



Write Your Power with Tony Weaver, Jr.
Superhero Stories and Science Fiction
Facilitator Guide

Welcome, Educators, Facilitators, and Superheroes!

This guide supports facilitation of 826 Digital’s anthology project Write Your Power with Tony Weaver, Jr.: Superhero Stories and Science Fiction. It includes prompts, activities to guide students through the writing process, and steps to [submit their finished writing](#) for a chance to be featured in 826 National’s 2026 student anthology!

The theme for this year’s anthology, **superheroes and science fiction**, comes at a time when so much of the world feels out of our control. This is especially true for young people, who may be questioning the world around them and their place in it. Now is the time for students to imagine what could and should be through writing.

In this moment, students need to hear:

You are powerful.

You can make a difference by sharing your story.

You are capable of creating extraordinary worlds—both real and imagined.

Our goal for this anthology is to provide a platform that will inspire young writers to build bold new worlds and futures, reflect on what makes them uniquely powerful, and develop entirely original characters—from superheroes to villains and beyond. Through it all, they will learn that writing is so much more than creative expression—their words can cultivate curiosity, stretch the limits of what is possible, and inspire real change.

In this guide, you’ll find these resources to help you get started:

- [About the Project](#)
- [Getting Started with the 826 Tenets](#)
- [Session Overview](#)
- [What You’ll Do—Suggested Timing and Activities](#)
- [Recommended Writing Prompt Options](#)
- [Submission Guidelines](#)

About the Project

Each year, 826 National collaborates with an author or other creative leader to share a writing prompt and publishing opportunity with students across the country. For the 2025–26 school and program year, we’re thrilled to team up with Tony Weaver, Jr., acclaimed author of *Weirdo*. Together, we invite young people across the country in grades 5–12 to explore what’s possible through writing science fiction and superhero stories. When they finish, students are encouraged to [submit their writing](#) for a chance to be published in 826 National’s student anthology! All published authors will receive two copies of the publication, which will be released and distributed in June 2026.

See past 826 National student anthologies below:

- [UNBOUND](#) with literacy advocate and librarian Mychal Threats
- [Let This Be Our Anthem](#) with *New York Times* bestselling author Javier Zamora
- [The Beast](#) inspired by a prompt from U.S. Poet Laureate Ada Limón
- [A Place Worth Being](#) with *New York Times* bestselling author Jason Reynolds
- [Poets in Revolt!](#) with inaugural poet Amanda Gorman

About 826 National

826 is the largest youth writing network in the country. 826 National serves as the hub of the movement to amplify student voices and champions the belief that strong writing skills are essential for academic and lifelong success.

The 826 Network now serves more than 775,000 students ages 6 to 18 in under-resourced communities each year online via 826 Digital and through chapters in nine cities: Boston, Chicago, Detroit/Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti, Los Angeles, New Orleans, New York City, San Francisco, Washington, D.C., and Minneapolis/St. Paul. 826 National was established in 2008 to support a growing network of writing centers founded by author Dave Eggers and educator Nínive Calegari in San Francisco in 2002.

We work toward a country in which the power and the joy of writing is accessible to every student in every classroom. Together, we believe writing is the key to cultivating a new generation of creative and diverse thinkers who will define a better, brighter, and more compassionate future.

About Tony Weaver, Jr.

Tony Weaver, Jr. is an award-winning writer and educator who creates diverse stories that make young people feel seen and valued. After seeing the impact that media stereotypes had on students in his community, Tony embarked on a journey to create new media narratives that would challenge the status quo. He is the author of *Weirdo*, a graphic novel for middle grades that celebrates self-acceptance and belonging.

Getting Started with the 826 Tenets

At 826, our work is grounded in the core belief that **all young people are writers**. Our collective impact is guided by the [826 Tenets](#), principles of writing instruction that undergird our approach to writing across 826 Network programs.

