

# PROJECT

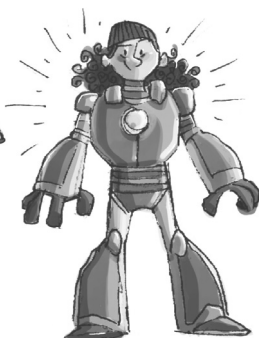
Teacher Resource Guide



# SUPERHERO

WRITTEN BY E. PAUL ZEHR ILLUSTRATED BY KRIS PEARN

ECW PRESS



# Teacher Resource Guide

## PROJECT SUPERHERO

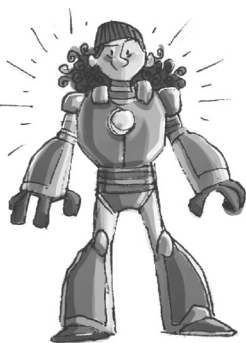
Written by E. Paul Zehr

Illustrated by Kris Pearn

Teacher Resource Guide developed by

Eleanor Creasey, B. Ed., M. Ed.

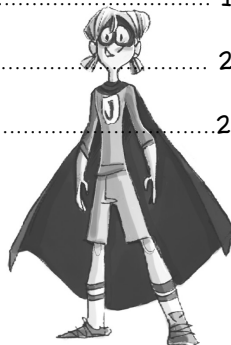






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# Introduction

Combining a compelling story, science facts, lively illustrations, and comic-book trivia with actual correspondence from super humans such as NYPD Sergeant Mike Bruen, Olympian Clara Hughes, and CAPTAIN MARVEL writer Kelly Sue DeConnick, PROJECT SUPERHERO is a celebration of the heroes among us and of one girl's super-secret identity: herself.

In this resource, several activities are suggested as possibilities for working with the text in middle school grades five through seven.



## Before Reading

Prior to reading PROJECT SUPERHERO as a class, guide predictions by using some of the following discussion possibilities:

- Consider the title. What do you think the book will be about based on the title? What does the title make you think of?
- Look at the front cover. What do you see there? What do you think the girl is doing? What is depicted on the lighter-colored drawings in the background? What do the illustrations tell you that would help you to know what the book might be about?
- Read the back cover. What do you think are some of the big ideas or themes that may be explored in this book? Of these, which ones particularly interest you and why?
- Discuss the difference between fiction and non-fiction. Explain that this book is a combination of both. Ask students if they have questions about such a book type.



Once these discussions have taken place, it is helpful for students to start a KWL Chart so they can document what they think they already know, as well as wonder further about what will happen in the book.

At this point in the study, they will complete the first two columns based on the classroom discussion that has been held surrounding both the above questions and their own questions and ideas.

### KWL Chart

K What I Know	W What I'd Like To Know	L What I Learned

Let the students know that completing this chart will be an ongoing part of their study and reading, and ask them to add to the "What I Learned" column as they discover details that answer their questions or that present new learning or information to them as they read.

This chart can be referred to while reading the book as new information and insights become available, and it can also be a good forum for class discussions.


## During Reading

### i. Responses

There are many places in this novel that allow for responses. Think about having a daily writing session after the reading, asking the students to write responses to the following questions. Several examples are given, and the teacher can continue this process for the remaining part of the book, taking into account the interests of the students in the class.

#### 1. MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 8

"Like I said, I'm pretty sure I want to be a writer or a journalist. Being a journalist means having lots of power, since you can influence people's opinions with what you report, and that comes with great responsibility too, which seems so cool. But the biggest reason I want to be a journalist is I really like listening to people's stories. Probably that's why I loved to listen to Gramma so much! She told stories like no one else."  
(p. 12)



In this quote, Jessie talks about the power and responsibility of being a journalist. What do you think she means? Discuss your ideas of the possible power a journalist might have and talk about the corresponding responsibilities.

Jessie mentions how much she loved her Gramma's stories. Do you know anyone in your life who is a great storyteller? Who is it? What is it that helps them to be a great storyteller? Do you think you are or might be a great storyteller? Why or why not? Do you like listening to other people's stories? What do you like about a good storyteller?

## 2. WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10

Jessie says she is shy in bigger groups, such as the classroom, and she often doesn't put up her hand to answer questions because of that. Sometimes she finds that she gives embarrassing answers that are not what she really thinks but are all she can get out in public. "UGH! SO. EMBARRASSING." (p. 17)

Write about an experience like Jessie's where you had trouble saying what you really thought because you were nervous in public. Where was it? What happened? How did you feel? Was there someone like a teacher or a friend who made it easier for you? In what way?

