“Look! Up in the sky! It’s a bird . . . It’s a plane . . . It’s Superman!” Have you ever heard this familiar saying at the beginning of movies or television shows? It introduces a famous character known around the world: Superman. He is a crime fighter with incredible powers. Do you know the origin of this famous superhero? Two childhood friends, Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, dreamed him up. Superman first appeared in a series of comic books called *Action Comics* in June of 1938.

What makes Superman so different from other comic book heroes? He wasn’t the first caped hero to fight crime in comics. For example, a hero called the Phantom fought bandits in comic books before Superman. However, the Superman character was much more popular than the other heroes in comic books at the time. Superman supposedly comes from the distant planet of Krypton. His otherworldly birth gives him super powers on Earth. He is able to fly. He can bend steel with his bare hands. In fact, he is almost indestructible.

It might surprise you to learn that Superman was originally a villain. The two men realized that the character would be more popular as a hero. The character has appeared in television shows, movies, and music videos. His kindness and bravery have made him a popular superhero with people of all ages.

### Pre-Reading

**Look at the picture and answer the questions.**

1. Does this superhero look familiar?
2. What special abilities do you think this superhero has?
3. Can you name any superheroes that come from comic books?

### Understanding the Passage

**A. What would be the best title for the passage?**

- a. Comics’ Greatest Villains
- b. The First Superhero
- c. The Story of Superman
- d. The History of Comic Books

**B. Choose the main idea of each paragraph. One choice will NOT be used.**

1. **The 1st paragraph**
   - a. Superman is distinct from other heroes and his super powers make him almost indestructible.
   - b. The creators of Superman decided to make their character good rather than bad.
   - c. Two friends created a superhero that became world-famous.
   - d. The Superman movies became very popular due to their special effects.

2. **The 2nd paragraph**
   - a. Superman is distinct from other heroes and his super powers make him almost indestructible.
   - b. The creators of Superman decided to make their character good rather than bad.
   - c. Two friends created a superhero that became world-famous.
   - d. The Superman movies became very popular due to their special effects.

3. **The 3rd paragraph**
   - a. Superman is distinct from other heroes and his super powers make him almost indestructible.
   - b. The creators of Superman decided to make their character good rather than bad.
   - c. Two friends created a superhero that became world-famous.
   - d. The Superman movies became very popular due to their special effects.

### Learning Vocabulary

**Match each of the vocabulary words with the correct definition.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary Word</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>saying</td>
<td>a. possibly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>origin</td>
<td>b. a short expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>series</td>
<td>c. a bad character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bandits</td>
<td>d. thieves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>supposedly</td>
<td>e. a set of books with the same group name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>indestructible</td>
<td>f. unable to be destroyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>villain</td>
<td>g. the place where something begins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>otherworldly</td>
<td>h. from another planet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Understanding Details

Choose the best answer.

1. Superman’s creators first wanted him to be a ___________.
   a. hero  b. villain  c. lawyer  d. policeman

2. Superman has powers that other people don’t have because ___________.
   a. he is originally from a distant planet
   b. he gets help from extremely intelligent scientists
   c. he was born with superhuman strength
   d. he fights for truth and justice

3. The author mentions all of the following of Superman’s special abilities EXCEPT:
   a. his ability to fly
   b. his ability to bend metal with his hands
   c. his ability to see through objects
   d. his ability to survive under almost any circumstances

4. What can be inferred about the Superman character in Action Comics?
   a. He was more popular than the Phantom.
   b. He was a super villain.
   c. He did not look like his modern character.
   d. He was not originally able to fly.

Write in Your Own Words

Answer the following questions in 1 or 2 sentences.

1. Who created Superman?
   ____________________________________________________________.

2. How long has Superman been around?
   ____________________________________________________________.

3. Why did Superman become so popular over time?
   ____________________________________________________________.

Visualize the Passage: Cause & Effect

Authors often describe why things happened using a series of causes and effects. Read each of the choices in the box below to find one cause and two effects. Write the sentences in the spaces below.

