

ORIGIN STORY

Every hero has an origin story. An *origin story* is a story that explains how a person (or character) came to be who they are today. An origin story can be positive, negative, or neutral. Basically, an origin story is any event that changed the person in some way and influenced who they are today.

An origin story can also be your coming out story or your journey of learning to love and accept yourself for who you are, including your sexual orientation and your gender identity. Like every person, real or fictional, you deserve to tell your truth and your story because no one deserves to live in the closet. You are allowed to be you -- the real, beautiful, wonderful you. And your story matters.

Can you think of some examples of origin stories? What kinds of superhero, or science fiction, or fantasy origin stories have you heard or read about before?

Here are a few fictional characters to get you thinking. Feel free to write out the answers to these questions, draw them, or think about them. If you are unfamiliar with some of these stories, it is okay to skip them or to look them up online!

- How did Harry Potter learn he was a wizard?
- What led Rey from *The Force Awakens* to discover that she has Jedi powers?
- How did Kate Kane become Batwoman?
- How does Adora become She-Ra, the Princess of Power?
- How does Charlie Bradbury become a hunter on *Supernatural*?
- What helps Simon Spier come out to his friends and family in *Love, Simon*?

Often - especially for superheroes - an origin story can involve an awful experience, such as a loss of a family member. For example, Batman (Bruce Wayne) witnessed both of his parents being killed by a mugger, when he was a small child. After this terrible experience, Bruce Wayne grew up to become Batman, the protector of his city.

Some origin stories include one significant event (like Bruce Wayne witnessing the death of his parents). Other origin stories take place over a long period of time. For example, Kate Kane experienced years of homophobia and prejudice before she became Batwoman, a powerful protector of Gotham City.

Some people have one origin story, while other people experience multiple origin stories. For example, Adora, a Superhero from *She-Ra*, was adopted at birth, and she learns that the people who raised her intend to destroy her planet. She later becomes She-Ra, the protector of her home planet and her people.

Not all origin stories involve trauma. While some origin stories are life changing, others can seem less significant to you but still have meaning. Moving to a different city, changing schools, discovering your talent or discovering your true identity can also be your origin story and can impact your life.

For example, when Theo, a character in *The Chilling Adventure of Sabrina*, comes out to his friends about his gender identity, specifying his pronouns and adopting his new name, his true friends react in a very supportive way. Theo's other classmates are initially cruel to him. They bully him, misgender him, and call him by his dead name. Over time, however, everyone -- including the school jocks and Theo's own family -- accept him and love him.

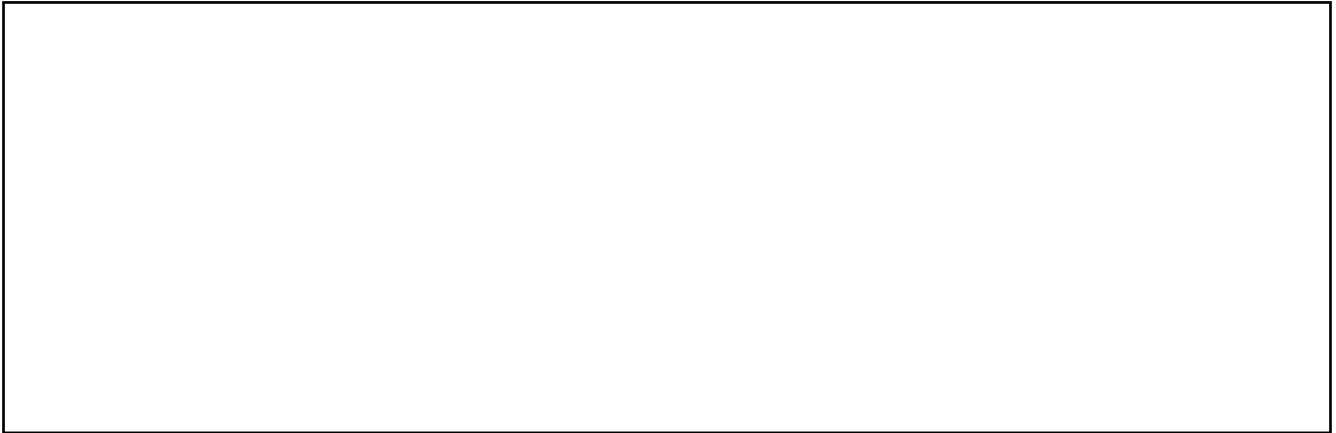
See if you can think about an origin story of your favorite fictional character or perhaps a real-life hero, someone you look up to, someone who is compassionate and wise. What happened to the character to get them started on their journey to becoming the hero that you love or admire?

Feel free to write about your favorite fictional origin story, draw it, or simply think about it.