This anthology project, which invites young people to explore their power through writing science fiction and superhero stories, is connected to four 826 Tenets:

- **Welcoming & Brave Space:** We provide a space students can call their own where they feel safe to reflect and brave to share their experiences. We strive to ensure that our programs and practices are inclusive and encourage learning from one another.
- **Culture of Creativity:** We create an environment where students are valued as creators and are encouraged to try new ideas and experiment with their work.
- **Student-Driven Pedagogy:** Through approaches such as project and inquiry-based learning, students have agency over their work as they are encouraged to explore their interests, ideas, and personal stories through writing.
- **Celebrating & Amplifying Student Voice:** Students build confidence and take pride in their work as we amplify their writing in professional publications and honor students' voices at community events. Through this process we encourage students to see themselves as authors and changemakers who take the lead in our national dialogue.

In this session, young people will stretch the limits of their imaginations and build new worlds through writing. Here are a few suggestions to cultivate a welcoming and brave space, so that students may feel comfortable taking risks in the writing process:

- Some of the writing prompts used in this session ask students to explore parts of themselves they might initially feel uncomfortable shining a light on. Begin the session with a discussion about community agreements—a shared set of ground rules for how everyone in the space would like to be treated. See our Educator Tool [How to Co-Create a Safe and Brave Space with Students](#) for more detailed information.
- Find ways to make your physical space welcoming and inviting: flexible seating, background music, lowered lighting . . . anything that supports creativity and invites imagination.
- Encourage students to imagine their own superhero persona and to dress the part. Tony Weaver, Jr., for example, often dons a cape and hat with horns on top! Perhaps your students (and you!) have a favorite enamel pin, a cozy hoodie, or sweet kicks they can wear to help them feel like a superhero.

- Whenever possible, write and share alongside young people. This practice models the writing process, and it also invites students to bravely share their own work.
- Encourage students to participate and write in their home language; we welcome submissions in all languages. English translations are encouraged but not required for publication.

To learn more about how 826 uses writing to create community and to support students' positive identity development, check out our Educator Tools, [Building Community Through Writing](#), [How to Co-Create a Safe and Brave Space with Students](#), and [Writing to Discover Yourself](#).

Session Overview:

Inside all of us lives a story waiting to be told. This anthology project invites students to explore the stories they carry, as well as the limits of their imagination, by writing science fiction and superhero tales.

The session is designed to offer you and your students multiple entry points to explore the science fiction genre. It includes four options for writing prompts that touch on world-building, character development, speculative fiction, and poetry.

Each prompt encourages students to think about superhero stories in a new way. They ask students to dream new worlds, create characters that defy expectations, reimagine lived experiences with bold new outcomes, and reflect on what makes them uniquely powerful.

You can choose to teach one of the writing prompts, offer students a choice of prompts, or try all four prompts if time allows. See the Before You Begin section for recommendations for implementing the prompts with students.

Time: We recommend at least two to three hours total, depending on the prompt(s) students are responding to. Just like all 826 Digital lessons, you can break sessions into shorter blocks that best fit your classroom or program schedule.

Materials:

All lessons and student handouts are available in English and Spanish. You can find materials needed for each prompt, as well as Spanish translations, in the "Materials" section on each lesson page. See the complete list on page 5.

- Writing Prompt Handouts:
 - [Bold New Worlds–Handout](#)
 - [Heroes \(and Villains, Mentors, and Sidekicks\) of the Future–Handout](#)
 - [Character-O-Matic–Handout](#)
 - [Reclaim Your Power–Handout](#)
 - [Superhero Persona Poems–Handout](#)
 - [Nuevos mundos imaginativos– Hojas de trabajo](#)
 - [Héroes \(y villanos, mentores y compañeros\) del futuro – Hojas de trabajo](#)
 - [Personaje-mágico–Hojas de trabajo](#)
 - [Recupera tu poder– Hojas de trabajo](#)
 - [Poemas de personajes de superhéroes–Hojas de trabajo](#)
- Writing utensils
- Scratch paper, notebooks, and/or writing journals

Before You Begin:

Before you get started, familiarize yourself with the prompt options and activities in [STEP 3](#). We suggest identifying at least two prompts so students can choose one that interests them most. Depending on time, of course, you can plan for students to respond to just one of the prompts or to all the prompts—they work together in beautiful ways!

