartoon heroes expressed by middle school students are domestic cartoon heroes. Yıldız (2016) aimed to analyze the content of violence in cartoons preferred by 3-6 year old children and determined the most watched cartoons as Ben 10, Çizgi Otomobilalar, Muhteşem Spiderman, Beyblade Metal Fury, Transformers Prime and Rafadan Tayfa, Strawberry Girl, Winx, Mia and Me, Canım Kardeşim, Keloğlan Tales and Pepee, Scooby Doo and Caillou. In this study, Masa and Big Bear, Spiderman, Pepe, and Keloğlan were the cartoon heroes mentioned by middle school students. Biricik & Atik (2021) conducted a study with primary school students in Erzurum province and found that the digital games played by the students were Superman, Minecraft, Pubg Mobile, GTA for boys and doll dress up, puzzle, league of legend, cake making, snake game for girls, and that the games that are popular in certain periods are becoming widespread and children play the same games as a general tendency. In this context, the games (Minecraft, Pubg Mobile) played by the students in the two studies are similar. In this context, the results of the two studies are compatible with each other.

The reasons that middle school students generally expressed for wanting to know the heroes were as follows: benefiting the society, being a good person, being reliable, showing heroism, being recognized worldwide, representing their country in different fields, becoming a brand

in their work, bringing an innovation in their field, being fun, being a role model. White & O'Brien (1999) also stated that students attach importance to at least one of four basic characteristics in the heroes they choose and these characteristics are: Being good, brave, nice and reliable. In the light of the findings, the following suggestions can be made:

- Research can be conducted to recognize heroines in different fields in the context of social studies course.
- Action research, quasi-experimental or mixed-method research can be conducted to utilize heroines in the context of social studies course.

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