Sometimes, our most excruciating experiences -- such as rejection from people we love, or an internal struggle to accept our true identity -- can serve as our own origin story. Perhaps there is a part of your appearance, your abilities, or your mental health that is very challenging for you to embrace. Origin stories can be very difficult, and they are also only the beginning of your heroic quest. The rest of your journey is up to you.

Think about your origin story (either from the past or the present). You can write it down or draw it (stick figures and word bubbles are perfectly okay). This will be for your eyes only; you don't have to show this to anyone. If you don't feel comfortable writing or drawing your origin story, you can think about a song that helps you process key experiences that are part of your origin story.




Next, think about how your origin story changed you. What did you learn from this experience?

It might be that you have learned empathy toward other people who are just at the beginning of their self-exploration or their coming-out journey. It could be that you have learned how challenging it is for some people to be open about who they really are, and you wish to pave an easier way for others.

Perhaps as a result of the pain you have endured, you became more caring, more understanding toward the pain of others, more artistic or creative, or more motivated to help other people.

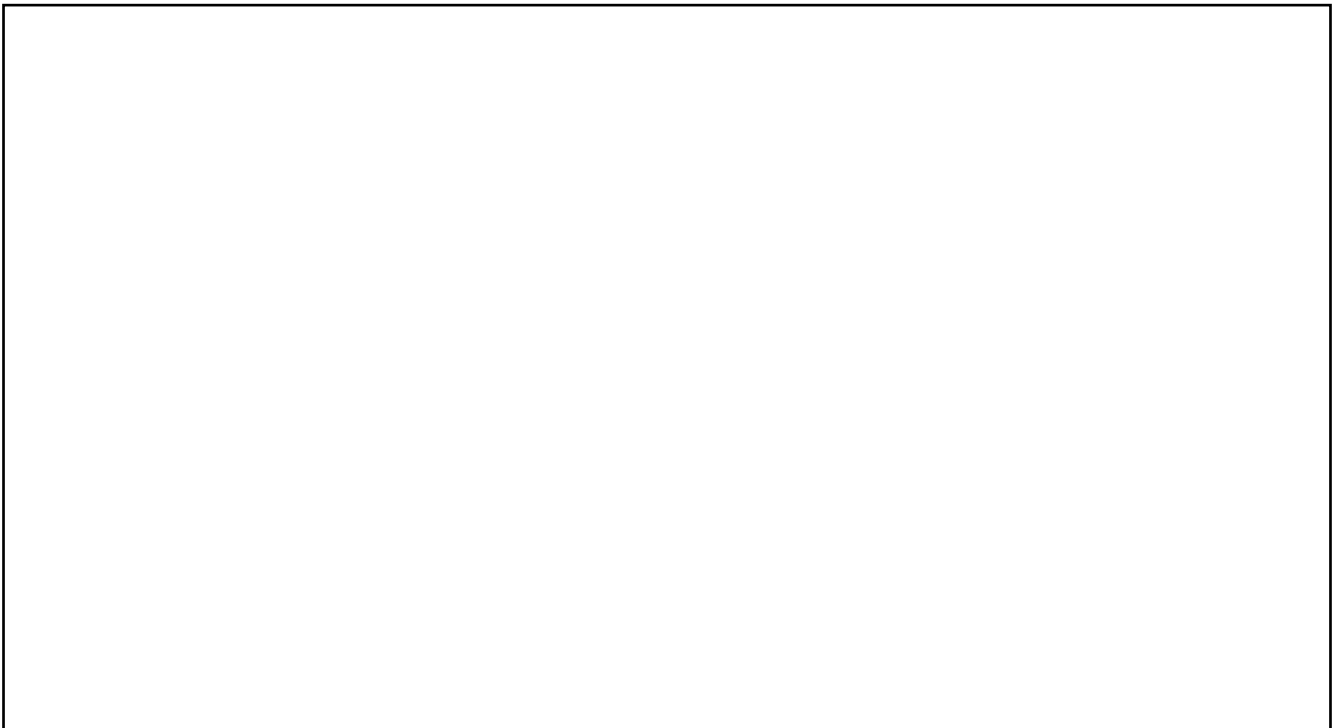
Feel free to write about, draw, or think about how you have been changed or transformed.





Now, take a few moments to imagine that you have some alone time with your personal hero. Your hero knows exactly what you have been through, what your origin story is, and how it has shaped you. Your hero is understanding, supportive, and encouraging. Your hero knows exactly what to say to you to provide comfort and validation. What words would your hero say to you?

If it is too difficult to think of what your hero may say to encourage you, that is okay. It happens to a lot of people. Take a breath. You can always try this exercise at another time, when you are ready to imagine your favorite hero talking to you, heart to heart.



Always remember, you are loved for being exactly for who you are. Who you are makes you magical. Who you are makes you special. Thank you for being you.