

The Age of Superheroes

The story of how superheroes got their start—and why they still matter

About the Story

Lexile: 890L

For qualitative complexity factors, go to *Scope Online*.

Learning Objective: to synthesize information from two articles about superheroes, then design an original superhero

Key Skills: key ideas and details, figurative language, inference, cause and effect, compare and contrast, synthesis

Essential Questions:

- What is a hero?
- How do we cope in times of crisis?
- How do a culture's stories reflect its values?

Standards:

The article and lesson support these Common Core anchor standards: R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, R.6, R.7, R.9, W.2, SL.1, SL.2, L.4, L.5, L.6

For more standards information—including TEKS—go to *Scope Online*.



Your Teaching Support Package

Find your full suite of support materials at scope.scholastic.com.

Audio:

- Article read-aloud
- Text-to-speech
- Vocabulary

Connected readings from the *Scope* archives:

- "If I Were a Superhero"
- "Grammar Makes a Superhero"
- "Searching for Wakanda"

Skill Building Activities to print, project, or share digitally:

- Preparing to Write: Design Your Superhero
- Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice
- Close Reading and Critical Thinking
- **Core Skills Workout:** Text Evidence*, Central Ideas and Details*
- Choice Board
- Quiz*
- Contest Entry Form

*Available on two levels



Step-by-Step Lesson

Close Reading, Critical Thinking, Skill Building

1. Preparing to Read

10 minutes

Do Now: Journal and Discuss (5 minutes)

- Journal: Project the prompt below on your whiteboard. Have students respond in their journal, on a piece of paper, or in their own document.

If you could have any superpower, what would it be and why?

- Discuss: Invite volunteers to share their responses with the class.

Preview Vocabulary (5 minutes)

- Project **Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice**. Review the definitions as a class.
Highlighted words: *alter ego, diabolical, dominated, economic, iconic, mainstream, prevail*.
(To hear these words and definitions read aloud, go to the audio section at the top of the Resources tab in Teacher View, or go to the bottom of the story page in Student View.)

2. Reading and Discussing

45 minutes

“Superman Becomes a Star”

- Have a volunteer read the **As You Read** box that appears on page 22 of the magazine and at the top of the digital story page.
- Read the article once through as a class. Optionally, have students listen to author Mackenzie Carro read her article aloud while they follow along. The **audio read-aloud** is located in the Resources tab in Teacher View and at the top of the story page in Student View.
- Have students reread the article silently to themselves. Then pose the following close-reading questions to the class. Have students share their thinking with a partner first, then expand the share into a whole-class discussion.

Close-Reading Questions

(20 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

1. **During the 1930s, why did Americans need a hero?** (key ideas and details) *At that time, America was going through an economic crisis called the Great Depression. Millions of people had lost their jobs. The world was also facing a crisis, with World War II brewing. These circumstances left people feeling powerless, hopeless, angry, and frightened—and in need of the hope and joy a hero could provide.*
2. **What made Superman just the hero people needed?** (key ideas and details) *The villains in people's real lives—Adolf Hitler, corrupt bankers, dishonest politicians, employers who put their workers in danger—were handily defeated in the pages of Superman comics. At a time when many people felt powerless and frightened, Superman gave them hope that good could win the day.*
3. **Author Mackenzie Carro writes that the first issue of Action Comics “flew off shelves.” What does she mean?** (figurative language) *She means that the issue was very popular. The image of books flying off shelves illustrates how quickly copies of Action Comics were being grabbed from store shelves and purchased.*
4. **Why do you think Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster chose to give Superman an alter ego? How might this choice have affected the character's popularity?** (inference) *Siegel and Shuster likely gave Superman an alter ego to make the character relatable—Clark Kent was just an ordinary guy living an ordinary life as a reporter—and this relatability likely added to the character's popularity. Through the character of Superman, ordinary people could enjoy vicariously fighting the forces of evil and always winning.*
5. **What effect did Superman have on the comic book industry?** (cause and effect) *Superman's success caused comic books to explode in popularity. Dozens of new superheroes were created to feed this interest, and by 1944, more than 90 percent of kids read comics. (Before Superman, comics existed mostly as short daily or weekly comic strips in newspapers.)*

“Why We Still Love Superheroes”

- Read the article as a class. Optionally, have students listen to author Mackenzie Carro read her article aloud while they follow along. The audio read-aloud is located in the Resources tab in Teacher View and at the top of the story page in Student View.
- Divide students into groups to read the article again and discuss the following close-reading and critical-thinking questions, some of which draw on both articles.

Close-Reading Question

(5 minutes)

The following question can be shared in printable or interactive form.

1. **How has our relationship with superheroes changed since the 1930s? How has it stayed the same?** (compare and contrast, synthesis) *Superheroes' popularity is at an all-time high today. Unlike in the 1930s, when most people got to know superheroes through comic books, many people today know superheroes through TV shows and movies. But the appeal of superheroes is the same now as it was in the 1930s: They show us the world as we want it to be and inspire us to be our better selves.*

Critical-Thinking Questions

(5 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

1. Carro writes, "... news is often dominated by frightening reports. Our world has big problems: disease, injustice, war, natural disasters. It's easy to feel overwhelmed and powerless." Do you ever feel this way? Is there anything that gives you an escape or makes you feel hopeful? *Answers will vary.*
2. **Who are your favorite superheroes? Why?** *Answers will vary.*

3. Skill Building and Writing

20 minutes

- Have students complete **Preparing to Write: Design Your Superhero**. This activity will help them respond to the prompt at the end of the articles.
- Alternatively, have students choose a task from the **Choice Board**, a menu of differentiated culminating activities.

Connected readings from the Scope archives:

- Fiction In a Flash: ["If I Were a Superhero"](#) (December 2019/January 2020)
- Grammar: ["Grammar Makes a Superhero"](#) (September 2019)
- Short Read: ["Searching for Wakanda"](#) (October 2018)