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Level 5 – 9th February 2026

Hero boy swims for four hours to save his family

FREE online quizzes, mp3 listening and more for this lesson here:

<https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2602/260209-hero-swimmer-5.html>

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Please try Levels 4 and 6. They are (a little) harder.

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THE READING

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2602/260209-hero-swimmer-5.html>

A boy was hailed a hero after an epic swim to save his family. Austin Appelbee, 13, and his family were on holiday in Australia. They were kayaking and paddleboarding in shallow water when the wind pushed them offshore. They ended up four kilometres away from land. The daylight was fading. Austin decided to kayak to shore to get help. However, the waves had damaged his kayak and it flipped over. He said he then lost an oar and knew he was in trouble. He said he had no alternative but to swim to land to raise the alarm. He swam through shark-frequented waters.

Austin got to the beach and phoned for help. This sparked a rescue operation. Coastguards found the boy's mother and two younger sisters. The boy said: "I hit the bottom of the beach and I just collapsed, and then, after that, I had to sprint two kilometres to get to the phone." Rescuers called him "superhuman". One rescuer said Austin's actions could not "be praised highly enough". He said Austin's "determination and courage ultimately saved the lives of his mother and siblings". Austin's mother Joanne, 47, said the experience was "an absolute nightmare".

Sources: <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/world/teen-13-makes-harrowing-swim-through-shark-frequented-waters-to-save-family-swept-out-to-sea/YS5HBJ2Y2BFP3G44WGQ7Z67BPM/>
<https://www.nbcnews.com/world/australia/australia-perth-family-stranded-sea-teenager-swims-rcna257203>
<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cly3ezj3rg3o>

PHRASE MATCHING

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2602/260209-hero-swimmer-5.html>

PARAGRAPH ONE:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. A boy was hailed a hero | a. he was in trouble |
| 2. paddleboarding | b. frequented waters |
| 3. The daylight | c. in shallow water |
| 4. waves had damaged his kayak and | d. after an epic swim |
| 5. he then lost an oar and knew | e. was fading |
| 6. he had no alternative | f. alarm |
| 7. raise the | g. it flipped over |
| 8. He swam through shark- | h. but to swim to land |

PARAGRAPH TWO:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Austin got to the beach | a. courage |
| 2. This sparked a rescue | b. the boy's mother |
| 3. Coastguards found | c. "superhuman" |
| 4. I just | d. an absolute nightmare |
| 5. Rescuers called him | e. and phoned for help |
| 6. Austin's actions could not be | f. collapsed |
| 7. Austin's determination and | g. operation |
| 8. the experience was | h. praised highly enough |

LISTEN AND FILL IN THE GAPS

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2602/260209-hero-swimmer-5.html>

A boy was hailed a hero after an (1) _____ save his family. Austin Appelbee, 13, and his family were on holiday in Australia. (2) _____ and paddleboarding in shallow water when the wind (3) _____. They ended up four kilometres away from land. The daylight was fading. Austin decided to kayak to shore to get help. However, the waves had damaged his kayak and (4) _____. He said he then (5) _____ and knew he was in trouble. He said he had no alternative but to swim to land to raise the alarm. He swam through (6) _____.

Austin got to the beach and phoned for help. This (7) _____ operation. Coastguards found the boy's mother and (8) _____. The boy said: "I hit the bottom of the beach and (9) _____, and then, after that, I had (10) _____ kilometres to get to the phone." Rescuers called him "superhuman". One rescuer said Austin's actions could not "be praised highly enough". He said Austin's "determination and (11) _____ the lives of his mother and siblings". Austin's mother Joanne, 47, said the experience was "(12) _____".

PUT A SLASH (/) WHERE THE SPACES ARE

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2602/260209-hero-swimmer-5.html>

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HEROES SURVEY

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2602/260209-hero-swimmer-4.html>

Write five GOOD questions about heroes in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.
When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1 _____	STUDENT 2 _____	STUDENT 3 _____
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

WRITE QUESTIONS & ASK YOUR PARTNER(S)

Student A: Do not show these to your speaking partner(s).

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____
- d) _____
- e) _____
- f) _____

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WRITE QUESTIONS & ASK YOUR PARTNER(S)

Student B: Do not show these to your speaking partner(s).

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____
- d) _____
- e) _____
- f) _____

WRITING

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2602/260209-hero-swimmer-5.html>

Write about **heroes** for 10 minutes. Read and talk about your partner's paper.

[illegible]