Causes

Effects

a. Superman’s creators decided to make him into a heroic character.

b. Superman was born on a different planet.

c. Superman can fly and bend steel with his bare hands.

d. Superman’s body is very strong and difficult to injure.

Summarize the Passage

Complete the summary by filling in the blanks.

Superman is a 1 ____________ crime fighter with superhuman abilities. He came from the imagination of two 2 ____________ friends. Superman’s physical abilities come from his birth on the distant 3 ____________ of Krypton. He can fly and bend 4 ____________ with his bare hands. He is almost 5 ____________! Although his creators first thought about making him a 6 ____________, he has always appeared in comic books as a 7 ____________.

childhood  indestructible  caped  steel  planet  villain  hero
I want to draw my own comic book. Who knows? Maybe my superhero will one day become as famous as Superman or Batman. First and foremost, a superhero needs a secret identity. Superman is Clark Kent during the day just like Batman is Bruce Wayne. They are just normal people until they put on their costumes and assume their secret identities. They do this to protect people from acts of revenge. I think my superhero will disguise himself as a grasshopper. Watch out for The Hopper!

Next, I need to think of my hero’s physical abilities. These abilities will set The Hopper apart from other superheroes. Superman can fly and has super strength. Batman has all sorts of special gadgets that help him fight crime. The Hopper will be able to jump, of course. He will be able to jump over tall buildings and across great distances. Grasshoppers have the ability to make a high-pitched sound with their legs. The Hopper will use this sound to disable his enemies. In addition, he will be able to command thousands of bugs to help him.

There is so much to do when creating a superhero. I have to draw The Hopper in his costume. I also have a lot to figure out. Why does he have these abilities? Where does he come from? I even have to think of villains for him to fight.
Organize the following sentences into information about the famous superheroes Batman and Superman and the imaginary superhero The Hopper. Two sentences will NOT be used.

a. During the day they are Bruce Wayne and Clark Kent.
b. One superhero is Artie Spence during the day.
c. One superhero does not have any villains to fight yet.
d. One superhero can fly and has superhuman strength.
e. One superhero uses gadgets to help him fight crime.
f. Some superheroes do not wear disguises.
g. One superhero dresses as an insect to hide his real identity.

Complete the summary by filling in the blanks.

A writer imagines what it would take to create a 1 ___________. The most important thing to think of is the hero’s 2 ___________ identity. This is to 3 ___________ friends from acts of revenge. The writer decides to disguise the hero as a 4 ___________. The writer decides that a superhero also needs special physical 5 ___________. The Hopper will be able to 6 ___________ long distances. He will also be able to disable his 7 ___________ using sound. The writer still needs to think of other details in order for The Hopper to be complete.

Choose the best answer.
1. A superhero needs a secret identity in order to protect his friends from acts of ___________.
   a. revenge   b. strength   c. bad luck   d. daring
2. According to the passage, The Hopper needs unique physical abilities to make him ___________.
   a. different from other superheroes   b. fight criminal activity
   c. control thousands of bugs   d. create a secret identity
3. According to the passage, which of the following is NOT true about The Hopper?
   a. He will be able to leap over tall buildings.
   b. He will be able to bend steel with his bare hands.
   c. He will be able to disable his enemies using sound.
   d. He will be able to lead other insects.
4. What can be inferred about The Hopper?
   a. He will never have his own comic book like Superman.
   b. He will eventually become a villain.
   c. His creator is a grown man.
   d. His power comes from a magical bite.

Answer the following questions in 1 or 2 sentences.
1. According to the author, what is the most important decision to make when creating a superhero?
   ____________________________________________________________________________________.
2. According to the author, what sets one superhero apart from another?
   ____________________________________________________________________________________.
3. What does the author still need to do to create the Hopper?
   ____________________________________________________________________________________.