

SUPER WHO? SUPER YOU!

WEEK ONE

DAY ONE: JUST WHAT IS HEROISM?

What makes some people heroes? What makes other people villains?

What do students think?

The teacher will draw two large overlapping circles (a Venn diagram) on the chalkboard or overhead projector and labels one circle “hero” and the other “villain.” Have students orally share adjectives that fit under hero or villain (Focus students' commentary on character traits and qualities.) In the overlapping area, students can list common characteristics using plural forms of adjectives. Note: You may find that you run out of room rather quickly in the “How are they alike?” category. This should help begin to illustrate for students that the distinction between “good” and “evil” is not always clear, and that, surprisingly, heroes and villains are often as much or more alike than they are different. (In fact, generally what distinguishes them involves an irreversible choice at a crucial turning point in their history, rather than something inherent: a significant moment arrives wherein they are forced to make a decision to help, harm, or neglect, and they are forever changed by their actions—which we’ll explore more later in the ‘Hero’s Journey’ video.)

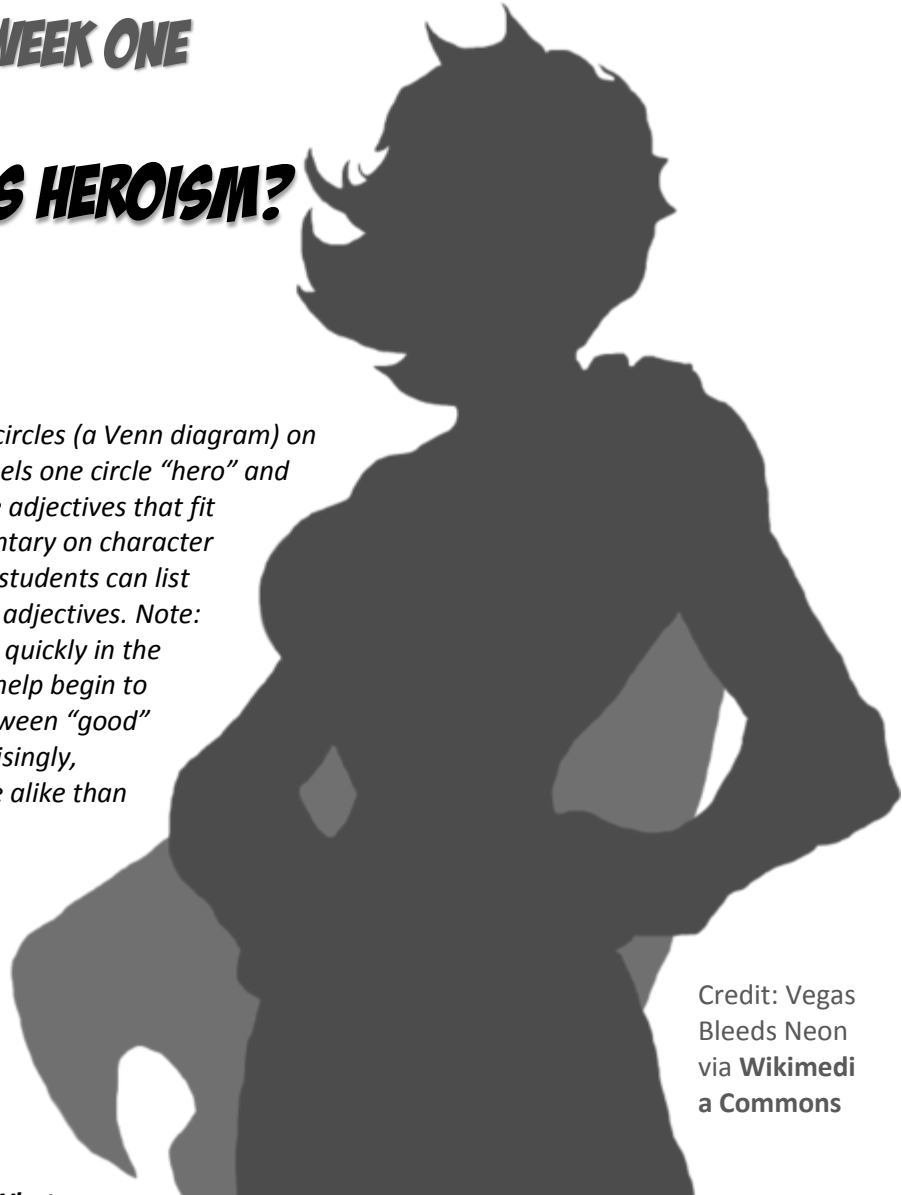
Do students have any heroes in their lives? What

makes them heroic? Does a hero have to be public? Someone who has made an impact on their lives. For instance, the first person in their families to go to college. Heroism has many faces...

Consider local heroes -- police and fire come to mind immediately, but what about the people who run local shelters, food pantries, or soup kitchens? What about teachers in their school? **Have students share who their hero is and how their hero aligns to the characteristics of a hero they have defined. Ask each student to recall a heroic trait he or she admires in his or her real-life hero. Have students think about how they might begin to behave in these same ways.**

Are there any ‘villains’ in their lives? What makes them a villain?

When they watch movies or read stories who do they remember the most—the hero, or the villain? Why?



Credit: Vegas Bleeds Neon via [Wikimedia Commons](#)

According to the American Film Institute (AFI) a "hero" was defined as a character(s) who prevails in extreme circumstances and dramatizes a sense of morality, courage, and purpose. Though they may be ambiguous or flawed, they often sacrifice themselves to show humanity at its best.

By the AFI, a "villain" was defined as a character(s) whose wickedness of mind, selfishness of character and will to power are sometimes masked by beauty and nobility, while others may rage unmasked. They can be horribly evil or grandiosely funny, but are ultimately tragic.

World renowned psychologist Philip Zimbardo offers a definition of [heroism](#) as an activity with several parts.

"First, it's performed in service to others in need—whether that's a person, group, or community—or in defense of certain ideals. Second, it's engaged in voluntarily, even in military contexts, as heroism remains an act that goes beyond something required by military duty. Third, a heroic act is one performed with recognition of possible risks and costs, be they to one's physical health or personal reputation, in which the actor is willing to accept anticipated sacrifice. (Must it be someone who consciously decides to take a stand regardless of the sacrifice required? What about those that never know they are heroes or the results of their actions? What do students think?) Finally, it is performed without external gain anticipated at the time of the act.

Simply put, then, the key to heroism is a concern for other people in need—a concern to defend a moral cause, knowing there is a personal risk, done without expectation of reward."

What trials unite not only Harry Potter or Frodo Baggins but many of literature's most interesting heroes, heroines, and super...? And what do ordinary people have in common with these literary heroes? In his TEDeD talk "What makes a hero?" Matthew Winkler takes us step-by-step through the crucial events that make or break a hero. And a pattern we should look for in every hero's tale, and our own lives. Watch [here](#)



What are some other stories (whether film or written form) that students can think of that fit Joseph Campbell's "Monomyth" structure? Ex. Finding Nemo, The Incredibles (which is interesting since he started out a 'hero'), Eragon, Lord of the Rings, the Redwall series, Mulan, Percy Jackson & the Olympians, Kung Fu Panda, Star Wars, Enders Game, Watership Down, Madeleine L'Engle's "A Wrinkle in Time," and so many more. Even in commercials you can find the Hero's Journey especially ones about the National Guard and how they have their call to action.

Another key principle of heroism: Heroes are most effective not alone but in a network. By working with others heroes have more resources to work with. **What else might be good about having a network?**

Do students agree that there's not always a clear line between good and evil? Can the line be permeable; meaning that people can cross back and forth between it? Can an individual act villainously towards some, but heroically towards others? In stories, movies, and in real life characters can be very complex. Characters who are simply good or evil are hard to find.

Considering the definitions of heroes and villains we've explored in the quotes and the video return to the students' brainstormed lists/diagrams and ask students to reflect on the items that they have included and make any additions or revisions. Have the students come up with their own group definition of heroism.

A first step in being a hero is being willing to be one! Perhaps a good place to start is to take the "hero pledge," a public declaration that says you're willing to be a hero in waiting. It's a pledge "to act when confronted with a situation where I feel something is wrong," "to develop my heroic abilities," and "to believe in the heroic capacities within myself and others, so I can build and refine them."

OPEN TO INTERPRETATION

Note: Character analysis represents one of the most common assignments given in literature classes. A successful character analysis demands that students infer abstract traits and values from literal details contained in a text.

Teacher instructions: With younger students you can read the following passages, or excerpts from the passages, to the class and work as a group to analyze the characters and fill out the sheet. For older students you can divide them into groups and assign each group one or more of the 'case studies,' and it's okay if multiple groups have the same case study. Groups will work to analyze the character, fill in their worksheets, and come to their determination. They will then share their decision with the group and give their reasons why they came to that conclusion. See if any other groups agree or disagree or have other reasons for their choices even if they agree.

In most stories (whether in 'real-life' or in a story or movie), some of the characters are given positive, heroic portrayals. Others have negative, villainous portrayals. Still other may begin with negative qualities and gradually become more and more positive. The author gives us details about characters' physical appearance, actions, speech, behavior, and interaction with others that help us figure out who is "good" and who is "bad."

People in China still venerate a leader named Mao Tze Tung. Some people in Russia still revere a leader named Stalin. In each of these cases, many other people today regard these men as having done immense harm to the countries they ruled. These are extreme cases. However, some heroes listed in were - and are - controversial figures.

One way to see if a person is a hero or a villain (in a story, movie, or even real life) is to look at the 'Three Elements of Characterization.'

