Big Idea
Telling your own story as a superhero through comics and sequential art

Your students will:
• Envision themselves as superheroes
• Come up with a story to tell in the form of a comic book
• Create their own sequential art with a beginning, middle and end

Learn about Comic Books and Graphic Novels with Freddie!
As a class, co-view the clip from the episode "Comic Books & Sonic Sable," in which Freddie and her best friend Sable explore graphic novels and envision themselves as superheroes. Prompt a discussion about the episode. Conversations starters might include:

1. What did you learn about comic books and graphic novels in this episode? Are there any comics or superheroes you like? Share something about them with the class.
2. What was the goal of Eric Battle's graphic novel BLAM!: Black Lives Always Mattered? How did the artists envision real life people as superheroes and why?
3. Freddie helps support Sable when she decides to take a break from making comics. Artist Eric Battle explains that Freddie is being an ally. What is an ally? Can you think of a time when someone has been an ally to you or when you’ve shown up and supported a friend?

Make Your Own Comic Strip!
Teacher Prep:
1. Consider printing out the provided comic book template for your students to use.
2. If you have access to comic books or graphic novels, bring some in for your class to look through for inspiration. A copy of BLAM! would be the perfect book to have on hand for this lesson.

Materials
• Paper
• Rulers
• Drawing supplies
• Optional: A printer and comic book template
Instructions

1. Imagine if you were a superhero! Fill in the blanks:
   - My superhero’s name is ________.
   - My superpowers are ________.
   - My nemesis is ________ because ________.

2. Draw yourself in your superhero costume. Do you have a cape or mask? Any special tools? Sketch it out.

3. Ask students to come up with a story about their superhero selves encountering their nemeses. What is the problem in their story? What is the beginning, middle and end?

4. Have students illustrate their stories as a page in a comic book. Use the printed comic book template, or ask students to use a ruler to draw panels (squares and rectangles that contain each illustration) on a piece of paper.

5. Remind students to add in word bubbles, thought bubbles and captions in their stories. How can they imply how each character is speaking through text? Maybe big letters show that a character is shouting and small letters indicate a whisper.

6. Invite the class to share their comics with the class.

Vocabulary

**Sequential art**: Visual storytelling in which pictures occur in a certain order

**Graphic novel**: A book that tells a full, complete and often long story using sequential art

**Comic book**: A shorter part of a longer story or narrative, like a chapter from a book, using sequential art

**Panel**: The border that contains each individual moment and illustration in a comic book or graphic novel

**Nemesis**: The main rival or enemy in a story

Tips and Extensions

- Eric Battle teaches Freddie that superheroes aren’t always imaginary characters. They can be regular people who make a difference in our world by standing up for what is right. Encourage students to create their own biographical comic book page about a person they admire who has made a difference in the world.

- Combine all the students’ comics into a classroom graphic novel. Students can even team up to create a book about different classroom characters. How would you make a Second Grade Justice League, for example?
School-to-Home Connection

- Sable incorporates her dad into her comics. Find inspiration in your own family members and add them as characters to your story.
- Visit a local library, book store or comic book shop to find more graphic novels to explore. You might be able to find some comic strips in your local newspaper, too.

More about Eric Battle

- Eric Battle is a Philly-based artist and illustrator whose work has been featured in Marvel and DC Comics. He is the creator and art director of the graphic novel *BLAM! Black Lives Always Mattered!* for which he invited artists to highlight the lives of 14 Black Philadelphians, including Marian Anderson, Cecile B. Moore and W.E.B. Du Bois. The graphic novel was developed for readers of all ages to learn more about influential African American leaders.
More Classroom Activities
Visit PBS LearningMedia for more lesson plans like this inspired by *The Infinite Art Hunt*.

Children’s Books with Related Themes
Check out these children’s books online or at your local library to continue exploring the concepts in this episode.

**BLAM! Black Lives Always Mattered** by Eric Battle
Eric Battle’s graphic novel illustrated by a group of artists and highlighting the lives of 14 influential African Americans in Philadelphia.

**Dog Man: Grime and Punishment** by Dav Pilkey
Part of the Dog Man series, this graphic novel for early readers focuses on helping your friends and doing good.

**When Marian Sang** by Pam Muñoz
A story detailing Marian Anderson’s struggle to let her voice be heard in the face of racial injustice.