

## TV Program Analysis

### “Heroes”

#### 1. Technical

- A. “Heroes” is broadcast nationally on NBC during Monday night primetime from 8 to 9pm Eastern Standard Time. The series has a standard 40 to 45 minute prologue format aside from commercial interruptions. Each episode consists of an average of six 7 to 8 minute acts with 4 to 5 commercial breaks lasting about 3 to 4 minutes. This is typical of an hour long program.
- B. In this episode entitled “Brave New World”, the entire length of the show is 42 minutes and 43 seconds long including the ending credits. The first act is approximately 5 minutes and 50 seconds, Act II is 7 minutes and 30 seconds, Act III is 8 minutes and 40 seconds, Act IV is 4 minutes and 30 seconds, Act V is 5 minutes and 20 seconds, and Act VI is 11 minutes and 33 seconds. So, I would need about 45 to 60 pages of script to yield to commercial breaks and any cuts and changes that may be made before production.

#### 2. Sets

- A. Many different sets are used in the making of the series. For this particular episode, the story takes place at about 5 or 6 different locations, each of which have their own different areas where an event happens. For time-saving purposes since this analysis is a continuation of an existing story with existing knowledge, these sets are based on previously depicted descriptions made by the actual writers. Many of the sets mentioned below will not have a full description.

B. Sullivan Bros. Carnival is where most of the story takes place. Due to the fictional aspects of the series itself, the location of the Carnival varies because of one of the story's "Specials" or super humans who can manipulate earth masses and take an entire sector to a different location on Earth.

- i. Sam Sullivan's Trailer is a crafty hunk of metal that sit near the very center of the carnival. Filled with colorful lights and bolts and mechanical toys, it is where most of the dialogue ensues.

After Claire discovers her father's painful past, she sets out to get her thoughts together. She knows that Sam is just trying to recruit her for his "army." Sam gives her an option to choose between him and her father in return to let her father free. He tells her that her father is in his trailer, so she runs to free him. But, Sam uses his ability to submerge the trailer underground while Claire and Noah are still in it. Claire and Noah are losing oxygen at this point.

- ii. The House of Mirrors is conveniently used to trick the mind on screen as well as in reality. But, the house is especially used as a concrete palette to illustrate the past memories of Noah.

When Sam captures both Claire and Noah, he commands a Special who can project the memories of his victims into the minds of others to show Claire what Noah's past really comprised of.

- iii. The Main Stage is where the "main event" of the episode occurs.

Conveniently exhibiting a neon sign that reads "Sullivan Bros. Carnival," it is

used to apprehend a Special who can transform kinetic-sound energy into a luminous shockwave.

In a previous episode, Sam gives a special cello to the Special with an animated “tattoo” of a compass on it. The tattoo is a mark of Sam’s powers. He convinces her to join the carnival; and then uses another Special who can manipulate the muscles of his victims to lure civilians into his massacre.

- C. Matt’s House is frequently used throughout the series even though the story constantly changes setting. Quite a colorful condo, it is spacious enough to allow reckless battles between the good and bad.

In this episode, Matt imprisons Sytar in his own mind. He then carries the unconscious Sytar into the basement and spends hours building and encasing Sytar in a brick wall. This wall then becomes a physical and metaphorical symbol for Sytar and his psychological issues.

- D. A hospital and a diner are used strictly to illustrate Hiro’s story in the episode. Hiro passes out and nearly dies from a brain tumor caused by his excessive use of time and space traveling. He is rushed to the hospital and taken to the emergency room where he suffers a cardiac arrest. However, Hiro is placed in a hallucinated dream-limbo that is set in the diner where he met Charlie. The diner is playfully changed into a courtroom where Hiro is being “prosecuted” of misuse of altering time and space for personal gain. He is found guilty and is sent into a white hallway similar to that of the hospital. At the end of the hallway is the typical “light at the end of the tunnel.” But, Hiro pleads guilty and winds up battling a former nemesis with Kendo swords. He kills the man and walks toward the light to find his deceased mother at the end of the

tunnel. She heals him and he wakes up in the hospital. Later, he reencounters Charlie who is now in her mid 60s.