- Physical appearance: What does the character look like?
- Actions, speech, and behavior: What does the character do? How does the character behave? What does the character say?
- Interactions with others: How other characters in the story react to this character

CASE STUDY 1: JONATHAN BARTHEL OF LAKE NORDEN, SOUTH DAKOTA

A 21 year-old deputy sheriff, Jonathan Barthel was asleep at his home when he learned that a father and son were struggling to reach the shore of frigid Lake Poinsett after an accident to their canoe. Barthel immediately ran the 2,000 feet to the lake in his bare feet and, wearing only gym shorts, plunged into the 40 degree water and swam to the canoe. Lifting the 9 year-old son from his precarious perch on top

of the overturned craft, Barthel swam back to the shore with the boy and then returned to help the father to safety. All three recovered from the ordeal.

IS HE A HERO OR A VILLAIN? WHY?

CASE STUDY 2: ELIZABETH BLACKWELL

Elizabeth Blackwell said she turned to medicine after a close friend who was dying suggested she would have been spared her worst suffering if her physician had been a woman. Though it's hard to imagine now, when Elizabeth Blackwell decided to study medicine, there wasn't a medical school in the country who would accept a woman student. After being rejected from every college she applied to, she applied to the Geneva Medical College in New York. The administrators there left the decision up to the students. Fortunately for Elizabeth, the students thought it was a practical joke, and approved her admission.

When the students and townspeople realized she was serious, they were horrified that a woman would want to study for a medical degree. She had few friends and was treated as an outcast. In the beginning, she was even kept from classroom medical demonstrations, as they were deemed inappropriate for a woman.

Elizabeth did not succumb to the ridicule and doubt. "The idea of winning a doctor's degree gradually assumed the aspect of a great moral struggle, and the moral fight possessed much attraction for me," she said.

She graduated first in her class in 1849, becoming the first woman to graduate from medical school, and the first woman doctor of medicine in the United States.

IS SHE A HERO OR A VILLAIN? WHY?

CASE STUDY 3: IRENA SENDLER

A *Los Angeles Times* obituary for Irena described how the Polish social worker passed herself off as a nurse to sneak supplies and aid into (and children out of) the Warsaw Ghetto, and the punishment she endured when she was finally caught by the Nazis:

She studied at Warsaw University and was a social worker in Warsaw when the German occupation of Poland began in 1939. In 1940, after the Nazis herded Jews into the ghetto and built a wall separating it from the rest of the city, disease, especially typhoid, ran rampant. Social workers were not allowed inside the ghetto, but Sendler, imagining "the horror of life behind the walls," obtained fake identification and passed herself off as a nurse, allowed to bring in food, clothes and medicine.

By 1942, when the deadly intentions of the Nazis had become clear, Sendler joined a Polish underground organization, Zegota. She recruited 10 close friends — a group that would eventually grow to 25, all but one of them women — and began rescuing Jewish children.

She and her friends smuggled the children out in boxes, suitcases, sacks and coffins, sedating babies to quiet their cries. Some were spirited away through a network of basements and secret passages. Operations were timed to the second. One of Sendler's children told of waiting by a gate in darkness as a German soldier patrolled nearby. When the soldier passed, the boy counted to 30, then made a mad dash to the middle of the street, where a manhole cover

opened and he was taken down into the sewers and eventually to safety.

Most of the children who left with Sendler's group were taken into Roman Catholic convents, orphanages and homes and given non-Jewish aliases. Sendler recorded their true names on thin rolls of paper in the hope that she could reunite them with their families later. She preserved the precious scraps in jars and buried them in a friend's garden.

In 1943, she was captured by the Nazis and tortured but refused to tell her captors who her co-conspirators were or where the bottles were buried. She also resisted in other ways. According to Felt, when Sendler worked in the prison laundry, she and her co-workers made holes in the German soldiers' underwear. When the officers discovered what they had done, they lined up all the women and shot every other one. It was just one of many close calls for Sendler.

During one particularly brutal torture session, her captors broke her feet and legs, and she passed out. When she awoke, a Gestapo officer told her he had accepted a bribe from her comrades in the resistance to help her escape. The officer added her name to a list of executed prisoners. Sendler went into hiding but continued her rescue efforts.

Felt said that Sendler had begun her rescue operation before she joined the organized resistance and helped a number of adults escape, including the man she later married. "We think she saved about 500 people before she joined Zegota," Felt said, which would mean that Sendler ultimately helped rescue about 3,000 Polish Jews.

When the war ended, Sendler unearthed the jars and began trying to return the children to their families. For the vast majority, there was no family left. Many of the children were adopted by Polish families; others were sent to Israel.

IS SHE A HERO OR A VILLAIN? WHY?

CASE STUDY 4: JOSEPH STALIN

When Joseph Stalin came to power in the mid-1920s, the Soviet Union was a vast but under-developed country, mostly agricultural with little industry. Russians had been through World War 1, two revolutions in 1917, civil war and famine. These events had left their impact on the state of the economy. He knew he had to modernize Russia quickly at all costs and build huge armies. Moreover he had to crush all hint of opposition--this was not just in his own interest but for the sake of national survival.

From 1928 Stalin began a state-run program of rapid industrialization. Factories were built, transport networks developed and workers encouraged, even forced, to work harder. Stalin intended to turn the economy around and make the USSR competitive with capitalist countries. To bring about this huge change, he acted ruthlessly. By producing far less consumer goods, e.g. clothes and food, and far more capital goods, e.g. heavy machinery, Stalin was able to steadily industrialize Russia. The economic improvements were immense. Objective estimates say that the annual economic growth during the rule of Stalin was 14%. However, lack of food and clothing are estimated to have killed roughly 10 million Russian peasants.

Whether as a result of his direct orders or as a result of these and other policies, it is possible that 20 million people died during Stalin's reign. He was hated and feared as a dictator. He was also adored. During his lifetime he was glorified in newspapers and films, cities and streets were named after him,

and statues of him were put up around the USSR. He was seen as the man who turned an undeveloped and divided nation into an industrial super-power.

The USSR became strong enough to help defeat Germany during World War 2 and after the war was one of the most powerful nations in the world. Stalin's policy of industrialization helped achieve this, but at the cost of many Russian lives.

--ALTERNATE DESCRIPTION—JOSEPH STALIN

“Stalin which means "Man of Steel" is one of the most controversial people to live in history. He is viewed as a man who created a world super power, the strongest army of all time (directly after WWII), and rid the world of the Nazis when his country captured Berlin. He is also known as a tyrant who forced labor on his people and forced people into a 5 year plan to modernize Russia, killing millions upon millions from famine. Stalin was extremely paranoid and many people were killed by him for no reason, people would clap in his speeches and would be afraid to stop because Stalin may find it insulting.

Everything this man did had a good side to it and a bad side to it. Had he not modernized the Soviet Union at the pace he did, the country would've fell victim quickly to the Nazis. You could argue that he killed 20 million, to save 280 million. Had this man not modernized the Soviet Union the way he did, then the Nazis *could* have been victorious in the Second World War. He made his country into a powerful one that would be known forever as a super power. He created a very strong economy. His country would have the largest and best land force army in all of world History, Britain's plan to possibly rid the world of Bolshevism was dubbed "Operation Unthinkable". Stalin is still viewed by many people as hero, the man of steel.

On the other side, his five year plan was horrendous to the people at the time of the Soviet Union. He created conformity via fear, families were destroyed, people were sent to gulags (work camps that malnourished people and over-worked them) and he put all the farmers in collectives (thus seizing their land). He had Totalitarian control, and any word against him would result in the death of the individual. His policies included extreme censorship, on a level this world had never known.” Posted by [akatsukiOwn3d](#)

IS HE A HERO OR A VILLAIN? WHY?

ARE THEY A HERO OR A VILLAIN?

WE STUDY—YOU DECIDE

AS WE READ & STUDY THE HERO 'CASE STUDY FILES' LISTEN AND LOOK FOR DETAILS ABOUT CHARACTERS' PHYSICAL APPEARANCE, ACTIONS, SPEECH, BEHAVIOR, AND INTERACTION WITH OTHERS THAT HELP US FIGURE OUT WHO IS "GOOD" AND WHO IS "BAD."

Case Study: _____

What was the problem?

What did the person want?

What does the person do? / How does the person behave? (Help others? Hurt others? Both?)

Did the problem get better? Did the person create any new problems?

Is the person a hero or a villain? (Circle your choice)

Hero

Villain

Why?

Case Study: _____

What was the problem?

What did the person want?

What does the person do? / How does the person behave? (Help others? Hurt others? Both?)

Did the problem get better? Did the person create any new problems?

Is the person a hero or a villain? (Circle your choice)

Hero

Villain

Why?

DAY ONE K-8 STANDARD ALIGNMENT

K

- RL.K.1. With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.
- RL.K.9. With prompting and support, compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters.

These standards will be met and reinforced as students study the hero's journey and then listen to case studies, reiterate what they heard in their own words, and work to practice analyzing characters, comparing and contrasting the characters and stories, and determining if the person/people they are talking about is a hero or a villain in their opinion.

1

- RL.1.3. Describe characters, settings, and major events in/from a story, using key details.
- RL.1.7. Use illustrations and/or details in a story to describe its characters.

These standards will be met and reinforced as students study the hero's journey and then listen to case studies, reiterate what they heard in their own words, and work to practice analyzing characters, comparing and contrasting the characters and stories, and determining if the person/people they are talking about is a hero or a villain in their opinion. Students will be asked to give specific details from the stories that helped them reach their conclusion.

2

- RL.2.3. Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.
- RL.2.1. Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.

