



SUPERHERO IRL

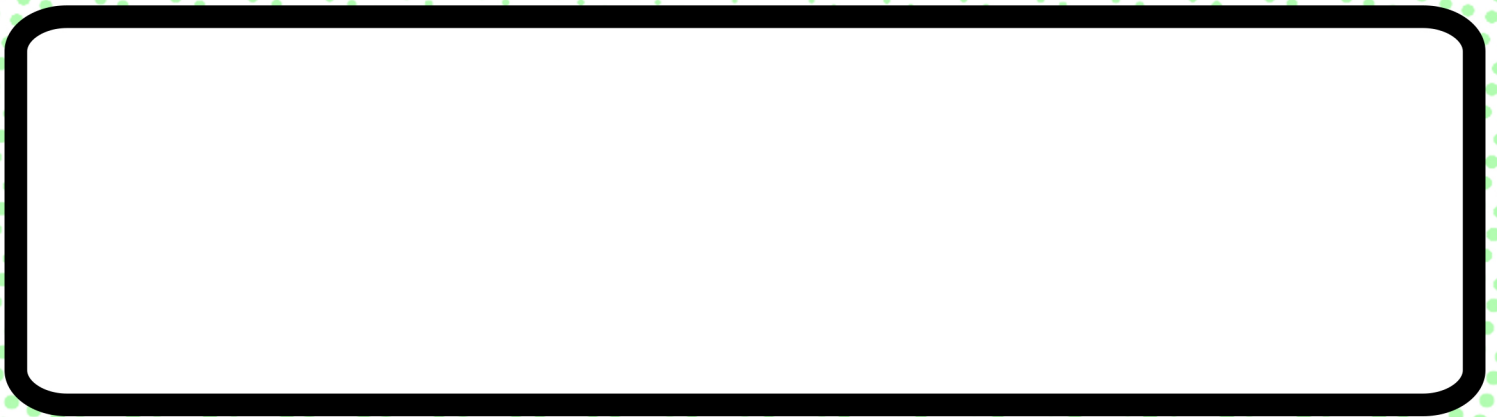
ORIGIN STORY PART I
BY DR. JANINA SCARLET

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 the event changed the person in some way and influenced who they are today.

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?

Feel free to write out the answers to these questions, draw them, or think about them. Feel free to skip the ones you don't know the answers to.

o Do you know how Peter Parker became Spider-Man?



o How did Harry Potter learn he was a wizard?



o What led Rey from *The Force Awakens* to discover that she has Jedi powers?

o How did T'Challa earn his Black Panther title and become the hero of Wakanda?

Oftentimes, 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.

All of these heroes' origin stories contributed to a "call to action" (a strong sense that we should be acting to help others).

How did Bruce Wayne's loss of both parents contribute to his decision to become Batman?