Basically, the whole set is used to illustrate the psychological struggles of dealing with the loss of Charlie, his long lost love.

### **3. Theme**

#### **A. Series' Summarized Theme**

- i. The entire series was originally centered on an ordinary cheerleader. After an unusual solar eclipse, she discovers she has the ability to heal her injuries making her nearly indestructible. But little does she know that she is connected to something even bigger than herself. She is not alone. The world she has discovered contains special people like her, and these people are all connected to her by one mean. Out of this comes the theme "Save the cheerleader, save the world."

#### **B. This Episode's Theme**

- i. This episode's theme is about overcoming self-boundaries and accepting oneself and the world around oneself, hence the title "The Wall."

Claire cannot come to accept people into her life. So, she constantly pushes them away to keep from getting hurt again. Her father is always keeping secrets from her, so she keeps awkward distance away from him because she knows he is always up to something. Her new friend tries to connect with her, but, again, she is too scared to let out her emotions and show her true feelings.

Sylar is facing a similar problem with his preconceived future. He was told that he will live the rest of his life alone. After Matt traps him in his own fears, and encases him in a brick wall in real life. The unconscious Sylar dreams of living in a world alone and abandoned. He claims to have been in this world for over 3 years. But when Peter hacks into Sylar's delusion, he tells Sylar that it's only a dream and he had been sleeping for only about 3 hours. This gives Peter the chance to forgive Sylar for killing his brother. But, Sylar cannot even forgive himself. They discover that they are quartered in a giant brick wall. They try for years to break through this wall with sludge hammers, but it does not even crack. When Peter finally forgives Sylar, and Sylar forgives himself, the wall finally begins to chip, and they break free of their confinement.

#### 4. Characters

A. Claire Bennet, played by Hayden Panettiere, is by far the most important character to the series. Without her, the series would have gone in a different direction. Initially, the series was centered on a cheerleader, Claire, who discovers she can rapidly heal her body if she ever injures herself. Along the way, she realizes her importance to a top secret organization bent on hunting these super humans and keeping this new world under wraps.

By this time, Claire is a 20 year old college student who befriended a girl who originally became “over-interested” in her. Her friend has been slowly trying to get close to her, but Claire keeps pushing people away in fear that she will get hurt again and she will never find true happiness. Though Claire eventually gives in and opens up to her new friend, and they develop a relationship on another level.

B. Noah Bennet, played by Jack Coleman, is a typical secret agent working for an organization that hunts down super humans and keeps their abilities from getting out into the greater world. He is not a super human, or “Special” as they refer to it in the series.

Being the foster father of Claire Bennet, Noah struggles to maintain a civil family life. His wife had recently divorced him because he cannot seem to balance his life with the family with his life as a secret agent. He and Claire are always butting heads. Claire knows deep inside that Noah is always hiding something from her, whether it is anything about the past, present, or even future. In spite of all his problems, he desperately tries to hold onto Claire and keep her safe no matter what she thinks of him.

C. Peter Petrelli, played by Milo Ventimiglia, is the youngest son of Angela Petrelli, a woman who has misguided dreams of the future. Peter has the ability to copy to the abilities of other Specials and use them to his liking.

Just recently, his older brother Nathan was killed in an unusual and unfortunate event. When Nathan's mind and body were replaced by Sylar's, the two settled it out in a heated battle. Sylar kills Nathan in Sylar's body leaving Sylar trapped in Nathan's body. However, Sylar has the ability to shape-shift. So, Angela directs Matt to manipulate Sylar's mind into think he is Nathan, thus Sylar turns himself into Nathan. Eventually, Sylar figures it all out and recovers his original memories with some of Nathan's memories.