These standards will be met and reinforced as students study the hero's journey and then listen to case studies, reiterate what they heard in their own words (what happened, what was the problem, etc.), and work to practice analyzing characters, comparing and contrasting the characters and stories, and determining if the person/people they are talking about is a hero or a villain in their opinion. Students will be asked to give specific details from the stories that helped them reach their conclusion.

3

- RL.3.3. Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.
- RL.3.6. Distinguish their own point of view from that of the narrator or those of the characters.

These standards will be met and reinforced as students study the hero's journey and then listen to case studies, reiterate what they heard in their own words (what happened, what was the problem, etc.), and work to practice analyzing the (real-life) characters, comparing and contrasting the characters and the different stories, and determining if the person/people they are talking about is a hero or a villain in their opinion and what they think the narrator's opinion was (and if they agree with the narrator or not.) Students will be asked to give specific details from the stories that helped them reach their conclusion.

4

- RL.4.3. Describe in depth a character in/from a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).
- W.4.9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis of a character, drawing on specific details in the text [e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions]

These standards will be met and reinforced as students study the hero's journey and then listen to case studies, reiterate what they heard in their own words (what happened, what was the problem, etc.), and work to practice analyzing the (real-life) characters, comparing and contrasting the characters and the different stories, and determining if the person/people they are talking about is a hero or a villain in their opinion. Students will be asked to give specific details from the stories that helped them reach their conclusion, ex. Was it something the character did, said, their reasonings, etc. that led the student to reach their conclusion.

5

- RL.5.3. Compare and contrast two or more characters (e.g. in stories or dramas), drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).
- W.5.9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis of characters, ex. Compare and contrast two or more characters drawing on specific details in the text(s) [e.g., how characters interact].

These standards will be met and reinforced as students study the hero's journey and then listen to case studies, reiterate what they heard in their own words (what happened, what was the problem, etc.), and work to practice analyzing the (real-life) characters, comparing and contrasting the characters and the different stories, and determining if the person/people they are talking about is a hero or a villain in their opinion (and if they agree with the narrator or not.) Students will be asked to give specific details from the stories that helped them reach their conclusion, ex. Was it something the character did, said, their reasonings, etc. that led the student to reach their conclusion.

6

- RL.6.1. Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences (a conclusion reached on the basis of evidence and reasoning) drawn from the text.
- W.6.1 b) Support claim(s) with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
- RI.6.3. Analyze in detail how a key individual is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated in a text.

These standards will be met and reinforced as students study the hero's journey and then listen to case studies, reiterate what they heard in their own words (what happened, what was the problem, etc.), and work to practice analyzing the (real-life) characters, comparing and contrasting the characters and the different stories, and determining if the person/people they are talking about is a hero or a villain in their opinion. They'll look to see if they think the way the character was presented was biased in any way, if the narrator had a spoken or unspoken opinion (and if they agree with the narrator or not.) Students will be asked to give specific details from the stories that helped them reach their conclusion, ex. Was it something the character did, said, their reasonings behind their actions, etc. that led the student to reach their conclusion.

7

- RI.7.3. Analyze the interactions between individuals, events, and ideas in a text (e.g., how ideas influence individuals or events, or how individuals influence ideas or events).
- W.7.9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis.
- RI.7.6.a) Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text.

These standards will be met and reinforced as students study the hero's journey and then listen to case studies, reiterate what they heard in their own words (what happened, what was the problem, etc.), and work to practice analyzing the (real-life) characters, comparing and contrasting the characters and the different stories, and determining if the person/people they are talking about is a hero or a villain in their opinion.

We'll look to see if we can come to a conclusion about why each author wrote about their subject as well as looking to see if they think the way the character was presented was biased in any way, if the narrator had a spoken or unspoken opinion about the person (and if they agree with the narrator or not.) .) Students will be asked to give specific details from the stories that helped them reach their conclusion, ex. Was it something the character did, said, their reasonings behind their actions, etc. that led the student to reach their conclusion.

8

- RL.8.3. Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story reveal aspects of a character.
- W.8.9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis.
- RI.8.1. Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports the analysis, e.g. what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

These standards will be met and reinforced as students study the hero's journey and then listen to case studies, reiterate what they heard in their own words (what happened, what was the problem, etc.), and work to practice analyzing the (real-life) characters, comparing and contrasting the characters and the different stories, and determining if the person/people they are talking about is a hero or a villain in their opinion.

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DAY TWO: HERO'S JOURNEY HOME

HERO'S JOURNEY OBSTACLE COURSE!



“A hero is an ordinary individual who finds the strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles.”

On your mark, get set, hero! Obstacle course challenges are pure fun and energy, and they can be set up easily.

Have obstacle course materials ready (you can use whatever items you have on hand, ex. Cones, masking tape, boxes, and old pool noodles have infinite uses-- Stand colorful foam pool noodles in buckets weighted with sand (or soil or stones) and set up in a zigzag pattern for a 'slalom course') and divide students into groups. Then assign each group an area or section of the obstacle course/hero's journey to build.

They can do things like set up sections for running through Hula Hoops, tossing balls into targets, dribbling a ball through cones, crawling under a net, and more.

They can also come up with their own designs (safety being overseen and checked by teachers) for their fellow heroes (and themselves) to journey through by balancing, crawling, jumping, and more.

Then gather all your heroes at the starting line and send them through one at a time. The first obstacle should be easy, ex. the ladder run, kids scamper through the rungs of a "ladder" made of masking or blue painters tape laid out on the ground. Then build up the challenges from there! Kids race to complete journey and get back 'Home.'

Working with your group determine if you want to have teams competing for time or not. Some kids like the addition of a stopwatch to keep track of their course times. Other kids would rather just go through the course for fun. The great thing about obstacle courses is they are infinitely flexible.

At the end have students vote as a group what was the most challenging aspect of their heroes journey course!

Obstacle course ideas from [Martha Stewart](#):



Balloon Table-- Kids shimmy under a table hidden inside a ground-hugging cloud of balloons. Dangling from yarn taped to all sides of the table, the balloons wobble and bump as kids pass through.

To make this obstacle, use a hand pump (or some handy sets of lungs) to fill enough balloons to completely mask a table -- it took about 100 balloons to cover a 3-by-6-foot table. Tie yarn or string to each balloon and secure to the table -- on top, underside, and all four legs -- with heavy tape.

Balance Beam: Kids set a good pace and, using all the swagger they can muster, get across the two-by-four balance beam in no time. You can simply lay an 8-foot-long two-by-four on the grass. Or you can raise it on 6-by-6-by-12-inch blocks or other stable materials.



Newspaper Walk: Kids are handed three sheets of newspaper and must place one beneath every step they take. This is the perfect event to place at a tricky turn in the course.

Hoop Alley--Lay out eight plastic hoops in a straight line. Kids step into each hoop, lift it overhead, and drop it behind as they move forward. (Reset the row before the next person's turn.)

Crabwalk--Kids sit on the grass or floor, bend their knees, lean back, and lock their elbows, then "walk" as straight and fast as they can. This activity is great silly fun for the last 8 to 10 feet, when kids are rushing to the finish line.



A few more ideas:



Target practice/bean bag toss out of a cardboard box!



Feeling 'a-mazing'? Make a maze out of cardboard boxes!



HOME OR BUST!



Your adventurers have defeated a terrible enemy and claimed a magical prize that's desperately needed at 'Home', but now they must make the arduous journey back. Strange and deadly monsters know the adventurers are weak and in possession of a powerful item, and they will pursue them until all have been defeated.

Three individuals, or one third (or up to half) of the group of students are chosen as 'mischievous Treasure Goblins' and the rest of the

players are part of the returning group of 'Heroes.'

Designate one side of the space or a small section as 'Home' which is guarded by the Monsters. Have another section (off to the side) designated as the 'Goblins' Cave.'

Have three (or more) members of team of 'Heroes' pick up a part of the quest item (ex. 'gold coin') and hide it in one of their team member's hands, being careful not to show the 'Goblins' who has it.

On the command of "Homeward!," the Goblins try to catch the other players. Heroes who get caught, go to "the Goblins' Cave", where they turn into sad little creatures. They must then stand perfectly still, with their legs straddled, until one of the free Heroes "crawls" through their legs to free them from the cave.

The game ends when either all of the treasure is safely delivered 'Home' or all adventurers have been captured. Then the teams switch roles with the Goblins becoming the Heroes and vice versa.