Facilitator Note:

Some activities in these prompts encourage students to reflect on their identity, their power, and their place in the current world. When introducing the prompt(s), be mindful that students will exhibit a wide range of social and self-awareness. You know your students best—if you sense students are struggling with an activity or prompt, invite them to write about what they feel comfortable sharing and to take risks when they feel ready. All students should feel welcome to participate.

What You'll Do—Suggested Timing and Activities:

Step 1: Welcome and Check-in

10 Minutes

Welcome participants, pass out name tags if they are gathering for the first time, and begin with a check-in question to frame the session. We suggest one of the following:

- If you could have any superpower, what would it be?
- If you could have a secret, unexpected superpower, what would it be? (The ability to make ice cream appear whenever you wanted? The ability to finish your homework at warp speed? The ability to mute your little brother?)

- What is your everyday superpower, secret or not? (The ability to make your sister laugh when she's mad? Excellent dance moves? Superknowledge about random facts?)
- Who's your favorite superhero or villain?

Decide how writers will respond to the question: they can share with a partner, share in a small group, write their response on their name tag, etc. If you're splitting the session across multiple days, you can use a different check-in question to kick off each day.

Note: If this is the first time this group of young people are coming together, we also suggest spending some time talking about [community agreements](#), or what kinds of supportive behaviors they appreciate when working in a new group.

Share with students that today, they will be writing about superheroes and get the chance to imagine new characters and worlds. The characters and worlds they build may be totally fantastical, inspired by their identities and experiences, or a bit of both. The amazing thing about science fiction is that anything is possible, and in this project, they will have the power to shape their own story.

Then, introduce the idea that superhero fiction is a type of science fiction. Share the following definition of science fiction:

- **Science fiction: a genre of fiction that is based on imagined scientific breakthroughs and major social and environmental change; this genre of fiction is often driven by the question "what if?" and challenges the status quo through envisioning new worlds and futures**

Then, read (and project, if possible) this quote from Tony Weaver, Jr.:

"The things that make you weird are the things that make you powerful."

Ask students to share with a partner or a small group what they think this quote means: how does this quote connect to the idea of superheroes and/or science fiction?

Step 2: Play Video

5 Minutes

To introduce the video, share the following details with students:

- Tony Weaver, Jr. is the author of *Weirdo*, a graphic novel for middle grades that celebrates self-acceptance and belonging.

- After seeing the impact that media stereotypes had on students in his community, Tony embarked on a journey to create new stories that would challenge the status quo.
- He reminds us that everyone has a superpower and a story that is worth sharing with the world.
- In his video, Tony shares an exciting opportunity to share YOUR writing and become a published author—let’s watch together.

If A/V allows, play his video: [Write Your Power with Tony Weaver, Jr.](#) Alternatively, you may choose to read the transcript with students:

I think more kids should be published authors. Because literacy isn't just reading – it's also writing. So I'm partnering with 826 National to help kids become published authors with their own storytelling. We're publishing an anthology made entirely out of student stories, and any kid can submit for the chance to have their writing be a part of it.

The theme of the anthology is Super Heroes and Science Fiction. We want to hear about unlikely super heroes and villains. If you're a parent or educator, encourage the kids in your life to share their story. 826 National is providing free lesson plans on worldbuilding, character development, and writing prompts to help their ideas become reality.

It's time people listen to kids instead of ignoring their experiences. Go to 826national.org and submit your story to be a part of our anthology.

Jacobs, A. J. "Write Your Power" *826 National*, September 2025

<https://826digital.com/resources/2026-anthology>

Afterward, ask for reflections or questions.

At this point, to make the publishing opportunity more tangible, it may be helpful to open and display links to previous 826 National student anthologies, found in the [About the Project](#) section of this guide. Tell students they have an opportunity to share their superhero stories and poems with Tony Weaver, Jr., and that their piece might even get published!

Step 3: Time to Write!

60-90 Minutes

Recommended Writing Prompt Options

Students naturally gravitate toward different genres—some are inspired by real-life reflections, while others thrive in wildly imaginative new worlds. That’s why we have

provided a variety of prompts, each with different brainstorming activities and entry points. We recommend reviewing them all and, if possible, selecting at least two that are a good fit for you and your students. Whenever possible, build in choice so students can pick the prompt(s) that ignite their creativity.

