**Read the Following Excerpt and Answer the Questions at the End**

When I think of a hero I think of someone who has made it on their own, someone who stands up for what they believe in, someone who made a significant change when one was needed. Someone like Coco Chanel. Coco Chanel completely redesigned the way women dressed during the 20th Century. She took her dreams and turned them into reality on her own, and liberated women from their common stereotypical uniform.

Gabrielle Chanel, as she was known as before she became a leading lady in the fashion industry, was born in France in 1883 and grew up in an orphanage. Life wasn't easy for her, but she followed her dreams of becoming a clothing designer. "She couldn't afford the fashionable clothes of the period--so she rejected them and made her own" (Time magazine). She opened her first, and now legendary, shop at 31 rue Cambon just outside Paris France in partnership with her uncle. Gabrielle Chanel saved up money for starting the store by performing at the music hall. The store displayed men's pullover sweaters, sailor jackets, and straight skirts which caught the attention of everyone who walked past the window.

Back in the 1920's women dressed conservatively and were still thought to be less then men. It was Coco Chanel who took her wild ideas of fashion and ran with them. Her first designer item to be publicly known for was her little black dress. She designed this dress using a jersey fabric--which was, for its time, stunning. She used pearls, jewels, and lace to turn an ordinary item of clothing into an extraordinary piece of art. Gabrielle Chanel was later critically acclaimed for her women's business suits, which turned the fashion industry upside down. She had done something no one else had ever dared to try--to turn clothing designed for men and making it a unisex fashion. Her emotions, thoughts, and expressions were all displayed in her clothing. She didn't care about what people thought or if her styles would be accepted, and it showed in her innovative and spontaneous designs...

She showed the world her passion for fashion and wasn't afraid of failing. She showed women that they had freedom of expression through their clothes and they didn't need to be limited to the way others thought they should look, that the only limit that exists is the one that lay within you. This is why Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel is my hero.

**Part II**

1. What did Coco Chanel do?

2. How did she help women?

3. When was she born? Where did she grow up?

4. What was your childhood like?

5. Why did she reject the fashions of her time?

6. What things do you reject in life?

7. What was her first famous designer item?

8. What kind of fashion did she create?

9. What did she display in her clothes?

10. What do you like to display in your clothes?

11. What kinds of fashion do you like? Why?

12. If you were to become a fashion designer what kinds of clothes would you make? Why?

13. How is fashion at your school and fashion in your family similar and different?

14. What do you think are some qualities of a good fashion designer?