DAY TWO K-8 STANDARD ALIGNMENT

K-2nd Grade Physical Education Standards

- 5.2.2 work on assigned tasks individually or with others in a productive manner
- 1.2.21 Demonstrate obedience to guidelines and behaviors for basic safety principles in physical education (implements, small and large equipment, environment)

*These standards will be met and reinforced through the physical challenge activities. All students will be instructed on the rules and safety procedures. Students will work together to craft obstacle course elements and to complete the activities correctly. Teams **will lose points** for unsportsmanlike conduct, disobeying the rules, non-participation, or other infractions.*

3rd-5th Grade Physical Education Standards

- 1.2.9 identify and apply safety principles in all activity situations
- 5.2.2 complete assigned tasks individually or with others in a productive manner

*These standards will be met and reinforced through the physical challenge activities. All students will be instructed on the rules and safety procedures. Students will work together to craft obstacle course elements and to complete the activities correctly. Teams **will lose points** for unsportsmanlike conduct, disobeying the rules, non-participation, or other infractions.*

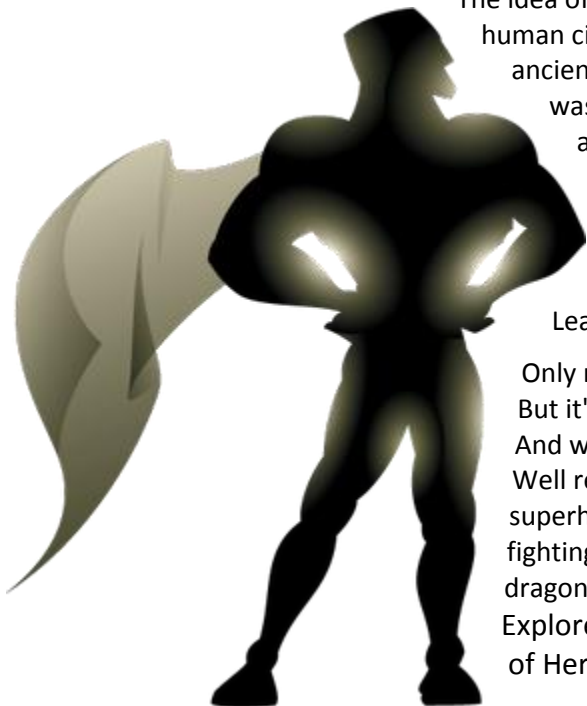
6th-8th Grade Physical Education Standards

- 5.2.2 Work cooperatively with a group to achieve group goals in competitive as well as cooperative settings
- 1.1.4 demonstrate basic tumbling, running, and balance skills

*These standards will be met and reinforced through the physical challenge activities. All students will be instructed on the rules and safety procedures. Students will work together to craft obstacle course elements and to complete the activities correctly. Teams **will lose points** for unsportsmanlike conduct, disobeying the rules, non-participation, or other infractions.*

DAY THREE: WHAT'S A **SUPERHERO**?

The idea of superheroes is prehistoric. It goes back to before the dawn of human civilization. Comic books and our superheroes are linked to the ancient gods and the ancient heroes of mythology and history. Superman was certainly not the first fictional character to exhibit powers. Long ago, ancient civilizations told stories about gods and goddesses who exhibited “superpowers.” For example, Zeus from Greek mythology liked to toss the occasional thunderbolt at his enemies. He also resided in a palace on Mount Olympus with the other deities, in what could rightly be called a predecessor to the Justice League’s Watchtower or the Avengers Mansion.



Only now they wear spandex and capes. No more skins and heavy armor. But it's the same thing. And what are they doing? Well really, look at the superheroes. They're fighting the demons and dragons of their day. Explore a bit more: [A Host of Heroes](#)



What can some of literature’s most famous heroes teach us? From the epic hero (like Beowulf) to the tragic hero (like Oedipus), each has something distinctive to share. In her TEDed talk “A host of heroes,” April Gudenrath describes the many faces of the fictional hero -- and shows how they can inspire everyday people. Watch [here](#)

Ask students to name some of their favorite superheroes and super-villains from comic books or movies, and list their suggestions on the board or chart paper.

AGAINST THE CLOCK!

How Quickly Can You Identify Superheroes & Villains?

Divide the students into teams. Start by explaining to your students that you will be playing a guessing game together. Let them know that you will be giving three clues (to the team whose turn it is) to try to guess who you are describing.

Start with the [Superhero Dictionary](#) or the [Superhero Database](#) (open to the [Characters page](#).) Looking at the definitions on the Dictionary and/or the images/descriptions/character histories/nicknames on the Database, read a quick blurb or clue with/to students about some superheroes they are likely to be familiar with, such as:

- Superman (‘born on Krypton but grew up on a farm,’ writes for the Daily Planet, “it’s a bird, it’s a plane, it’s...” ‘Man of Steel’),
- Wonder Woman (former Goddess of Truth, the daughter of Queen Hippolyta, also known as the Amazing Amazon, carries the lasso of truth’),

- Batman (billionaire, orphaned when young, loves to use an arsenal of high-tech gadgets, also called the ‘Caped Crusader’),
- Spider-Man (was bitten by a radioactive spider),
- The Hulk (‘has a temper problem.’ ‘changes colors when he’s angry’)
- or Elastigirl from *The Incredibles*

As well as ones they may not be as familiar with, ex. Mighty Mouse, Flash Gordon, Doc Savage, Hal Jordan--the first Green Lantern from Earth.

Teams must try to identify the hero after each clue, giving them up to three tries.

SCORING

If they correctly identify the character after only one clue, they get 15 points. If they need two clues before they can identify the character, they score 10 points. If they use all three clues before they identify the character then they get 5 points. If they can’t identify the character after all three clues the other team gets a chance to identify the character, and if they guess correctly they get 5 points. **You may wish to make the clues go from hardest to easiest.*

Ask students to talk about what they know about the characters generally (they have super powers, fight evil, wear costumes, live in cities, and so forth).

The goal is to have students establish a basic understanding of “super-characters” before analyzing them more closely. Not all students will necessarily be familiar with the subjects or concepts, but that’s okay; the class discussion will provide the context and information they’ll need.

From the same [Characters page of the Superhero Database](#), give the students clues about two or three super-villains. Ask the students what descriptive or physical clues let them (readers/viewers in general) know who is a hero and who is a villain, and have them discuss why. *The goal here is to build on what we’ve already discussed and help them identify subtle details of characterization that make heroes and villains recognizable to us automatically. In this way, students begin to distinguish sub textual clues in what we read and see that feed into our perceptions.*

Have the class vote for one superhero and one super-villain to talk about in more depth (and show side-by-side.) Now make two new lists—one for each super-character—and have the students brainstorm each character’s distinctive qualities. Encourage students to name everything they can think of that applies. Some things to consider are (write these on the board or chart paper for students to refer to):

- Special powers—such as superhuman abilities, mutations, or scientific knowledge.
- Appearance—are they colorful, funny, serious, drab, dark, or menacing?
- Background—where did they come from, and did they go through a shocking experience that made them who they are?
- Public or “secret” identity—what is their social life like, do they have regular jobs, family, friends?
- Special equipment—such as tools, weapons, or vehicles.
- Place of residence—rural or urban, apartment or house, secret lair or in plain sight.

IS ONE OF THESE THINGS A LOT LIKE THE OTHER?

SUPERHEROES & VILLAINS

SIDE-BY-SIDE COMPARISON

NAME:		NAME:	
SPECIAL POWERS		SPECIAL POWERS	
APPEARANCE		APPEARANCE	
BACKGROUND		BACKGROUND	
PUBLIC OR 'SECRET' IDENTITY		PUBLIC OR 'SECRET' IDENTITY	
SPECIAL TOOLS		SPECIAL TOOLS	
WHERE THEY LIVE		WHERE THEY LIVE	

IS ONE OF THESE THINGS A LOT LIKE THE OTHER?

SUPERHEROES & VILLAINS

SIDE-BY-SIDE COMPARISON

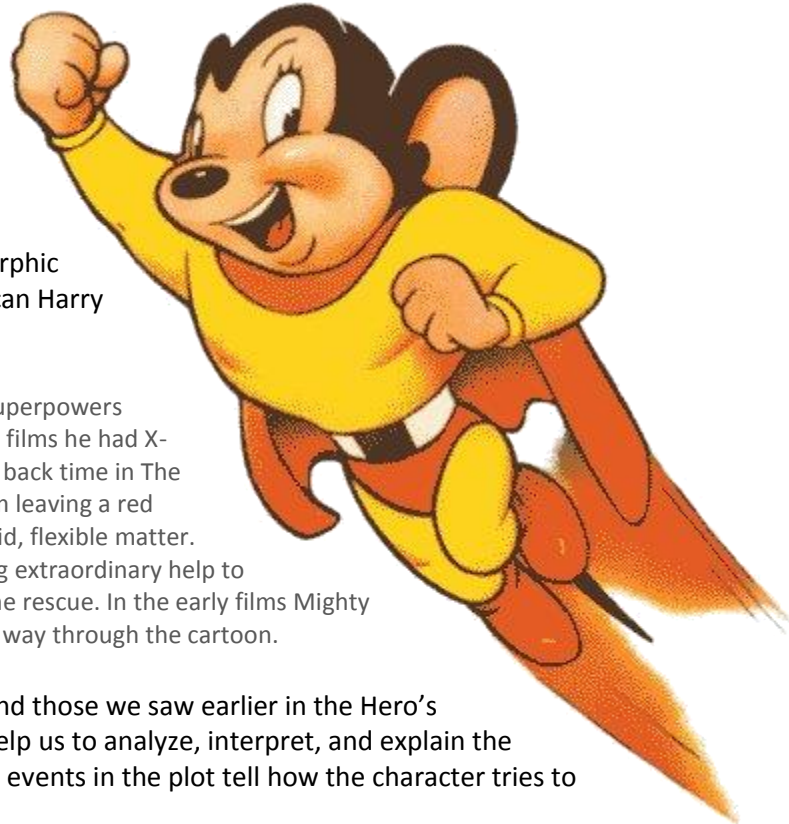
NAME:		NAME:	
SPECIAL POWERS		SPECIAL POWERS	
APPEARANCE		APPEARANCE	
BACKGROUND		BACKGROUND	
PUBLIC OR 'SECRET' IDENTITY		PUBLIC OR 'SECRET' IDENTITY	
SPECIAL TOOLS		SPECIAL TOOLS	
WHERE THEY LIVE		WHERE THEY LIVE	

HEROES IN ACTION!

"HERE I COME TO SAVE THE DAY!"

Hero: **Mighty Mouse** (originally called Super Mouse).
Real Name: Mike Mouse. Identity/Class: Anthropomorphic rodent mutate. Occupation: Superhero. Enemies: Oilcan Harry (Cat)

Note: Created as a parody of Superman, Mighty Mouse's superpowers included flight, super strength, and invulnerability. In some films he had X-ray vision and used psychokinesis. He was also able to turn back time in *The Johnstown Flood* and *Krakatoa*. Other cartoons showed him leaving a red contrail during flight that he manipulated like a band of solid, flexible matter. The early formula of each story consisted of a crisis needing extraordinary help to resolve. At the decisive moment, Mighty Mouse came to the rescue. In the early films Mighty Mouse would not appear until nearly three quarters of the way through the cartoon.



