



WEEK 5

Lead Your Mission

How do you deal with challenges in your life? What do you do to solve them? What does it feel like to work on a mission, quest, or challenge?

“My Own Superhero” Comics

Your Quest:

Your quest is to create a superhero comic strip that tells the story of how you overcame a challenge.

By embarking on this quest, you will gain the following skills:

- Creative visual and written expression
- Learn some elements of comic strip design
- Create a storyline- story sequencing
- Enhance self-esteem through personal reflection
- Provide inspiration to others with your story

Mission Materials:

- Paper
- Pencils
- Colored pencils or markers

Mission Directions:

We all face many challenges in life, some big and some small. Even if you are Wonder Woman, Spiderman, T’Challa, or Storm, challenges can sometimes feel so big and overwhelming that it’s hard to know what to do. Creating comics can be an entertaining and cathartic way to express the rewarding accomplishment of a facing challenge. We are all the heroes/heroines of our own stories, and just like our favorite comic book heroes, we all have the superpowers inside us to conquer life’s challenges.

Are you ready for your mission? Put on your cape, get ready to create, and reveal the “superhero” that is inside of you.

1. To create your comic strip, first think about your strengths. Can you run fast, listen well, read for 30 minutes or more, draw, play ball really well, or help a neighbor with chores? Are you empathetic, artistic, or curious? Be creative; we all have heroic qualities!



WEEK 5 Lead Your Mission

2. Decide upon your main character. Will your character be based on you expressed as you really are or will you integrate elements of fantasy, science fiction, or mythology into your story by representing yourself as an animal, a mythic creature, or an alien?
3. Decide what powers your character has. Your character's powers should be related to your strengths, but you can also add additional powers too. If you're writing a realistic comic, for example, you can include a few of the strengths you already possess and a few strengths you are working to develop. For a fantasy approach, the character could have supernatural or special superpowers that are both related to your strengths and just for fun.

For our purposes, we are going to use a realistic girl character: a teenage girl, drawn simply and with a cape, because most superheroes have capes. Cat also has the ability to fly. We also decided to have our character possess the superpower of having super senses, especially when it comes to animals. This is related to our real-life strengths of empathy and an ability to care for and connect with animals.

4. Start to draw or sketch your main character. What do they look like? What do they wear? What type of hairstyle do they have? Your character can be a stick figure, or a more fleshed out character. Be creative! Try different ways to draw your characters until you find one you like.
5. Think of a challenge that you overcame in your life, or a challenge you are hoping to overcome in your life. Write it down. For example, think about a time you improved your grades, stopped a bully from harming someone, or resolved a disagreement with a friend. You can make this as personal or as general as you wish.
6. Then, think about how you could use or did use your strengths or superpowers to overcome that challenge. You can also exaggerate the challenge or add supernatural or fantastical elements to it.

In our example, Cat's challenge is that she doesn't get along with other people very well, because she feels misunderstood by them and has a hard time connecting with them. She can use her deep empathy and her love of animals to connect with other humans who also love their pets.

7. Once you decide upon the challenge, sequence the process your main character will take to overcome it. Ask the following questions:
 - a. What events lead to the challenge?
 - b. What are the obstacles that prevented your character from overcoming it?
 - c. What actions or superpowers you used to overcome it?
 - d. What happened the moment you accomplished it?
 - e. What happened after you accomplished it? How did you feel? What was the impact in your life?
8. Use those answers to create your plot for the story. A basic plot follows this process:

WEEK 5 Lead Your Mission

- a. **Exposition (Beginning):** Introduce your character and setting
- b. **Rising Action:** The challenge they face obstacles that block success
- c. **Climax:** Highpoint of the action
- d. **Falling action:** Success or failure reveal the results
- e. **Resolution:** Results of the action taken/ impact on the character

So for our example character, the plot could be:

Exposition: Cat secretly saves animals in distress. She only likes animals because she feels misunderstood by other humans.

Rising Action: One day there is a person in distress along with an animal in a fire.

Climax: Will Cat also save the person? Her identity may be revealed and she really does not like other people. This is her challenge.

Falling action: Her love for living creatures wins out and so she saves the beloved pet. But while doing so, she also saves the pet owner.

