

# What Superheros are made of!

**Inspired By:** Jay Laber and Kristen Kainz

**Topics:** Art & Philosophy

**Grades:** 3 and up

**Estimated Time:** 90 mins to 120

## Materials

Found/recycled objects and materials for the “body” and other superhero attachments (i.e. plastic bottle, yogurt container, paper towel roll, tin can, buttons, old keys, towels) really anything. wire, hot glue, ducttape, tape, butterfly pins, acrylic or tempera paint, and permanent markers.

## Key Terms

- **Sculpture:** A piece of art that is made by adding material together or removing material from a whole piece. Typical materials are metal, clay, and stone.
- **Stereotypes:** Are unfair and untrue beliefs about a group of people.
- **Metaphor:** Taking a description of an object, event, or idea and using its meaning to describe something else.
- **Identity:** Who someone is, what they believe and feel.
- **Artistic Activism:** Using art to bring about social change.
- **Honor:** respect that is given to someone who shows good character through their actions.
- **Armature:** A frame or skeleton used by a sculptor to build around and support any attachments.

## Introduction

Artist Jay Laber was a Blackfeet sculptor who created his artwork to fight stereotypes of Native people. Jay turns negative feeling towards Native people into a strength and a reason for making art. Jay uses parts of old run down cars from Native reservations to build his sculptures. These parts are seen as forgotten and discarded. Jay thinks of these car parts as a metaphor for Native people. So, Jay puts carefully picked car parts together to make lively animal and Native people sculptures. Jay is showing that Native people are not forgotten like an old car parts, but that they are strong and beautiful.

Artist Kristen Kainz makes sculptures and paintings inspired by living in Montana. Kristen takes metal scrapes and old tools to form them into many of the animals you would see in Montana. Kristen can start a sculpture by seeing one piece of scrap metal, and then she will imagine the rest of the animal. In Kristen’s mind she can see the animal and then picks out old parts to put the sculpture together. Creating a sculpture that will come alive and have energy!

## Process

Step 1: Grab a piece of paper and pencil. Now, take 5-10 minutes, think about all the powers your superhero has and write them down. Ok, now give your superhero a name! So, now you have a superhero with superpowers.

Step 2: Find a recycled or found object that will be the “body” of your superhero. Think about your superhero what shape will work best. Now spend some time collecting a few other recycled or found objects that you think will help you make your superhero. Think about Jay Laber and how he used old and forgotten objects to make something powerful! Also, how artist Kristen Kainz used everyday materials to make sculptures that come alive!

Step 3: After collecting and thinking about your materials you may have to cut, bend, and fold these materials to make your arms, legs, and head. Start cutting all the pieces you will need to put your superhero together.

Grades 6 and up - Think about your superpowers and how they will affect the size and shape of the superhero’s arms, legs and head. Does your superhero need a hat, cape, or a mask?

Step 3: Now using your hot glue, duck tape, and or pins, start putting your superhero together. Taking time to think about where all the parts go and why.

Grades 6 and up - Think about where you place these pieces, what are the reasons you are putting certain pieces where.

Step 4: Now that you have assembled your superhero, are they missing anything, any clothes or tools that will help with their superpowers?

Grades 6 and up - Try adding another material to show more of your superhero’s superpowers.

Step 5: After you are finished putting your superhero together, now it is time to paint or color your super hero.

Grades 6 and up - Think about why you are using the colors you are. What does it mean to use these colors?

Step 6: Now, let your superhero dry if needed. While your superhero dries, take 10 minutes to write a story about how your superhero and their powers.

Grades 6 and up - Write a story about how your superhero used their powers for good and why they should be honored. Remember, superheroes are honored by people because they are respected for the good things they do for others and/or the earth.

## Reflection

- Share with your peers and discuss the choices you made- subject, messages, colors, etc...
- Do you think there are people in your life that you could honor and show appreciation to.
- Do you think what is inside someone is just as important as the outside?
- How would you use your found objects and materials differently?
- Share your work on AMM’s Community Gallery!!

## Standards

- **Anchor Standard #1:** Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work
- **Anchor Standard #3:** Refine and complete artistic work
- **Anchor Standard #6:** Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work
- **Anchor Standard # 7:** Perceive and analyze artistic work
- **Anchor Standard #8:** Construct meaningful interpretations of artistic work
- **Anchor Standard #10:** Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art
- **Anchor Standard #11:** Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding, including artistic ideas and works by American Indians