On page 18, Jessie says that, in school, she and her friends are often separated so they don't get too goofy. Talk about a time when this happened to you or to other students in your class. How did it make you

feel to be separated in this way? Do you think it was a good idea for the teacher to do this? What might have been a better idea?

At the end of this chapter, Jessie has come to the conclusion that doing the Superhero Project is going to be fun but also a lot of work. Think of a time that you did a school project that was a lot of work but also fun. What was the project? Write about the hard work that you had to do, and also about the fun you had while doing it.

### 3. THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11

"It's been a long time since September 11, 2001, but all the news coverage still seems so creepy." (p. 19)

In this chapter, Jessie's class had a special speaker, Mike Bruen, who was a sergeant in the New York City Police Department on September 11, 2001. He spoke about many things that he experienced that day. He talked about focusing on the task at hand, and he also mentioned that – when time allowed – he and his colleagues would lift their heads and look around to see the unbelievable level of destruction around them. In a way, it sounded like he was involved with the "small picture" but also aware of the "big picture" of what was happening.

Write about an example of a situation where you were involved in a small part of something bigger. What was the situation? Did it make you feel useful that you were contributing your small part, or did you feel frustrated

that you weren't able to do more toward the big picture? From what you have heard about September 11, 2001, why would you think it was important for many people to be aware of the "small picture"?

"Real heroes run towards – not away from – danger."  
(p. 22)

Discuss this conclusion that Jessie came to at the end of Sergeant Bruen's presentation. Do you agree with her conclusion? Why or why not? Think and write about an example that you have heard about or experienced where this statement has proven to be true.

#### 4. MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 15

On page 22, Audrey and Jessie are excited that the superhero project will allow them to use socials and science too. Have you ever done a project that combined more than one subject? What was the project? What do you think about that type of interdisciplinary approach? Did you think it allowed you to learn more or in a different way?



## 5. FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

"And anyway, being different means we learn from each other." (p.33)

Jessie says this in regard to her friendship with Audrey because she believes that she and Audrey are different from each other, but that this is a good thing. Think about you and your friends. In what ways are you different from each other and in what ways are you the same? Do you think differences are a good thing in friendship? Why or why not?

## 6. MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 22


When speaking of Dylan, Jessie says, "If only we could change his powers for evil into powers for good." (p. 38)

Do you know anyone in your life for whom you might have this wish? How do you think the world might change for the better if those with evil power could be changed into having good power? Give some examples.

## 7. TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23

"My dad's the one who always says that I'm a little bit detail-oriented. He says he's glad I 'can see the forest and the trees,' but sometimes I wind up 'chewing on the bark.'" (p. 48)

Talk about the kind of person YOU are. Are you



detail-oriented or are you a big picture person? Give some examples that show the type of person you are. What type of person do you think would make a better contribution to a group? Why?

## 8. FRIDAY, OCTOBER 24

On page 67, Jessie says, "Also, Batgirl had to overcome lots of difficulties in her life to get so good at what she does." Then she asks Clara Hughes about that because she knows Clara has also had to overcome lots of challenges in her life.

Do you agree that a person gets better at something when they have to overcome challenges? Think of an example, either from your own life or someone else's life, that illustrates this. Write about this example and give details to prove your perspective.

## 9. MONDAY, NOVEMBER 17

Bryan Q. Miller, writer of BATGIRL, advises Jessie, "Though physicality is important for being a hero, never forget that heroes inspire through their actions and deeds, and not just with the throwing of a punch. Heroes are symbols. They inspire. Gandhi was a hero, right? So was Martin Luther King Jr." (p. 88)

Choose someone you consider to be a hero and write about the actions and deeds that person has done that have inspired you.

## 10. WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10

On page 102, Jessie gives her opinion about group assignments: "Normally I'm okay with group assignments. It just depends on the group. Group projects where the teacher assigns members? Not okay."

Give your opinion about group assignments. Do you like to do work in this way? Why or why not? Do you agree or disagree with Jessie's opinion? Why? What do you like about group projects? What do you dislike about group projects?

## 11. MONDAY, DECEMBER 15

From Jessica Watson's letter, Jessie says she has learned that "if you really want to achieve something, you need to be pretty determined. And never ever give up." (p. 109)

Write about something you have achieved. How did you show that you were determined to complete this? Were you ever tempted to give up before you finished? Write about how you stayed the course even though it was hard.