Story lines usually follow patterns like those below (and those we saw earlier in the Hero's Journey video). Identifying essential plot points will help us to analyze, interpret, and explain the story. In many stories, a character has a problem. The events in the plot tell how the character tries to solve the problem.

- Main Problem (Conflict)*: The plot hinges on some major problem, often a conflict between characters or an obstacle that must be overcome.
- Climax*: The high point of the action, when the conflict or problem could either be resolved or cause a character's downfall.
- Resolution*: The conflict or problem is solved and normalcy or a new order is restored.

When you read or watch, ask yourself: What problem does the character need to solve? If you know what the problem is, you can focus on how the character tries to solve the problem. When we're watching a story unfold we want to identify the following:

- Identify the characters (Describe the main characters)
- Define the problem (What is the problem?)
- Analyze the problem (Why is the problem occurring?)
- Did they develop a plan (What are they going to do to solve the problem?)
- How did they implement the plan (Carry out the intervention?)
- Evaluate (Did the plan work?)

Ask: Why is it important to pay attention to the plot in a problem-solution story? (The plot tells how the problem is solved.)

Let's test it out with Mighty Mouse! Watch an episode from [6 Vintage 'Mighty Mouse' Cartoons \(1942- 1943\) by "TerryToons"](#) Follow our problem solving formula, fill out the included worksheet, and see what answers we get. Does everyone agree on their answers?

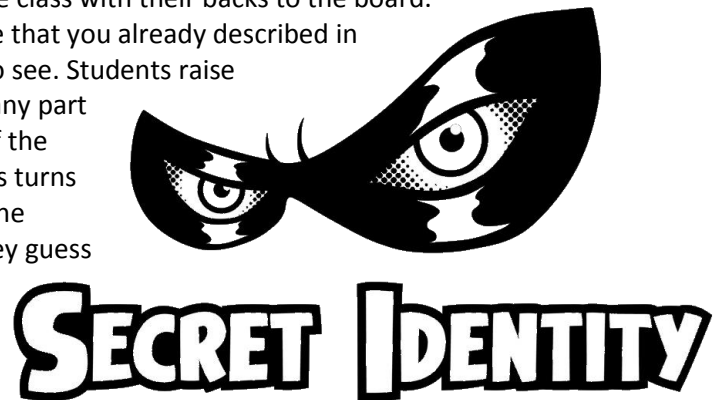
And then see if it still works for our hero Flash Gordon [Flash Gordon is a 1936 science fiction film serial. Told in 13 installments, it was the first screen adventure for the comic-strip character Flash Gordon, and tells the story of his first visit to the planet Mongo and his encounter with the evil Emperor Ming the Merciless. In 1996, Flash Gordon was selected for preservation in the United States National Film Registry by the Library of Congress as being "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant".]

What problems does he encounter in Flash Gordon 1. [The Planet of Peril \(1936\)](#)—or another episode? And how does he resolve them? Follow our problem solving formula, fill out the included worksheet, and see what answers we get. Does everyone agree on their answers?



EXTENSION: SECRET IDENTITY

Two students come to the front of the room and face the class with their backs to the board. Put a Superhero or Super Villain name on the board (one that you already described in the previous game/discussion) for the rest of the class to see. Students raise their hands to give a **one word clue** that does not have any part of the vocab word in it. (Ex: can't say "super" or "man" if the vocab word is 'Superman'). Each of the two players takes turns calling on a classmate to give them the one word clue. The student may guess the word after the clue is given. If they guess it right, they get to stay up. The student who gave the last clue takes the place of the player who did not guess the word.



PROBLEMATIC!

AS WE WATCH OR LISTEN TO THE STORY ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

- Who are the characters? (Describe them)

 - Define the problem (What is the problem?)

 - Analyze the problem (Why is the problem occurring?)

 - Did they develop a plan (What are they going to do to solve the problem?)

 - How did they implement the plan?

 - Evaluate (Did the plan work? Why or why not?)
-

AS WE WATCH OR LISTEN TO THE (NEXT) STORY ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

- Who are the characters? (Describe them)

 - Define the problem (What is the problem?)

 - Analyze the problem (Why is the problem occurring?)

 - Did they develop a plan (What are they going to do to solve the problem?)

 - How did they implement the plan?

 - Evaluate (Did the plan work? Why or why not?)
-

COMPARE THE STORIES.

Were they similar in any way? *Why or why not? If they were, how?*

Were the problems or solutions similar in any way? *Why or why not? If they were, how?*

DAY THREE K-8 STANDARD ALIGNMENT

K

- RL.K.3. With prompting and support, identify characters, settings, and major events in a story.
- RL.K.9. With prompting and support, compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in stories.

These standards will be met and reinforced as students learn about heroes (both ancient and modern) that story lines usually follow patterns (including those we saw earlier in the Hero's Journey video). Ex. In many stories, a character has a problem. The events in the plot tell how the character tries to solve the problem. Working together we will identify characters, problems, and if/how the problems were solved. We will then apply what they've learned to see if the stories we study (ex. Mighty Mouse & Flash Gordon) have a similar structure or pattern.

1

- RL.1.3. Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details.
- RL.2.3. Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.
- RL.1.9. Compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in stories.

These standards will be met and reinforced as students learn about heroes (both ancient and modern) that story lines usually follow patterns (including those we saw earlier in the Hero's Journey video). Working together we will identify characters, where the story took place, what happened during the story, problems, and if/how the problems were solved. We will then apply what they've learned to see if students think the stories we study (ex. Mighty Mouse & Flash Gordon) have a similar structure or pattern. We'll talk about what they think and why they came to have that opinion.

2

- RL.2.3. Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.
- RL.2.5. Describe the overall structure of a story, e.g. including identifying the problem or central conflict, describing how the beginning introduces the story, and the ending concludes the action.
- RL.2.7. Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, and/or plot.

These standards will be met and reinforced as students learn about heroes (both ancient and modern) that story lines usually follow patterns (including those we saw earlier in the Hero's Journey video). []. Ex. In many stories, a character has a problem. The events in the plot tell how the character tries to solve the problem.] We will practice identifying characters, where the story took place, what happened during the story, problems, and if/how the problems were solved. Students will then apply what they've learned to analyzing stories as we watch them and filling out their sheets. During discussion we'll see if students think the stories we study (ex. Mighty Mouse & Flash Gordon) have a similar structure or pattern, and how they think the characters are similar or different to each other. We'll talk about what they think and why they came to have that opinion.

3

- RL.3.3. Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.
- RL.3.9. Compare and contrast the themes, settings, and plots of stories about similar characters.

These standards will be met and reinforced as students learn about heroes (both ancient and modern) that story lines usually follow patterns (including those we saw earlier in the Hero's Journey video). []. Ex. In many stories, a character has a problem. The events in the plot tell how the character tries to solve the problem.] We will practice identifying characters, where the story took place, what happened during the story, problems, and if/how the problems were solved. Students will then apply what they've learned to analyzing stories as we watch them and filling out their sheets. During discussion we'll see if students think the stories we study (ex. Mighty Mouse & Flash Gordon) have a similar structure or pattern, and how they think the characters are similar or different to each other, and if they saw any theme emerge from the story—ex. It always takes a hero to save the day?. We'll talk about what they think and why they came to have that opinion.

4

- RI.4.5. Describe the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, **problem/solution**) of events, ideas, and/or concepts, in a print or digital text.
- RL.4.3. Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

These standards will be met and reinforced as students learn about heroes (both ancient and modern) that story lines usually follow patterns (including those we saw earlier in the Hero's Journey video). []. Ex. In many stories, a character has a problem. The events in the plot tell how the character tries to solve the problem.] We will practice identifying characters, where the story took place, figuring out if there's a theme, describing what happened during the story, identifying the problems that needed to be solved, and if/how the problems were solved. Students will then apply what they've learned to analyzing stories as we watch them and filling out their sheets. During discussion we'll see if students think the stories we study (ex. Mighty Mouse & Flash Gordon) have a similar structure or pattern (ex. Do they see the hero's journey story structure?), and how they think the characters are similar or different to each other, and if they saw any theme emerge from the story—ex. It always takes a hero to save the day? We'll talk about what they think and why they came to have that opinion.

5

- RI.4.5. Compare & contrast the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, **problem/solution**) of events, ideas, and/or concepts, in print or digital texts.
- RL.5.2. Determine a theme of a story (and/or central problem) from details in the print or digital text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges.

These standards will be met and reinforced as students learn about heroes (both ancient and modern) that story lines usually follow patterns (including those we saw earlier in the Hero's Journey video). []. Ex. In many stories, a character has a problem. The events in the plot tell how the character tries to solve the problem.] We will practice identifying characters, where the story took place, figuring out if there's a theme, describing what happened during the story, identifying the problems that needed to be solved, and if/how the problems were solved. Students will then apply what they've learned to analyzing stories as we watch them and filling out their sheets. During discussion we'll see if students think the stories we study (ex. Mighty Mouse & Flash Gordon) have a similar structure or pattern (ex. Do they see the hero's journey story structure?), and how they think the characters are similar or different to each other, and if they saw any theme emerge from the story—ex. It always takes a hero to save the day? We'll talk about what they think and why they came to have that opinion.

6

- RL.6.3. Describe how a particular plot unfolds as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.
- RI.6.9. Compare and contrast one author's presentation of events with that of another.

