
Joseph J. Darowski, Brigham Young University - Provo

Abstract
Comic book superheroes have become adopted into American popular culture, and yet few have considered why these characters resonate with Americans. The first comic book superhero premiered in 1938 when Superman appeared on the cover of the first issue of Action Comics. For almost seventy years his adventures and the adventures of other costumed heroes have been continually published. Batman soon joined Superman as a popular costumed crime-fighter, and the early 1960s saw another generation of superheroes created that would be embraced in American culture. Among this new group of heroes were Spider-Man and the X-Men, who have proved as popular as Superman and Batman. The never-ending narratives of comic book characters provide a unique opportunity to analyze how superheroes have evolved across the decades to remain relevant for new generations of Americans. Superman, Batman, Spider-Man, and the X-Men are the most popular heroes, not only in comic books, but in other media adaptations. An exploration of why these specific characters have such resonance with Americans will provide insights into American mindsets, ideologies, and philosophies. Furthermore, comic books are uniquely positioned to allow a new historicist reading, as the characters’ adventures have been published on a monthly schedule for decades. A consideration of the alterations made in the narratives to reflect the time periods is inherently enlightening.

Degree
MA

College and Department
Humanities; English

Rights
http://lib.byu.edu/about/copyright/

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation
https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/752

Date Submitted
2006-07-25

Document Type
Thesis

Handle
http://hdl.lib.byu.edu/1877/etd1515

Keywords
Superman, Batman, Spider-Man, X-Men, Spiderman, superheroes, comic books, graphic novel, hero, American culture, popular culture

Language
English

What Superman, Batman, Spider-Man, and The X-Men Reveal About America. Joseph J. Darowski. ISBN: 978-3-8383-0918-7  Batman soon joined Superman as a popular costumed crime-fighter, and the early 1960s saw another generation of superheroes created that would be embraced in American culture. Among this new group of heroes were Spider-Man and the X-Men. An exploration of why some of the most popular comic book characters have such resonance will provide insights into American mindsets, ideologies, and philosophies.