What does this have to do with Peter? Peter cannot forgive Sylar for killing his brother in the most ridiculous situation even after Sylar had turned good. But later when Matt traps Sylar in his own mind, Peter realizes Sylar can help stop a man named Sam. So, Peter enters Sylar's mind and tries to free him. But, they may only be freed if Peter truly forgives Sylar, and Sylar forgives himself.



D. Sylar, played by Zack Quinto, is the main villain of the series. Since the eclipse, he had spent years murdering innocent and guilty victims as a side effect to his emotional past, and an untamable “beast” lurking inside his mind. With an ability that is similar to that of Peter’s, Sylar would use telekinesis to slash open the skulls and slice the brains of his victims.

Sylar has a history of his father abandoning him in a trade off with a stranger. Later, he discovers that his father had the same telekinetic ability and murders his mother outside the diner where the tradeoff happened. Sylar goes off to hunt for his father in hopes to learn why he is so angry with the world. But even with his new found knowledge, he continues to slash his victims.

At this point, Sylar realizes his true feelings. He was afraid of dying alone after Angela claimed he would. After being trapped in his own mind due to Matt Parkman’s ability and spending years in a time-warped world with Peter in his mind, Sylar later crossed over into the good side.

E. Matt Parkman, played by Greg Grunberg, is a former police officer who can manipulate anyone's mind into doing or seeing what he wants. His telepathy plays an important role in the death of Nathan Petrelli, the incident between Nathan and Sylar, and the incident between Sylar and himself.

Matt lived an ordinary life with his pregnant wife in the beginning of the series. Before his wife has their son, he goes off to help Claire, Hiro, and Noah in their quests. Matt separates from his wife; and then he meets a woman named Daphne who can accelerate into high speeds. They have a short relationship; and then realize they are not meant to be with each other. Matt goes back home and reconnects with his wife and finally meets his son.

Later on before Sylar turns good, he tricks Matt into using his abilities and switches bodies with Matt. For a while, Matt's body is being controlled by Sylar; and Sylar uses Matt's body to frame him. With help of Peter, Matt regains control of his body.

At this point, Matt can no longer face himself. He becomes a stay-at-home dad being too afraid to face the world he cannot seem to run away from. He thinks he is coward. So, he goes on a quest to seek and destroy Sylar before he hurts more people. However, he does not realize that Sylar had succumbed to the good side.

F. Hiro Nakamura, played by Masi Oka, is a hopeful man who has the ability to manipulate time and space. With this ability, he consistently and “single-mindedly” alters everyone’s destiny by changing something in the past. Throughout the series, he is accompanied by his childhood friend Ando; and they frequently communicate with each other in Japanese.

Currently, Hiro is obsessing over “the girl that got away.” Red haired, brown eyed Charlie is Hiro’s dream girl. Although he met her when he traveled far back in time, he still has feelings for her and feels guilty that he aided in her getting lost in time. Sam made a deal with Hiro involving a trade off with Charlie and his own benefits. But, Sam lied to Hiro and had one of his minions use Hiro’s ability to lose Charlie somewhere in time.

After being in the hospital for treatment of a brain tumor he developed with overusing his ability, he stumbles upon an older Charlie who had already had a life of her own. They found each other and agreed to move on with their lives.

G. Ando Masahashi, played by James Kyson Lee, is the tag-along pal of Hiro. Of the two, Ando is normally the wisest as he is constantly helping Hiro out of trouble with reasonable thinking. Most recently, he acquires the ability to send infrared electrical charges out of his body. Not much back story is told about Ando except the fact that Hiro's sister does not like him for some event that happened when they were all children. But despite that, he still maintains his importance to Hiro. He keeps Hiro company and is always there when Hiro needs him.

H. Sam Sullivan, played by Robert Knepper, is the key figure for this season. With his ability to manipulate the earth, he tries to seek vengeance on the human race for his regretful mistakes.