1. [Bold New Worlds](#) | Flash Fiction, Grades 9-12

World-building is a vital part of writing compelling science fiction. In this lesson, students will develop a new, in-depth world for their science fiction story.

2. [Heroes \(and Villains, Mentors, and Sidekicks\) of the Future](#) | Fiction, Grades 5-12

What makes a hero? In this lesson, students will develop a captivating character that defies traditional archetypes and then write a superhero story featuring that character.

3. [Reclaim Your Power](#) | Speculative Fiction, Grades 9-12

What if you could change the ending to a memory that left you powerless? In this lesson, students will retell a story with a new ending, reclaiming their power in the process.

4. [Superhero Persona Poems](#) | Poetry, Grades 5-12

When was the last time you felt like a superhero? In this lesson, students will reflect on that moment and write a poem that shows off their inner strengths.

Step 4: Revision

30+ Minutes

We believe revision is the heart of the writing process. In each writing prompt, you'll find revision strategies that help students build specific skills, reflect on their purpose for writing, and showcase their best work. No matter which writing prompt(s) you choose, we recommend dedicating at least thirty minutes, or an extra session, for students to revise and edit their work.

The revision strategies included for each prompt are designed to be adaptable, so you can integrate them into revision structures you may already have in place. If students are gathering for the first time, we encourage you to offer students opportunities to get feedback on their draft in pairs or small groups. These revision strategies can also be used independently, for students to revise their own draft if needed.

If students are submitting their writing to 826 National’s anthology, you might share with students that hundreds of pieces will be submitted for consideration, and revised, edited pieces are more likely to be selected during the review process. Focusing on revision will make their piece shine and help their chances to get their writing published in a real, professionally bound book!

For more ideas on how to approach revision, see 826 Digital’s [Guide to Revision](#).

Step 5: Reflection & Closing

10 Minutes

If time allows, invite participants who feel comfortable to share part of their writing. They can choose to share a paragraph, their favorite line, or even their favorite word. If a student is not ready to share, that’s okay—thank them for writing something new today! Thank all students for showing up and for trying something new in their writing today.

Finally, encourage them to submit their writing for a chance to become published authors! See the submission guidelines below. Whether or not they choose to submit their piece, we hope they continue to use writing as a way to explore what’s possible, both in themselves and in the world around them.

Submit to 826 National’s Anthology!

826 National wants to publish the next generation of writers—that means the young people in your community and learning spaces! Students, families, and educators can submit writing from this session to 826 National, now through December 5, 2025, for a chance to become a published author.

Submissions are open now through December 5, 2025!

How to Submit:

Students and families, submit your work using these links:

- [Students and families submission form](#) – English
- [Formulario de presentación de antología de escritos de estudiantes 2025-2026 de 826 National: ESTUDIANTES Y FAMILIAS](#) – Spanish

Educators and program providers, submit work from multiple young people using this link:

- [Educator submission form](#)

Guidelines:

- Our goal is to publish as many students as possible. With that in mind, we recommend a **maximum word count of 1,000** for each piece.
- Please submit no more than **two submissions per student**.
- We encourage young people to write in their home language, and **we welcome submissions in any language**. If it is possible to include English translations with the original piece, they are welcome but not required.
- Due to the high volume of submissions received, not all pieces will be published in the anthology. The 826 National Anthology review team will review all pieces with the following criteria in mind:
 - **Organization & Form**
The piece creatively explores the science fiction genre and short story/poetry forms, including a variety of narrative and/or poetic devices.
 - **Voice**
The piece is written with a clear and compelling voice. It includes intentional, effective word and stylistic choices, leaving an impact on the reader.
 - **Alignment with the Theme & Prompt(s)**
The author's work clearly aligns with the theme and speaks to the prompt(s).
The writing explores the prompt in a unique way or point of view.
- While we are unable to publish all pieces received, each student writer whose piece is submitted will receive a certificate celebrating their words and their work.
- Students with pieces published in the anthology will receive two free copies of the book, to be published and mailed in June 2026.