These standards will be met and reinforced as students learn about heroes (both ancient and modern) that story lines usually follow patterns (including those we saw earlier in the Hero's Journey video). [Ex. In many stories, a character has a problem. The events in the plot tell how the character tries to solve the problem.] We'll explore how different characters respond to the problem (ex. Does anyone come up with a plan to fix it? Does anyone act helpless and wait for rescue?) and whether any of them change as the story unfolds, ex. Does anyone get 'braver' or overcome fears? Does the villain regret what they've done? Or are there no changes? Students will then apply what they've learned to analyzing stories as we watch them and filling out their sheets. During discussion we'll see if students think the stories we study (ex. Mighty Mouse & Flash Gordon) have a similar structure or pattern (ex. Do they see the hero's journey story structure? Are Mighty Mouse and Flash Gordon similar in any ways? Are the problems/plots/solutions similar in any way?)

7

- RL.7.3. Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting, problems, or events shapes the characters or plot).
- RL.7.9 Analyze how two or more print or digital texts address similar themes or topics.

These standards will be met and reinforced as students learn about heroes (both ancient and modern) that story lines usually follow patterns (including those we saw earlier in the Hero's Journey video). [Ex. In many stories, a character has a problem. The events in the plot tell how the character tries to solve the problem.] We'll explore how different characters respond to the problem (ex. Does anyone come up with a plan to fix it? Does anyone act helpless and wait for rescue?) and whether any of them change as the story unfolds, ex. Does anyone get 'braver' or overcome fears? Does the villain regret what they've done? Or are there no changes? Students will then apply what they've learned to analyzing stories as we watch them and filling out their sheets. During discussion we'll see if students think the stories we study (ex. Mighty Mouse & Flash Gordon) have a similar structure or pattern (ex. Do they see the hero's journey story structure? Are Mighty Mouse and Flash Gordon similar in any ways? Are the problems/plots/solutions similar in any way?)

- RL.8.3. Analyze how particular problems, lines of dialogue, or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.
- RL.8.2. Determine a theme, problem, or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, events, and plot.

These standards will be met and reinforced as students learn about heroes (both ancient and modern) that story lines usually follow patterns (including those we saw earlier in the Hero's Journey video). [Ex. In many stories, a character has a problem. The events in the plot tell how the character tries to solve the problem.] We'll explore how different characters respond to the problem (ex. Does anyone come up with a plan to fix it? Does anyone act helpless and wait for rescue?) and whether any of them change as the story unfolds, ex. Does anyone get 'braver' or overcome fears? Does the villain regret what they've done? Or are there no changes? Students will then apply what they've learned to analyzing stories as we watch them and filling out their sheets. During discussion we'll see if students think the stories we study (ex. Mighty Mouse & Flash Gordon) have a similar structure or pattern (ex. Do they see the hero's journey story structure? Are Mighty Mouse and Flash Gordon similar in any ways? Are the problems/plots/solutions similar in any way?)

DAY FOUR: FINDING THEIR ROOTS

“It always strikes me as supremely odd that high culture venerates the written word on the one hand, and the fine visual arts on the other. Yet somehow putting the two together is dismissed as juvenilia. Why is that? Why can’t these forms of art go together like music and dance?” — Jonathan Hennessey, Author of [The U.S. Constitution: A Graphic Adaptation](#) and [The Gettysburg Address: A Graphic Adaptation](#)

AS WE EXPLORE THE FOLLOWING HISTORY AND THE CHARACTERS (BOTH REAL AND FICTIONAL) INVOLVED GIVE STUDENTS THE OPPORTUNITY TO START READING SOME COMIC BOOKS & HEARING ADVENTURE & SUPERHERO STORIES—FINDING THEIR FAVORITES (ONLINE, OLD RADIO VERSIONS, IN BOOK COLLECTIONS, AND COMIC BOOKS THEMSELVES) AND SEEING HOW COMICS ARE DESIGNED, ILLUSTRATED, AND WRITTEN FOR THEMSELVES. MAKE SURE TO CHECK BOOKS & SITES FOR APPROPRIATENESS FOR YOUR STUDENTS GRADE LEVELS & MATURITY LEVELS.

IDEAS FOR RESOURCES, BOOKS, & SITES TO EXPLORE

- The comics or ‘funnies’ from your local newspaper
- Dick Tracy 80th Anniversary Collection!* by Chester Gould
- Cleopatra in Space* series by Mike Maihack
- Doc Savage Archives Volume 1: The Curtis Magazine Era*
- The Adventures of TinTin*
- [Zorphbert & Fred](#)
- [JL8](#) the story of Superman, Batman and their friends as children attending elementary school
- [Sheldon](#) is a family tale of 10-year-old billionaire Sheldon who lives with his grandfather and a talking duck. Sheldon is another great choice for animal lovers. It has lots of jokes hidden inside for grownups!
- Old Time Radio online
- Actual physical comic books
- & much more



The comic book first arose in America in the mid-1930s. Why? What was it about that specific period of time circa 1933, '34, '35, which would create a demand for a new form of entertainment that we call the American comic book? First, people were becoming aware that we were a part of something bigger than just a small town. We were part of a unity that was facing a huge economic depression at the time and people were struggling.

We were also facing the threat of war in Europe. And we were looking for outlets for entertainment and such, and comic books were a cheap and very accessible form of entertainment that allowed ourselves to transport ourselves beyond just our day-to-day existence, to have an adventure and forget our own

problems, over and over again. So for only \$0.10 or less, people didn't have to go to the movies and watch a story just once (remember, DVDs weren't available, you couldn't watch a movie at home again later), people could read them over and over, and they weren't limited by any budget.

FORERUNNERS OF THE AMERICAN COMIC BOOK

Back then there was something new that was happening in America. There were characters, for example, coming out of the pulp magazines, like The Shadow. (These magazines were called pulp fiction because of the paper they were printed on. They were unfinished pieces of paper and they had rough edges, and they were cheap meaning that even the poorest of people felt like they could afford them.)

And then The Shadow transitioned and was also a comic book (and later novels). And then he was a radio show, and he was movie serials. And building multi-media stars had never happened in that way before, where you could find the same character in every media. You could watch them, you could read about them, and you could hear stories about them on the radio! **Does that sound like today? We have comics, video games, cartoons, movies, books, and what else, all about the same characters.**

And the same thing happened to Flash Gordon and Tarzan and Superman. All of these things largely centered around heroes. **Why?** Possibly, they wanted to capitalize on that feeling in America at the time, and the world at that time. Humanity often seeks a hero who can solve all our problems, and these comic book heroes sort of seemed to offer us that possibility. **Does that still happen today? Why do we like superhero movies so much? Video games, comic books, etc.**

Superheroes aren't just born of their creators' imaginations. They are born of their times. It can't be



understated. Superheroes first arose out of chaos, a time of economic disintegration, suffering, corruption, and bloody world conflict. **Do we have any of those problems today?**

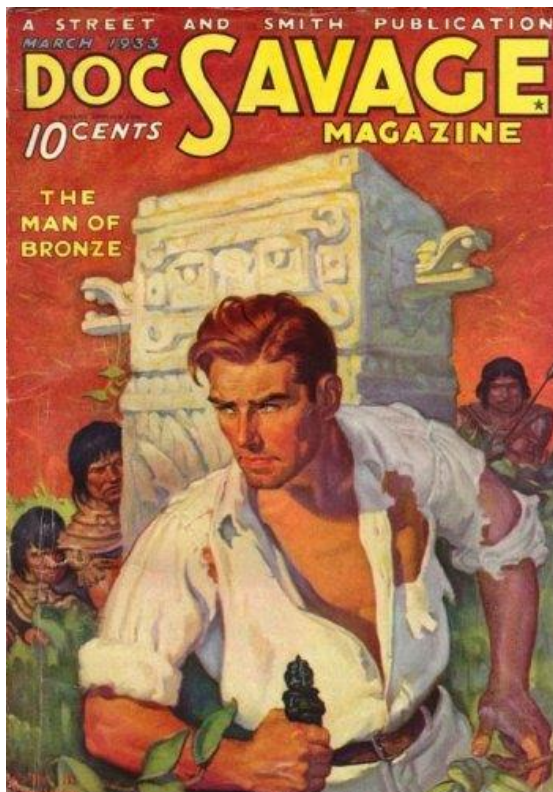
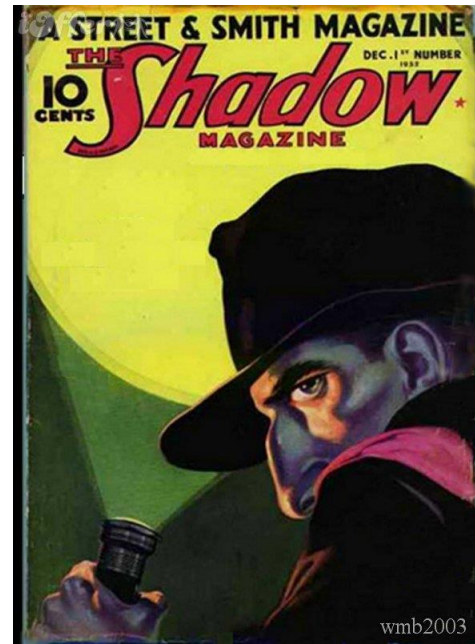
One of the things that America was feeling in that Depression era was maybe the police were not as effective as they can be. Maybe we needed a special breed of heroes.

And so mob bosses, hit men and corrupt police officers became the main villains in popular culture. It's no surprise, then, that so many of the immediate ancestors to superheroes, like the Green Hornet, The Shadow ("Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men?"), and Dick Tracy, found themselves battling these baddies in newspapers and on the radio.

