



## **Audie Murphy Classroom Guide**

He was an unassuming farmer's boy from Texas with only a fifth-grade education. But when Audie Murphy nearly single-handedly fought off hundreds of German soldiers during World War II, he became a legend. This 1-hour BIO *Audie Murphy: Great American Hero* tells the story of this decorated WWII soldier. After earning 33 medals in combat, Murphy headed west for Hollywood stardom and appeared in over 40 films. But like many heroes, Murphy was also flawed. By the time of his death at the age of 46, a gambling addiction had drained all his finances. Thus, his story can serve as a cautionary tale about the pitfalls of addiction. This program explores Murphy's contribution during World War II and to American cinema.

### **Curriculum Links:**

*Audie Murphy: Great American Hero* would be useful for classes on American History, WWII, American Culture and Military History. It is appropriate for high school and college students.

### **Vocabulary:**

**Ask students to define the terms below. They may also want to write down their own list of terms to define as they watch.**

- amphibious
- convoy
- desolate
- empower
- formidable
- indifference
- plagued
- surrogate
- tedium
- titan
- valor

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Audie Murphy's parents were sharecroppers. What is sharecropping? How did this system of farming and labor define the Southern economy in the first half of the 20th century?
2. Audie Murphy was a child during the Great Depression. How did the Great Depression affect Murphy and shape his childhood? How do you think his upbringing during the Depression may have influenced his later life?
3. How did Lattie Tipton's death affect Audie Murphy? Discuss why the bonds between soldiers are so essential and intense during wartime.

4. Audie Murphy performed some of the most celebrated acts of heroism in WWII. What drove Murphy to such heroic feats? Do you think he would have considered himself to be a hero?
5. Why did Murphy receive the Congressional Medal of Honor, the nation's highest honor?
6. What is post-traumatic stress syndrome? How does it affect soldiers throughout their lives? Do you think Murphy suffered from this condition?
7. Murphy became a successful actor after the war. How did Murphy get into the motion picture industry?
8. Why do you think Murphy was unable to deal with his gambling addiction? How do you think he might have been able to find help with this issue?
9. How do you think Murphy should be remembered today?

**Extended Activities:**

1. Design a poster or some other souvenir that commemorates the awarding of the Congressional Medal of Honor to Audie Murphy.
2. Design a poster for the movie *To Hell and Back*.
3. Write a short Bio about Murphy or another World War II veteran. Visit [www.veterans.com](http://www.veterans.com) to learn more about the history of veterans in the U.S.

**Books:**

Adler, Bill and Tracy Quinn McLennan. *World War II Letters: A Glimpse into the Heart of the Second World War Through the Eyes of Those Who Were Fighting It*. (St. Martins Griffin, 2003).

Murphy, Audie. *To Hell and Back*. (Holt, 2002). (Originally published in 1949)

**Websites:**

Learn more about Audie Murphy on Bio.com

[www.biography.com/articles/Audie-Murphy-9418662](http://www.biography.com/articles/Audie-Murphy-9418662)

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