## 12. MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9

In her letter to Jessie, Hayley Wickenheiser says, "I believe that you should always go after your dreams, no matter how high or how hard they seem – that just



makes you try harder!" (p. 130)

Write some comments about this quote from Hayley. What dreams do you have that may seem hard to achieve? How do or will you try to achieve those dreams? How do you feel when you are working hard towards something that is important to you?

On page 133, Hayley Wickenheiser talks about the importance of giving back to the community and supporting organizations that align with her beliefs.

Do you agree with Hayley's perspective? Why do you think this is or is not an important thing to do? Do you try to give back to the community by volunteering your time and talents? What volunteer work do you do or might you do in the future?

## ii. Vocabulary: Crossword Puzzle

The crossword puzzle on the following page highlights a number of words used in the novel. The puzzle provides an opportunity to study the context and the meaning of these words. Each clue is followed by a number in parentheses; this is the page where the word is found in the novel. Students should be instructed to find the word in its context, then to add it to the puzzle.

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ACROSS: 1. pulchritudinous / 2. axel / 3. stealthy / 4. arrogant / 5. acronym / 6. mayhem / 7. obsess / 8. mystique / 9. delude / 10. perseverance / 11. seared / 12. physiology / 13. alter egos / 14. tangent / 15. controversial / 16. exoskeleton

DOWN: 1. gene / 2. evasiveness / 3. histoplasmosis / 4. align / 5. agile / 6. attributes / 7. pulverized / 8. echolocation / 9. nemesis / 11. mongo

## CLUES

### Across

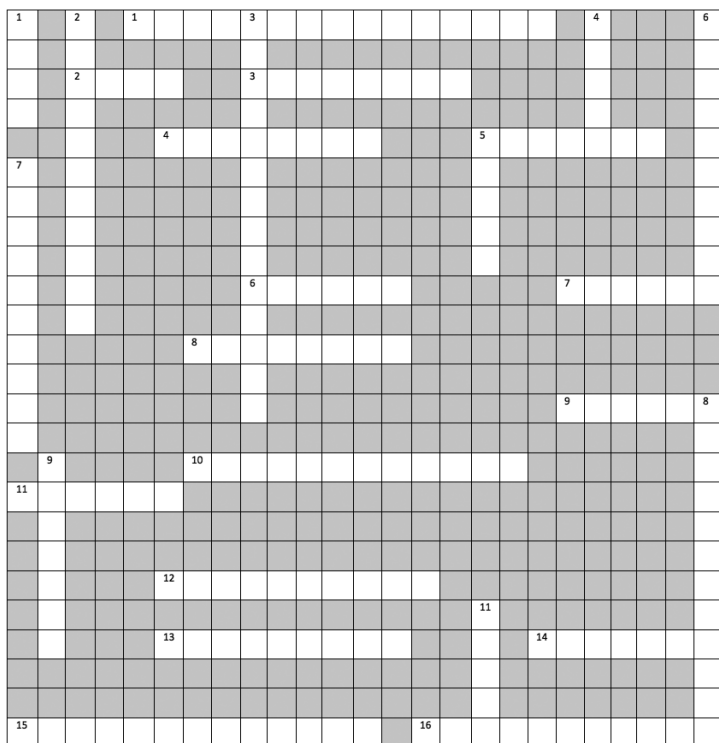
1. physically beautiful (p. 94)
2. a jump performed by a skater (p. 56)
3. acting with quiet, caution and secrecy, intended to avoid notice (p. 65)
4. pretending to be superior (p. 236)
5. a pronounceable name made up of a series of initial letters or parts of words; for example, UNICEF = United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (p. 141)
6. violence, damage or chaos (p. 22)
7. a persistent preoccupation with an often unreasonable idea or feeling (p. 16)
8. a special quality that makes a person or thing interesting or exciting (p. 126)
9. to deceive or fool (p. 99)
10. a quality that allows someone to continue to try to do something even though it is difficult (p. 66)
11. burned or scorched (p. 21)
12. a science that deals with the way living things function (p. 11)
13. different versions of the same person (p. 12)
14. a completely different line of thought or action (p. 23)

15. causing much discussion, disagreement or argument (p. 73)
16. an artificial external supporting structure (p. 52)

### Down


1. the basic physical unit of heredity (p. 11)
2. the act of avoiding something (p. 237)
3. a respiratory disease with symptoms like those of influenza that is caused by a fungus (p. 64)
4. place or arrange things in a straight line (p. 133)
5. able to move quickly and easily (p. 237)
6. qualities or characteristics of a person, place or thing (p. 230)
7. demolished or crushed completely (p. 21)
8. the determination, as by a bat, of the position of an object by the emission of sound waves that are reflected back to the sender as echoes (p. 63)
9. long-standing rival; arch enemy (p. 117)
11. huge; short for humongous (p. 22)