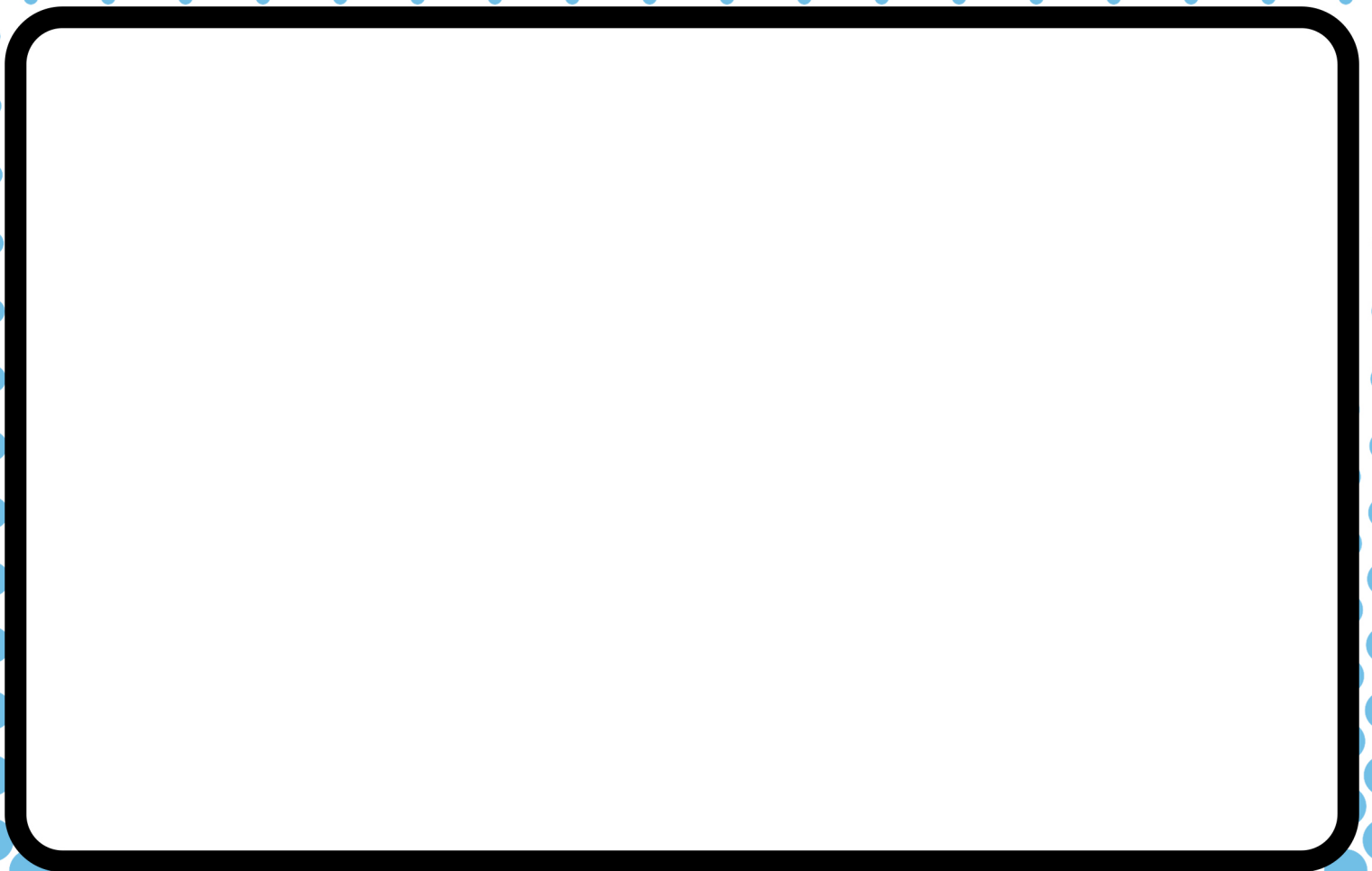
Some origin stories include one significant event (like Bruce Wayne witnessing the death of his parents). Other origin stories take place over a long period of time. For example, Harry Potter's relatives abused him for 10 years before he ever learned that he was a wizard and before he was able to go away to Hogwarts, the school where he learned magic.

Some people have one origin story, while other people experience multiple origin stories. For example, Peter Parker gained his spidey abilities after he was bit by a radioactive spider but he only decided to become the friendly neighborhood Spider-Man, a superhero, after his uncle was killed by a mugger.

Not all origin stories have to be traumatic. While some origin stories are life changing, others can seem less significant to us but still have meaning. For example, moving to a different city, changing schools, giving a speech for the first time, becoming a sibling, or discovering that you have a talent for (or an interest in) some kind of an activity can also be our origin stories and can impact our lives.

Think about an origin story of your favorite fictional character or real life hero. Think about what happened to them to get them started on their journey to becoming the hero that you love or look up to.

Feel free to write out your answer, draw it, or think about it.



MEET THE DOCTOR

Dr. Janina Scarlet is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist, author, and a full-time geek. A Ukrainian-born refugee, she survived Chernobyl radiation and persecution.

She immigrated to the United States at the age of 12 with her family and later, inspired by the *X-Men*, developed Superhero Therapy to help patients with anxiety, depression, and PTSD. Superhero Therapy refers to incorporating popular culture examples into evidence-based therapy to help the client to become the hero of their own journey. Dr. Scarlet is the recipient of the Eleanor Roosevelt Human Rights Award by the United Nations Association for her work on Superhero Therapy.

Dr. Scarlet's work has been featured on Yahoo, BBC, NPR, Sunday Times, CNN, CW, ABC, Huffington Post, The New York Times, Forbes, the Nerdist, BuzzFeed, Bleeding Cool, CNET, Mugglenet, LADbible, and many other outlets. She currently works at the Center for Stress and Anxiety Management in San Diego and has authored *Superhero Therapy*, *Harry Potter Therapy*, *Therapy Quest*, *Dark Agents*, *Super-Women*, as well as numerous contributions to *Star Wars Psychology*, *Star Trek Psychology*, *Wonder Woman Psychology*, *Supernatural Psychology* and many other books.

Founded in 2013, SuperheroIRL is a project of Pop Culture Hero Coalition, the first 501c-3 non-profit to use relatable stories from TV, comics, and film, to develop tools for living, including conflict resolution, resilience, empathy, and other crucial mental health skills.

Created by pop-culture-fluent clinical psychologists and educators, our work is in schools, comic cons, children's hospitals – and homes in the age of COVID-19.

www.PopCultureHero.org

For info and requests, please email info@PopCultureHero.org

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