He had murdered his own brother and he left behind his one true love. So, he tries to build a family to cope with his lost family member and his inability to form a family with his lost love. Also, the strength of his ability is determined per capita. In other words, the more people he is around, the greater his ability is. So when he lures the civilians to his carnival, he can kill two birds with one stone. He can strengthen his ability and kill as many people as his ability can buffer. But, Hiro comes along and teleports the civilians out of the carnival leaving Sam powerless and sobbing in his own demise.

- I. Stacy Strauss, played by Ali Larter, is an innocent bystander in the series. She is only important because of her relation to two other women that the main characters have dealt with in the past.

Stacy has the ability to rearrange her molecular structure into water molecules and vice versa. She can also manipulate water kinetically and thermally (turning water into ice). Her importance during this episode is to save Noah and Claire from being suffocated while submerged underground, although Claire can just heal her damaged lungs.

It is difficult to determine the importance of character because of the actress who plays her. Ali Larter can be considered a regular in terms of acting because she has actually played three different characters who just so happen to be triplets in the series. Initially, Larter played a character whose deceased sister possessed her body. Later, both of these characters are killed. Then, the story reveals that they are actually triplets. The third sister is Stacy Strauss.

## 5. Plot

### A. Series Summary

After an unusually eclipse, random people around the world discover that they have super human abilities that changes the face of reality. Prior to this event, a secret organization was founded to hunt down these super humans, or “Specials,” and keep them their secret from getting to the real world. But years later after the eclipse, the organization was taken down allowing Specials to live their lives freely. However, former workers of the organization still seek to keep this world a secret and will stop at nothing to go through with that plan.

### B. A Brief Recap of This Season

Claire’s father enrolls her in college against her will to help her live a normal life. She meets someone shortly after moving into the dorms, and they soon become close friends. Claire decides to pledge a local sorority. But, she discovers that the president of the Chapter is seeking revenge for what Claire’s father did to her father. They had been a part of this “family” of carnies brought together by a man named Sam Sullivan. Sam has been trying to recruit Specials for his “family.” But, he is only using these people for his own personal gain of seeking vengeance on the world that made him kill his own brother.

### C. This Episode’s Plot

Claire learns that Sam Sullivan is recruiting Specials to build up his stamina. The power of his ability is determined by the amount of people he is around. So, he tricks Specials into believing that he is their savior and convinces them to join his carnival of special people.

By this point, the season has reached its peak. It is the season finale and the end of the fifth volume (or fifth season). All of what the organization had done has lead up to this point. Sam plans to expose the secret of their abilities to the rest of the world but only doing so by killing innocent people. He had originally planned to lure a massive amount of people to “view the greatest act ever done” and cause a huge massacre. But, his plan foils when Claire, Hiro, and Sylar come to the rescue.

The fifth volume ends; and the sixth volume begins. Claire comes to realize that she can no longer hide from the real world. She cannot live a normal life. So, she decides to show the news cameras what she really is and what had happened during that night. Claire climbs a nearby Ferris wheel and jumps off the edge onto the ground. She gets up and pops in her dislocated shoulder. She looks at the camera and makes a log similar to the logs she did when she first discovered her ability. The scar on her face heals right before their eyes. Their secret is finally out.

**Note:** the plot has been described further in the above categories.

## **6. Creative Concept**

- A. The series uses numerous amounts of special effects to make the abilities of the Specials look real. Red lightning flashes out of Ando’s hands. Hiro is in one place and all of a sudden disappears in a split second. Computer generated images create the different backgrounds of outside shots. They show a deserted city of Los Angeles with crowded buildings and a blue sky. Sometimes the show does not need special effects to create these illusions. Simple wires and pulleys can send individuals flying in the air when Sylar uses his telekinesis.



- B. The series' creative aspect is similar to that of a comic book. Each episode tells the time and place of each scene in subtexts. Each episode begins with the title generated somewhere in the scene. It could be on a wall, on a desk, or just floating in the air. The characters are not aware of this. This is merely to help guide the viewer along the story. Each episode contains the same little tune to illustrate the beginning of a new journey.