

## Mini-lesson #6: Superhero Story

Since the dawn of storytelling we have had the need to be uplifted by fantasy tales of extraordinary superheroes, and superheroines. We need heroes in our world like Hercules, Helen of Troy, Superman, and Batgirl because they give us hope and someone to model ourselves after. Superheroes unselfishly fight the thugs and tackle the big problems we are either too afraid of or find a real inconvenience in our busy, self-centered lives. Recently, *Time* magazine listed *Watchmen*, a graphic novel about a ragbag of bizarre, damaged, retired superheroes, as one of the 100 best novels of the century. The **graphic novel**, a book that uses drawings and dialogue to tell a story but is longer than a traditional comic book, is one of the most exciting mediums for literature today. Graphic novels, like the Manga (Japanese comics) series *Naruto* and retold classics like **Beowulf** and *Macbeth*, are becoming increasingly popular, creating a groundswell of excitement and interest for literacy teachers who want to grab their students' attention.

This lesson focuses on how to write a superhero story. Here are some questions that will help your students design a superhero or supervillain, whether they're creating a graphic novel, heavy metal song, radio drama, or video game script:

- What is my superhero's age, gender, education, occupation, and outlook on life?
- What superpowers does my superhero have?
- How did he/she become super?
- Does my superhero have a secret identity?
- How does my superhero use his/her powers to solve problems?
- What is it about my superhero that will appeal to my audience?

"Spudbuster" is a heavy metal song about a comic book superhero by Nile Stanley and Ben Brenner. The song focuses on Spudbuster's major passion/goal in life, which is helping sofa spuds—kids who watch too much TV. Spudbuster is a good guy who teaches kids how to "turn down TV" and "turn up" reading, playing, exercising, and other healthy endeavors. Be sure to explain to younger students that the "Spudbuster" song is an excerpt, part of a larger work, and not a complete story with a beginning, problem, solution, and end.

### Experience

1. Listen to "Spudbuster" (Track #16).
2. Listen again and follow along with the printed lyrics.
3. Students take turns acting like a rock star performing the song before a huge crowd.

### Reflect

1. Have students discuss what they think about Spudbuster's message?
2. Brainstorm common elements of various superhero stories.
3. Break the class into groups and discuss what a graphic novel, movie, radio drama, or video game about Spudbuster might look and sound like.

### Apply

1. Write and tell original superhero stories either individually or in groups.
2. Have students keep a journal for a week documenting how many hours daily they spend watching TV and playing video games.

3. Start a school-wide Spudbuster campaign to create media awareness and develop critical viewing skills. (There is a “TV Turnoff Week” in April and September. Visit <http://www.tvturnoff.org/> for more information.)
4. Have a superhero costume contest where students show and tell why they are the most super.
5. Have students do book talks about their favorite graphic novels.

### Resources

<http://www.superheronation.com/2008/02/24/index-writing-about-superheroes/>  
 “How to Write a Superhero Story”

[http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson\\_view.asp?id=921](http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=921)  
 “The Comic Book Show and Tell” lesson from NCTE/IRA

<http://www.adbusters.org/>  
 Adbusters Media Foundation is a not-for-profit, anti-consumerist organization that publishes *AdBusters* magazine and works to change the way information is spread.

**Spudbuster** by Nile Stanley and Ben Brenner



Hey all you sofa spuds,  
 Gather round.  
 The TV’s blaring,  
 You’re sittin’ in a coma staring.  
 Turn down the TV  
 Cause it’s spread’en VD (video disease).  
 Your brain is dead.  
 You got noth’en in your head.  
 Watch’en all that crud  
 Has made you into a sofa spud,  
 Made you into a sofa spud.

Spudbuster! Spudbuster! Spudbuster!

You’re a slouch  
 On the couch,  
 A junk food junkie,  
 A first-grade flunkie.  
 You’re wasting time  
 Stuck on that grime.  
 The only friends you met  
 Are stuck inside your TV set.  
 You gotta take a chance,  
 Gotta break the trance,  
 Break the trance.

Spudbuster! Spudbuster! Spudbuster!  
Unplug the drug! Unplug the drug! Unplug the drug!  
Don't become a sofa spud!

He's gonna disable your cable,  
Remove your remote.  
Hope you can cope.  
Toss Nintendo out the window.  
Lock up your Xbox.  
Read a book and take a look.  
Ride a bike and take a hike.  
Cut your IV from the TV.  
Make a choice and raise your voice.  
And click on me and set yourself free. Click on me and set yourself free.

Spudbuster! Spudbuster! Spudbuster!