# CROSSWORD PUZZLE



### iii. Writing Activities

1. On page 143, Jessie mentions the idea of facing your own fears. She decides to have a scary movie fest at home to face her fear of scary movies. Make a list of five of your fears. Then describe an activity for each that would help you face your own fears.
2. Imagine that your class was involved in the same project as Jessie's class. What superhero would you choose to be? Why would you choose this superhero? What would you do to try to develop the characteristics of this superhero?
3. On page 141, Jessie talks about an old acronym she used back in grade 2: "W.I.T.S.": Walk away, Ignore, Talk about it, Seek help. With a partner, make up ten acronyms that could help you with your life. Once complete, trade them with another group and see which group can decode them first.
4. Which of the superhero characteristics do you consider to be most important? (Wisdom and experience; physical strength and agility; perseverance and determination; critical thinking; recovery; courage; preparation; and leadership are the qualities given in the novel.) Research people who you believe demonstrate this characteristic. Make a poster including a definition of the characteristic you have chosen and photos or drawings of the people who demonstrate this characteristic.
5. Choose a real life superhero, someone you really admire. Write your own letter to this person. Tell



the person you choose about yourself and what is happening in your life. Ask your real life superhero about him or herself. Include some questions about how this person overcame challenges in their life, how they developed perseverance and other skills, or how they became someone who might be considered a superhero.


6. At the top of page 146, the word hero is defined as “doing something selfless.” Jessie says, “A real hero could be someone who does something without thinking of themselves or any benefit or reward for doing it. Taking action puts them at risk and may only benefit someone else.” Write about someone who is your personal hero. Talk about how this person does something selfless that puts them at risk and benefits someone else. Give examples from your hero’s life.

7. Jessie’s story is told in the form of a diary. She dates each chapter with a particular date, which helps the reader to understand the order of the events and the fact that they took place over a long period of time. Keep your own short diary for a unit of work you are doing in school. Write a little each day over a period of a month. In your diary, tell what you did, how you felt, who you worked with, and so on. Make sure to date each day!

## After Reading

Here are some possible activities for students to work on when they have finished reading the novel.

1. Draw your own comic book superhero. Focus on details in your drawing, just as Kris Pearn did in the novel. Write a character sketch that incorporates what you have drawn and how it fits with your superhero. Make sure you include the qualities a superhero should have, as mentioned in the book.
2. Choose your favorite part of the book. Print a sentence or two that shows your favorite part of the book and then illustrate that part. You are a different artist than Kris Pearn, so do not copy his style. Use your own style to enhance the words in the story.
3. Complete a research project on one of the superheroes that responded to Jessie. Show your learning in a Powerpoint presentation or a brochure.
4. In groups of two, develop ten questions you would like to ask a real life superhero who is not in the book. Choose and name your superhero. Find the answers through the research process. Then turn the questions



into an interview with one group member being the interviewer and another group member being the superhero. Present the interview to the class.

5. Jessie won a debate that was the culmination of the superhero project. Take this opportunity to teach students about the debate process. A debate is a formal discussion on a particular topic in which opposing sides are put forward.

Some basic debate terms include resolution, affirmative team, negative team, rebuttal, judges, and opinion (which is based on example, common sense, expert, and statistics).

A formal debate process includes the team formation, a consideration of the resolution, the side selection, speech one (first argument of the affirmative), speech two (first argument of the negative), speech three (second argument of the affirmative), speech four (second argument of the negative), a short break to prepare rebuttal, speech five (the negative team presents rebuttals to the affirmative team's arguments and summarizes own arguments), speech six (the affirmative team presents rebuttals to the negative team's arguments and summarizes own arguments), and the judge choosing the winner.

A resolution might be: "Be it resolved that the world is a better place because of superheroes," or, "Be it resolved that every person has the capacity to be a superhero."

6. As a final activity, go back to the KWL Chart from the “Before Reading” section of the guide and ask students to review what they have learned through the reading and study of this book.

## KWL Chart

K What I Know	W What I'd Like To Know	L What I Learned





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This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

## A vertical sequence of 12 illustrations showing the stages of a hand being pulled into a black box, representing the concept of 'pulling the hand out of the fire'. The hand is shown in various positions, from being fully inside the box to being completely pulled out. The background is a light gray gradient.

This image shows a full page of blank white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, providing a guide for writing. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

