“Superpatriot”

by Avi

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edited by Jon Scieszka

Superman. Batman. Robin. Wonder Woman. The Flash. Hawkman. Plastic Man. The Green Lantern. Captain America. Captain Marvel Junior. Mary Marvel. Uncle Marvel. Best of all, Captain Marvel. To name only the important ones.

They may have been comic book characters to some people, but they were my role models. Hardly a coincidence that all these superheroes went through life pretending (like me) to be normal. With a quick change of costume (better than underwear) or, in the case of Billy Batson, at the utterance of a magic word ----*Shazam!*---- they turned into superheroes. They didn’t just right the wrongs in the world; they always thought of other people. Not one selfish or self-serving bone in their muscular bodies. No wonder that, having worked hard to defeat our enemies during World War II, they were great patriots.

I never could read enough about them. But then I was aiming to be a superhero. After all, I had mastered half the role ----being, like Clark Kent, mild mannered.

Then I learned the truth about myself.

It happened in 1946. Right after the war. I was nine years old. Hospitals were full of wounded military personnel. Somehow I learned that they, too, liked comic books. As they convalesced, they would enjoy some.

I decided to hold a comic book drive at my school, Public School Eight. During the war, there were many such patriotic collection efforts. Newspapers. Scrap metal. Even string. So when I asked my teacher if I could organize a comic book collection drive for “our boys” in hospitals, I received an enthusiastic “OK.”

To announce this drive, I went from class to class and spoke about how our boys had sacrificed a lot for us. How unselfish they were. That by giving them our beloved comics, we, too, could be unselfish patriots. I spoke at the weekly assembly, making a rousing patriotic speech. I was praised. My parents were praised. And the comic books came pouring in.

Hundreds of them. Sure, there were some Little Lulus, and Archies

----girl comic books---- but so what? I read each and every one of them. I read them in the morning before school. After school. At night. I read them under the covers. In the bathtub. At the dinner table. On the toilet.

“Don’t you think you should send them off to the hospitals?” my mother prodded. She had found a place to send them----along with an address and a willingness to pay the postage.

“I haven’t finished reading them all,” I said.

“Who are they for?” she asked.

I was too busy reading to answer.

A month later, I came home from school and discovered she had scooped them up, packaged them, and sent them off.

I was mad. “They were mine!” I protested.

“Oh?” she replied, with a lift of one eyebrow.

A few weeks later I received a letter from the hospital. They thanked me lavishly. Told me how much the boys enjoyed the gift. The last line read, “America is great because of unselfish patriots like you.”

Soon as I read that line, I knew-----as sure as I knew anything----that my motives had not been pure. I wanted to read those comic books myself. I had been selfish. I was not going to be a superhero.

Oh, I kept on reading about superheroes. But I was reading about them, not me. It was clear even to me that I was doomed to remain just…mild mannered.

Memoir Listening Passage

Title: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Author: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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| MEMOIR TRAITS | | EXAMPLES FROM THE MEMOIR | |
| Beginning catches reader’s attention | |
| Focuses on ONE event | |
| Reveals the feelings of the author | |
| Narrative Elements | Setting | Characters | Plot (3 main events) |
| Theme / Lesson learned by the author |
| Description brings story to life |

Memoir Listening Passage

Key

Title: \_\_\_\_\_”Superpatriot\_\_\_\_\_\_

Author: \_\_\_\_\_Avi\_\_\_

