

1 "What makes a superhero?"

What makes a superhero? Is it the costume, the mask, the cape that flows behind them as they fly away to save the day once again? Is it the strength of ten men, the x-ray vision, the ability to regenerate within seconds of receiving a wound? Or is it the morality and empathy that drives them to put the well-being of an entire population above their own?

One could argue that it is all of these things. What is a superhero without powers, without a secret identity, without extraordinary strength? Obviously there are some heroes that don't have the powers, but are still "super" in their own right.

The Archetype

Superman, hands down, is a classic archetype superhero. He is, after all, "faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive, and able to leap tall buildings in a single bound". He can fly, he's incredibly strong, and he's got a kick-ass¹ costume to top it all off. He also has the alter ego, Clark Kent, the passive, milquetoast² reporter of Metropolis's *Daily Planet*. The secret identity is one of the main trademarks of a superhero. After all, if everyone knew that little Clark Kent was really Superman, well, he wouldn't be able to get anything done at the *Planet*, now would he? People would get to expect too much of him and he wouldn't be able to run off and anonymously save the world from mass destruction if he is constantly getting flagged down to save a cat stuck in a tree. Superman is considered the prototype for subsequent superheroes, although there are many that stray from this basic formula.

Associated Content (November 2007)

1. very impressive

2. a very timid, unassertive person, especially one who is easily dominated or intimidated



Cover of *Superman, The Man of Steel*
DC Comics (April 1997)

2. Find characteristics for Superman mentioned in the text.

a) Superpowers

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b) Alter ego /

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1. Find 6 different characteristics of a superhero in the document.

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