THE SHADOW!

Once upon a time, before the world-wide web; before 157 channels; before Facebook...93% of all people listened to the radio each week. Have students listen to an episode of *The Shadow* from [Times Past Old Time Radio](#). **Can they see/hear how audiences waited eagerly for these radio shows? Why? How do you "see" the action? With imagination. "And therein lies the magic: tens of thousands of people out there, listening, each envisioning their own motion picture of the mind. And that is what we give our audience...we give them dreams. We give them towers and landscapes, secrets and revelations. We give them a warm hearth in the dark—or a cold shiver up their spine."**—Victor Comstock, Remember WENN

"The Theater of the Mind" was the perfect medium in which to present programs filled with blood and thunder, two-fisted action, and high adventure. After all, what would cost hundreds of thousands of dollars on a movie screen could be "seen" far better on the radio. We're going to exercise your imagination and listen to some of the most thrill-packed and engrossing shows ever heard."



Of course, Being a radio show each chapter ramps up to precipice point much like the classic Republic serials...and then left you waiting until the next week even though you were ready to learn more at that exact moment as the show comes to a close. **What are some modern versions of 'radio shows'? ex. Podcasts?**

WHAT'S UP 'DOC'?

See, the first ones to capitalize on that desire for a hero were the pulp magazines and the newspaper comic strips. The newspaper comic strips went to work on this, launching one of the most successful comic strips in history, Dick Tracy the lone square-jawed hero who holds the line against the underworld. (The strip is also notable for its introduction of scientific detection to comics.)

But even the pulp characters who never quite made it into the world of comic strips had a huge, huge influence on the creation of so many different superheroes and the people who were responsible for bringing them to us.

For example, Doc Savage.

Doc Savage was one of the first and foremost of the great pulp superheroes. (Unlike the Shadow, another superhero of the time, Clark Savage (or "Doc" to his friends), had no special powers (besides being a physician, surgeon, scientist, adventurer, inventor, explorer, researcher, and musician; as well as having a photographic memory; and being a master of martial arts; a master of disguise; and a great imitator of voices), but was raised from birth by his father and other scientists to become one of the most perfect human beings in terms of strength, intelligence, and physical abilities.) And his most heavy influence was on those two young kids from Cleveland, Ohio, Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, in the creation of Superman.

In 1933, Doc Savage was advertised in the pulps as, quote unquote, "Superman." He was known as the man of bronze. For Jerry Siegel, Superman became the 'man of steel.' Doc Savage's real name, Clark Savage. Superman's real name? Clark Kent. [Someone described the hero as a mix of Sherlock Holmes' deductive abilities, Tarzan's outstanding physical abilities, Craig Kennedy's scientific education, and Abraham Lincoln's goodness.]

Doc Savage had a secret base, strange and wonderful headquarters hidden away in the frozen North. It was called the Fortress of Solitude. Many years later, Superman started his own special headquarters in the frozen North, and he decided to come up with the name called the Fortress of Solitude.

So the parallels are clear. The influence of Doc Savage is clear on Superman.



Interesting to Note: Almost all attempts to adapt Doc Savage into other media have been valiant failures. Just ask legendary producer-director George Pal. With such classics as "The Time Machine" and "The War of the Worlds" to his credit, he purchased the rights to all 181 original novels starring Street & Smith's iconic pulp superman, and expressed unbounded confidence that his 1975 film "Doc Savage: The Man of Bronze" would spin off countless sequels.

Instead the film sank Pal's career. At least he got a movie out of it. A decade before, Chuck Connors was poised to star as Doc in "The Thousand-Headed Man", with five sequels right behind it. That project never went to camera.

Numerous versions of Doc Savage have appeared in comic books - some good, some bad, most indifferent. Despite being the inspiration for such popular culture titans as Superman, Batman, the Man from U.N.C.L.E., Star Trek's "Mr. Spock", Buckaroo Banzai, and Marvel Comics' the Fantastic Four, the metallic magic of Doc has proven hard to recapture outside the pages of the original "Doc Savage" pulp magazine.

THE MAN OF BRONZE



The Adventures of Doc Savage – Radio Archives by VicSage2005



Have students listen to a clip of the Doc Savage radio show from **Radio Archives: The Adventures of Doc Savage** over on the [Retroist](#).

(Unlike in 1985 where you had to wait until the next week you can sit back and listen to the next chapter immediately, or make

students wait to hear the next part of the fantastic adventure!) *The Adventures of Doc Savage includes two tales of the Man of Bronze, Fear Cay and The Thousand-Headed Man. The first tale concerns a villain named Dan Thurden, who claims during a fight...in which he takes on Doc Savage AND his friends...that he is 130 years old. The chase for this stranger and the mystery of the "Fountain of Youth Inc." leads Doc and his team from New York, Florida and to Fear Cay. The second story is focused on the mood, mystery and atmospheric horror of Doc Savage's quest for a lost expedition in 1934 Indo-China which brings the Man of Bronze in direct combat with the half-mythical menace known only as the Thousand-Headed Man".*

Have students evaluate the professional audio recording based on reading fluency, expression and emotion. Then challenge students to employ the same criteria as they read aloud themselves.

Did they hear any onomatopoeia? What do students think is importance of using sound effects, sounds that represent objects and/or environments and sound shots, an effect that gives the listener a sense of space by recording a sound that's far away? **Does use of sound effects and sound shots in an audio drama increased the level of mental imagery that students have, and also help them, as listeners, pay more attention?**

TEACHER TIP: KIDS LISTEN UP!

Improving students' listening skills is one of the essential components of the new education mandates, and using audio in the classroom can be an effective way to promote listening. Students can listen to content two-to-three grade levels higher (or even more in some cases) than they can read, according to research--students listening comprehension is often beyond what they understand in print. An unfamiliar word that might stop them on the page doesn't compel them to tune out from a story told aloud.

Public radio stories, which are known for being authentic, accurate, well told and sharply edited, with a dramatized audio structure are ideal for sparking student interest. Ex. You can describe fluency all you want, but nothing illustrates the concept more vividly than the animation a professional narrator brings to an audio recording. Research shows there are many other advantages too, including an increase in reading comprehension, motivation and self-confidence.

Ask students how the narrator’s tone, pace and inflection affect the interpretation of a story’s characters, settings and events (e.g., Does the protagonist in the audio recording sound like students imagined? Why or why not?).

In students’ opinion, who is the target audience for this radio program? Can they identify the age, gender, ethnicity, economic level, and values of a typical listener? Is it general or very specific?

Do they hear any elements of the ‘hero’s journey’ in the story? Is it one in which a protagonist faces some sort of stressful challenge or conflict?

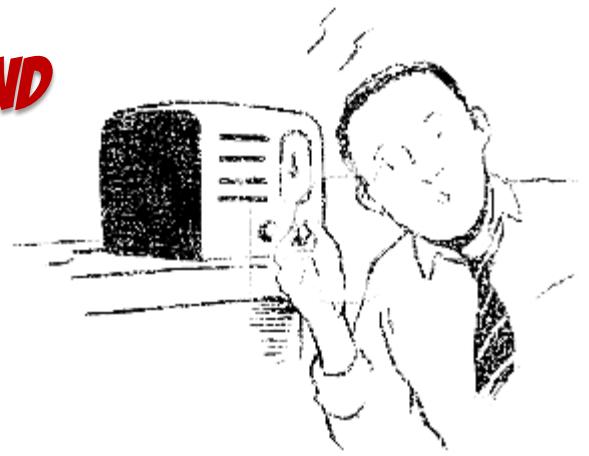
Note: We will also have access to the complete audio files for The Adventures of Doc Savage, as well as The Adventures of Jungle Jim, Volume 1, and The Adventures of Philip Marlowe, Volume 3 [Author Raymond Chandler’s hard-boiled gumshoe, Philip Marlowe was one of the most popular sleuths in the history of the crime fiction genre.]

To give students a better idea how such recordings and radio shows took place, show a clip of the show Remember WENN (Created by Rupert Holmes--about a radio station (and the fun cast of characters who work there & do the shows) in the 1940s.) Limited episodes are available online, like [Season 1, Episode 1](#). The first three and half minutes give a brilliant example of how these shows (and commercials) were put on, the sounds were made, and just how versatile the actors had to be.



Remember WENN 1x01

THE THEATER OF THE MIND



WHERE DO YOU THINK THIS STORY IS TAKING PLACE? DESCRIBE IT

WHO IS THE 'HERO' IN THIS STORY?

WHAT DOES HE/SHE LOOK LIKE? WHAT DO YOU SEE IN YOUR MIND?

WHO ARE SOME OTHER CHARACTERS (LIKE COMPANIONS OR THE VILLAIN?)

WHAT DO THEY LOOK LIKE?

DID YOU HEAR ANY 'SOUND EFFECTS?' LIKE WHAT?

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF THE STORY? WHY?

WHAT DO YOU THINK MIGHT HAPPEN NEXT IN THE STORY?

DO YOU THINK THE READER(S)/ ACTORS DID A GOOD JOB? WHY OR WHY NOT?

WORLD WAR II

As the thirties came to a close, a second world war got underway in Europe and Asia. Although America wouldn't enter it for a few more years, its shadow covered the nation, and superheroes were born under its influence. Our pulp heroes, they were trying their best to keep us entertained, but we needed something more. We desperately need something more. We need somebody faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive, able to leap tall buildings in a single bound.



Coming in June 1938 was the explosion of a planet far, far away, and sending us exactly what we need to escape the depression and to deal with the onslaught of World War II.

