



WEEK 1

Discover Your Strengths

What makes you uniquely awesome? How can you use your strengths to support your community?

Heroic Self-Portrait

Your Quest:

Create a portrait of yourself either as you are in the real world, with your skills arrayed around you, or with your skills and abilities translated into fantastical skill sets (superhero, fantasy hero, science fiction hero).

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

- Self-awareness
- Creative expression

Mission Materials:

- Paper
- Pencils, pens, markers, paints, collage materials or any other materials you want to use to illustrate your portrait
- A mirror or photo of yourself (optional)

Mission Directions:

Think about your strengths-- and not just your physical strengths. Not to be corny here, but a good hero, in a story or in real life, is someone with a variety of skill sets and abilities--and you absolutely have skills you can translate into something heroic.

Kinds of Skills

Can you endure and bounce back from stressful events? Are you good at seeing the best in people? Are you good at talking people down from taking drastic action too soon? Maybe you're really good at a particular practical skill-- like climbing trees, making puppets, drawing, playing baseball, or getting your baby sister to stop crying. Maybe you spin a really good story and are good at making friends with people. Or, you know, maybe you're an expert swordsman! Think about your skills-- and how to convey them in a picture. What colors, symbols, objects, or kinds of art convey your skills?

Values



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Maybe you aren't sure what you're good at, but you do know about what you think is right. Those are your values, and they're essential.

Examples of statements which show the types of values you or others might hold:

- "The strong shouldn't stomp on those weaker than them."
- "Sports help you understand yourself and others by working together."
- "Art can change the world."
- "Everyone deserves housing, food, and education."
- "Everyone should stand up for what they believe."

All of these are things that can translate to heroics. Think about what your values are, and how you might represent them in an image.

Fantasy Skills

If you want to draw a fantasy portrait, you can create a version of you where your skills in the real world become imaginary powers. Examples might include:

- Excellent storyteller → Mage whose song can change reality
- Good at not being seen when convenient → can turn invisible, turn into a mouse, etc. to listen in on important conversations
- Great at basketball → 10/10 accuracy rating when throwing magic lizard-bombs at the enemy
- Great at fixing things → cybernetic hands filled with tools
- Expert mathematician → can calculate how to build indestructible bridges, towers, etc.
- Great at babysitting → ability to calm and befriend any monster
- Love animals → can speak to animals or transform into animals

Drawing

You can draw yourself holding things connected to your skills or values, or you can draw more conceptual representations of these things around your hands, eyes, shoulders, ears etc. related to the skills you're discussing. You could also paint your portrait or make a collage. The possibilities are endless!

What will your emblem, or symbol, of yourself be? Will everyone be able to see it? Or will it be hidden? Remember that your emblem represents who you are, so take as much time as you need in designing it.

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Level Up:

- Draw an image or short comic of your hero-self battling an enemy-- whether this enemy is a person or an idea, like injustice, depression, or unlivable urban planning is up to you. Think about how skills could come in handy.
- Create a stats page for your hero-self, listing skills, prized possessions, special items, and important details about your past.
- Draw yourself with a friend, family member, or someone else you admire. What kind of strengths do they have? How would you represent them? How are their strengths and skills similar to yours? How are they different? Brainstorm some ways that the two of you would team up to change your community.
- Try drawing multiple versions of yourself. This can be helpful if you have a lot of skills and interests, and aren't able to fit them all into one design.

More to Explore at the Library:

- Read [*Shadow of the Batgirl*](#) by Sarah Kuhn and Nicole Goux, about a teen character with all the skills to become a supervillain who instead decides to be a hero-- even if she lacks the ability to talk or read, and isn't great with social cues. Barbara Gordon returns as a mentor, and with beautiful blue-and-pink tone art, this book shouldn't be missed. Ages 12+
- Jillian Tamaki's comic *SuperMutant Magic Academy* is now a [book that you can check out with your library card](#). If you like sarcastic humor, friendship, existential questions, and magic powers, check it out! Ages 12+
- Read [*Miles Morales: Spider-Man*](#) by Jason Reynolds. Not *exactly* consistent with the events of serialized comics or *Into The Spiderverse*, this book shows sensitive, sometimes big-headed Miles as he clashes with his father's beliefs and tries to find his own path to heroism. Ages 12+
- Read [*Green Lantern: Legacy*](#) by Minh Le and Andy Tong. The new Green Lantern is a 13-year-old Vietnamese-American boy who inherits his grandmother's jade ring after her death. When a billionaire tech bro offers to buy his grandmother's store, Tai Pham needs to figure out if the "Gold Coast" vision of his neighborhood's redevelopment is true to his grandmother's values and legacy...or something evil. Funny, fast-paced, and action-packed. Ages 10+
- Read [*The Supernaturalist*](#) by Eoin Colfer. Orphan Cosmo Hill lives at a horrible orphanage where children are lab rats for testing commercial products. After a truck accident, Cosmo sees strange, fairylike creatures, and is rescued and nursed back to health by a group of teenagers that calls themselves the Supernaturalists. They say the creatures feed on human life and must be wiped out to save the city-- but are they right? Ages 10+
- Read [*Superhero Playbook*](#) by Randall Lotowycz. You don't have to have magical powers or fight intergalactic foes to be a superhero. In this book, you will learn about the ways that you can stand up for others and take pride in the strengths that you already have, just by

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being yourself. The book is also filled with real life lessons from some of your favorite superheroes like the X-Men and Wonder Woman. Ages 9 & up.

- Read [Adventures in Sound with Max Axiom](#) by Emily Beth Sohn. Follow along with Max Axiom, Super Scientist, as he uses his knowledge and powers of determination and exploration to detail how the human ear works. You'll learn how all the intricate parts of the human body can, in fact, be super. Ages 9 & up.
- Read [El Deafo](#) by Cece Bell. When Cece Bell was very young, she became sick and lost her hearing as a result. Now, she has to wear a hearing aid that helps her, but is also very large and sometimes difficult. Read about Cece's experiences as she transforms into El Deafo, learning to love herself and make true friends who appreciate her for who she is. Ages 10 & up.

Your Reward:

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Activity Authors: Hal Schrieve, Children's Librarian, Grand Central Library and Annelisa Purdie, Senior Children's Librarian, Countee Cullen Library