Resolution: Facing the challenge allowed her to find common ground with the pet owner. By using her strengths, she overcame her challenge

9. Once you have an idea of your plot, think of a setting for your character and remember that your story can take place in multiple places, and that the plot may dictate the setting for specific parts of your comic.
10. You can use these five plot points to map your comic strip frames. For a longer comic strip, you might want to include more frames for each component of your story. For a shorter comic strip, you might want to include fewer frames for each component.
11. Voila! Put it all together drawing and writing in pencil first, and then when you finalize it you can color it in if you wish. Put yourself on the back for a job well done. Here's a short example comic about Cat's story:

WEEK 5 Lead Your Mission



Level Up:

To make a digital comic:

- On your favorite browser navigate to pixton.com.
- Click on “Go here for Classic Pixton.”
- You will then be prompted to create an account. **Note: if you are under the age of 13, you can only create an account with your parent or guardian’s permission and help.**
- You can then follow the tutorial Pixton has created for you or you can watch our tutorial to see how we created our comic. Here are the basic steps:
 - Choose your character.
 - Choose your background.
 - Based on what you want each comic text to look like, you can adjust the character settings by clicking on the character using the menu below the tile to change the character’s pose, skin color, expression, the direction they are facing or to swap or remove the character altogether.
 - You can add your preferred text to the text bubble (i.e. “Aww! I love my cat Sprinkles!”)
 - Once you are satisfied with the tile you created click on the plus button at the bottom right of the tile. A new tile will open with the same presets and you can repeat steps 5-8 until your comic is complete.

Other options to extend the story:

WEEK 5 Lead Your Mission

- Draw another character, an anti-hero, who has goals that are the opposite of your hero. Draw this anti-hero's lair and their villainous agenda as told in your next comic strip.
- Create a page with details (stats) for your hero. List their likes, abilities, their home, history, their points, etc.
- Create a longer story by letting the character fail or lose but then try again and succeed.

More to Explore at the Library:

There are so many comic books to draw inspiration from that you can check out with your New York Public Library card. Below are a few of our favorites:

- [Guts](#) by Raina Telgemeier - A story about growing up and conquering fears.
- [The Crossover](#) by Kwame Alexander with Dawud Anyabwile (graphic novel) - An award-winning novel about twin sibling rivalry and a family crisis, adapted as a graphic novel.
- [The New Kid](#) by Jerry Craft - When his parents send him to a prestigious school known for academics, Jordan Banks finds that he is torn between two worlds.
- [El Deafo](#) by Cece Bell - A comic book memoir, which incorporates fantastical elements, about overcoming challenges of making new friends at a new school and how a young girl uses her phonic ear as a superpower.
- [Long Story Short](#) by Lisa Brown - Features 100 classic stories that range from Lord of the Flies to Beloved presented in three panel comic strips.
- [Lumberjanes](#) by Shannon Matters and Grace Ellis- A group of best pals are determined to have a great summer and won't let a quest or supernatural creature stop them.
- [Rapunzel's Revenge](#) by Shannon Hale and Dean Hale - A new twist on the Rapunzel fairytale puts her on a quest to rescue her mother and get revenge on her kidnapper.
- [Black Panther, Volume 2](#) by Ta-Nehisi Coates and Chris Sprouse - T'Challa faces challenges to get his kingdom of Wakanda back.
- [One Piece](#) by Eiichiro Oda (manga) - Luffy embarks on an adventure full of challenges seeking the legendary one piece.

Your Reward:

Make sure to visit NYPL's Online Reading Portal through our partner Beanstack and log your completed activity to receive a special badge! Find our portal at nypl.org/summerreading.

Activity Author: Esther Jackson, Children's Librarian, Edenwald Library

Please note: This document contains third-party links. By clicking on the website links within this document—including any links to download files or documents—you will leave NYPL's website and enter a website not operated by NYPL. We encourage you to review the privacy policies of every third-party website or service that you visit or use, including those third parties with whom you interact through our Library services. For more information about these third-party links, please see the section of [NYPL's Privacy Policy](#) describing "Third-Party Library Services Providers." Note that children under the age of 13 should not submit any personally-identifiable information (e.g., name, email address, etc.) to any online website, per [federal COPPA requirements](#).