Over the next handful of years, these superheroes (like Wonder Woman, Captain America, Namor the Submariner, and Superman) devoted as much of their time battling the Axis powers and the Japanese as they did the mob. And Americans rallied behind them like never before. Comic books sales soared during these years of conflicts, setting the stage for them to become a permanent part of American culture.

IT'S A BIRD, IT'S A PLANE, IT'S A . . . VILLAIN?

That's right, the first superhero, he didn't exactly start out as a hero. . .

Cleveland, Ohio. 1930. Two teenaged boys meet while working together on their school newspaper.



They are both outcasts, the Jewish sons of immigrants, and they soon find they share a love of newspaper comic strips. So began one of the most famous and fruitful partnerships in the history of comics.

Jerry Siegel was the writer. Joel Shuster the artist. During their first few years together, they collaborated on numerous newspaper

comic strips, most of which were rejected. *What many fans don't realize is that Superman hasn't always been the Big, Blue Boy Scout they've come to know and love. In fact, in the very early stages of the character's development, he wasn't a hero at all, but a villain.*

One that wasn't, however, told the story of a bald super-villain who, following a botched scientific experiment, uses his powers to try to take over the world (Instead of physical superpowers, though, Superman had the power to read and control people's minds, all in an effort to take over the world). The comic was called "The Reign of Superman". Yes, Superman actually was first conceived as a villain!

Siegel, however, had second thoughts about Superman as a villain and reimagined him as a hero—some speculate that the inspiration for the change was the murder of his father at the hands of a robber.

Siegel turned to the stories of Hercules and Samson as well as his own status as an immigrant outsider to come up with the idea of a child from another planet whose parents save him from their dying planet Krypton. The product of a race far advanced both technologically and physically, the child arrives on earth and soon displays to his adopted parents extraordinary abilities. The revised character had enough strength to lift a car and the ability to jump great distances, exactly one-eighth of a mile. Superman was born. **(Wait! He couldn't fly? Does that sound like the Superman students know? What about x-ray vision and all the other stuff? Do students think superheroes might have/can change over time?)**

SUPERMAN'S DARK PAST

Audiences familiar with the rather stiff and morally upright character that Superman would later become would be surprised to discover that Siegel and Shuster's original character was actually a tough and cynical wise guy, similar to the hard-boiled detectives like Sam Spade who also became popular during the Depression years. Superman took to crime-fighting with an adolescent glee, routinely taking the opportunity to make fun of his adversaries as he thrashed them, something our modern day Superman would never do.

The character was published as the first edition of a new series, Action Comics. With little knowledge of copyright law and absolutely no concept of how iconic (and profitable) Superman would become, Siegel



and Shuster agreed to the standard work-for-hire arrangement, under which they sold the exclusive rights to Superman for \$10 a page, total of \$130.

No, that wasn't a typo. Superman, the most famous of all Superheroes, a billion dollar franchise spanning comics, radio, television, movies, and video games, was acquired for \$130!

Siegel and Shuster continued to work for National Allied Publications, publisher of Action Comics. Their work was innovative, engaging, and highly influential. Superman soon became a pop culture phenomenon, with a radio show and animated series along with Siegel and Shuster's strips. He was also a cash cow for National, earning hundreds of thousands per year by the early 1940s.

Looking back, the notion that this arrangement was unfair and exploitative can hardly be argued. It was, however, legally binding, and thus unbreakable. Siegel and Shuster would see their creation earn millions for the company that became Detective Comics (DC

Comics), and they saw none of it. Siegel continued as a writer-for-hire on various lesser known comics, while Shuster dropped largely from the public eye in the early 1950s.

A backlash occurred in the 1970s. Thanks to a public relations campaign orchestrated largely by Siegel himself, Warner Communications, now the parent company of DC comics, agreed to return the byline credit to Siegel and Shuster and award them a pension of \$20,000 a year. This helped Siegel and Shuster receive the recognition as pioneers of comic story and art that they so richly deserved. The men were inducted together into the Will Eisner Comic Book Hall of Fame in 1992 and the Jack Kirby Hall of Fame in 1993. Their story served as the inspiration for Michael Chabon's *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay*, winner of the Pulitzer Prize and generally considered a classic of contemporary fiction.

DAY FOUR K-8 STANDARD ALIGNMENT

K

- SL.K.2 Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, audibly, and orally.
- SL.K.2.b Confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details and requesting clarification if something is not understood.
- RF.K.2. Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds.

These standards will be met and reinforced as students listen to and participate in discussion of the stories and story extracts that are presented audibly and visually (also a great test of listening comprehension) as part of our discussion of superheroes.

We will also discuss the variety of storytelling techniques used to tell tales about superheroes, including radio presentations. We'll explore the benefits and drawbacks of these different mediums (including contrasting what they might "see" and "hear" if reading the text, or watching a film, to what they perceive when they listen.) We'll see what they understood of the plot/events/characters and if they can describe the characters they heard and what they envisioned in their minds.

1

- SL.1.2. Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.
- RL.1.7 7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as audio and in words.

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2

- SL.2.2. Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.
- RL.2.7 7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as through audio and oral presentations.

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3

- SL.3.5. Create and/or listen to engaging audio recordings of stories or poems that demonstrate fluid reading at an understandable pace.
- SL.3.2. Determine the main ideas and supporting details of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
- RL.3.7 7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as through audio and oral presentations.

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4

- SL.4.2. Paraphrase portions of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, audibly, and orally.
- RL.4.7 7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as through audio and oral presentations.

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5

- SL.5.2. Summarize a written text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, audibly, and orally.
- RL.5.7. Analyze how visual, audio, and/or multimedia elements (e.g., graphics, sound) contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text.

These standards will be met and reinforced as students listen to and participate in discussion of the stories and story extracts that are presented audibly and visually (also a great test of listening comprehension) as part of our discussion of superheroes.

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6

- RL.6.7. Compare and contrast the experience of reading a story or drama to listening to an audio version of a text, including contrasting what they might “see” and “hear” if reading the text to what they perceive when they listen.
- SL.6.2. Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., audibly, visually, quantitatively, and/or orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.

These standards will be met and reinforced as students listen to and participate in discussion of the stories and story extracts that are presented audibly and visually (also a great test of listening comprehension) as part of our discussion of superheroes.

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7

- RL.7.7. Compare and contrast the experience of a written story or drama to an audio story, analyzing the effects of techniques unique to each medium (e.g., sounds, fluency, onomatopoeia, etc.)
- RI.7.7. Compare and contrast the experience of reading a text to listening to an audio, video, or multimedia text, analyzing each medium’s portrayal of the subject (e.g., how the delivery of a speech affects the impact of the words).

These standards will be met and reinforced as students listen to and participate in discussion of the stories and story extracts that are presented audibly and visually (also a great test of listening comprehension) as part of our discussion of superheroes.

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8

- SL.8.2. Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., audibly, visually, quantitatively, and/or orally) and evaluate the motives (e.g., social, commercial, political) behind its presentation.
- RI.8.7. Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using different mediums (e.g., audio, print or digital text, video, multimedia) to present a story, particular topic, or idea.
- 7.4 Describe the changes in American life due to and exemplified in the new forms of media, art, and technology (e.g. radio)

These standards will be met and reinforced as students listen to and participate in discussion of the stories and story extracts that are presented audibly and visually (also a great test of listening comprehension) as part of our discussion of superheroes.

We will also discuss the variety of storytelling techniques used to tell tales about superheroes, including radio presentations and how they were a part of American life during this period (and discuss whether radio is still used the same way, or what similar forms of ‘radio shows’ we have, aka podcasts, etc.)

We’ll explore the benefits and drawbacks of these different mediums (including contrasting what they might “see” and “hear” if reading the text, or watching a film, to what they perceive when they listen.) We’ll see what they understood of the plot/events/characters and if they can describe the characters they heard and what they envisioned in their minds.

SAMPLES OF POSSIBLE WEEK ONE ACADEMIC VOCABULARY WORDS TO REINFORCE

K

- Community
- United States of America
- Story
- Human
- Pattern
- Change

1

- Media
- History
- Character
- Setting
- Responsibilities
- Past
- Present
- Classify
- Planet
- Values

2

- Authority
- Duty
- Justice
- Urban
- Rural
- History
- Message
- Plot
- Conflict
- Decision

3

- Character
- Setting
- Summarize
- Opinion
- Urban
- Rural
- Change
- Cause
- Effect

4

- Ancient Civilizations
- Missions
- Compare
- Contrast
- Audience (as listeners)
- Drawing conclusions
- Metaphor
- Outline
- Right

5

- Theme
- Point of view
- Metaphor
- Depression
- Justify
- Solution
- Newspapers
- Visual images

6

- Ancient civilizations
- Point of view
- Imagery
- Inference
- Cause and effect
- Mythology
- Power
- Similarity
- Symbolism

7

- Onomatopoeia
- Impact
- Function
- Stress
- Nuance
- Tone
- Mood
- Inferences
- Speed

8

- Impact
- Recession
- Inflection
- Enunciation
- Rate
- Pitch
- Tension
- Dramatization
- Order

SUPER WHO? SUPER YOU WEEK ONE SAMPLE SUPPLY LIST

Day One

- Access to videos
- Printouts of Case Studies
- Printouts of 'Hero or Villain' Worksheet
- Pencils

Day Two

- Materials for Obstacle Course
- Simple materials for 'treasure'
- Space with room to play

Day Three

- Access to videos & websites
- Printouts of Side-by-Side Comparison Worksheet
- Printouts of 'Problematic' worksheet
- Pencils

Day Four

- Access to books, videos, & websites
- Access to radio show audio clips
- Printouts of the 'Theater of the Mind' worksheet
- Pencils