Superheroes in Culture

The encyclopedia of superheroes
Jeff Rovin
P96 H46 R68 1985

Entries for superheroes include their alter ego, first appearance, occupation, costume, tools and weapons, biography, quote and comment. Here is a dictionary of more than 1,000 superheroes culled from mythology, TV, movies, literature, and (chiefly) comic books.

Heroes & villains
Mike Alsford

P96 H46 A46 2006

Hercules, Jesus, James Bond, Luke Skywalker, Gandalf, Frodo, Harry Potter, Buffy Summers, Spiderman, Batman, Captain Kirk, Dr Who, Darth Vader, Sauron, Voldemort, Lex Luthor, Dr Doom, the Daleks, the Borg. This title addresses questions such as: What is a true hero? What is a true villain? Have we misunderstood these terms?

Heroes in the global world
Susan J. Drucker and Gary Gumpert

Available through Summit

The studies in this volume support certain common, perhaps universal conclusions about heroes: All cultures have them; all cultures need them; who or what is considered heroic may vary from culture to culture; the heroes of a culture reflect or define culture values; communication is at the heart of hero creation and maintenance. This volume provides a survey and hopefully stimulates consideration of continuity and change with regard to heroes.

Heroes: what they do & why we need them
Scott T. Allison and George R. Goethals
BF575 C8 A45 2011

Abraham Lincoln, Princess Diana, Rick in Casablanca--why do we perceive certain people as heroes? What qualities do we see in them? What must they do to win our admiration? The authors offer a stimulating tour of the psychology of heroism, shedding light on what heroism and villainy mean to most people and why heroes--both real people and fictional characters--are so vital to our lives.
Killing monsters: why children need fantasy, super heroes, and make-believe violence
Gerard Jones
Available through Summit
An apologist for comic book and video game violence argues that both are essential for young people as they seek to develop a powerful sense of self in the modern era.

Mutants and mystics: science fiction, superhero comics, and the paranormal
Jeffrey J Kripal
PN6725 K75 2011
Account of how comic book heroes have helped their creators and fans alike explore and express a wealth of paranormal experiences ignored by mainstream science.

Reading comics: language, culture, and the concept of the superhero in comic books
Mila Bongco
PN6714 B66 2000
This book examines how the definition of the medium, as well as its language, readership, genre conventions, marketing, and distribution have kept comic books within the realm of popular culture. The evolution of the comic book superhero - from the patriotic heroes of the 1940s to the muscular rebels of the 1990s - is analyzed, showing how as the superheroes change, so does the style and content of the books.

Super heroes: a modern mythology
Richard Reynolds
PN6725 R48 1994
This fascinating book analyzing the import of the superhero in modern world will have special appeal for students of popular culture. In blending academic scholarship with specialized knowledge of the comics medium, this study reveals how comics mythologize the role of the hero and the nature of consensus, authority, and moral choice.

Superhero: the secret origin of a genre
Peter M. Coogan and Dennis O'Neil
Available through Interlibrary Loan
Presents a history, which traces the superhero's roots in mythology, science fiction, and pulps, and follows the genre's development to its renaissance in film, literature, and graphic novels.

Superman on the couch: what superheroes really tell us about ourselves and our society
Danny Fingeroth
PN6714 F54 2004

Presents a psychological analysis of why superheroes are so popular in modern culture, discussing the history of the superhero, the notion of dual identity, powerful women, and other topics. With its roots in ancient mythologies and modern obsessions, the idea of the superhero is one that permeates our entertainment as well as our daily lives. This book examines how the key superhero archetypes - Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman etc. - touch primal needs and experiences in Western culture.

The ten-cent plague: the great comic-book scare and how it changed America
David Hajdu
PN6725 H33 2008

In the years between World War II and the emergence of television as a mass medium, American popular culture as we know it was first created--in the pulpy, boldly illustrated pages of comic books. Comics spoke to young people and provided the guardians of mainstream culture with a big target. No sooner had this new culture emerged than it was beaten down by church groups, community bluestockings, and a McCarthyish Congress. This book opens up the lost world of comic books, its creativity, irreverence, and suspicion of authority, showing how--years before rock 'n' roll--comics brought on a clash between children and their parents, between prewar and postwar standards.

Drawing & Reading Comics and Graphic Novels

Graphic storytelling
Will Eisner
PN6710 E57 1996

Examines the fundamentals of storytelling in comic book style and offers advice on story construction and visual narratives.

Making comics: storytelling secrets of comics, manga, and graphic novels
Scott McCloud
NC1764 M335 2006 (UO PDX)

Presents instructions for aspiring cartoonists on the art form's key techniques, sharing concise and accessible guidelines on such principles as capturing the human condition through words and images in a minimalist style.
Reading comics: how graphic novels work and what they mean
Douglas Wolk
PN6725 W65 2007
This volume contains two sections: "Theory and history," an explanation of comics as a medium and an overview of its evolution, and "Reviews and commentary," a diverse examination of creators and works. The second section spans Will Eisner's pioneering efforts as well as the groundbreaking modern comics by the Hernandez brothers, Chris Ware and Alison Bechdel.

Recommended Reads

American born Chinese
Gene Luen Yang and Lark Pien
PN6727 Y36 A54 2006 (Juvenile Collection)
Alternates three interrelated stories about the problems of young Chinese Americans trying to participate in the popular culture. Presented in comic book format.

The cartoon guide to chemistry
Larry Gonick and Craig Criddle
QD37 G625 2005 (Science Library)
Uses cartoons to discuss chemistry, covering the history of the field and examining such topics as acids, solutions, biochemistry, thermodynamics, logarithms, and physical and organic chemistry.

Ichiro
Ryan Inzana
KNIGHT NONFIC INZ (Knight popular)
Raised by a Japanese mother in New York City, his American father killed in a war, Ichiro finds it difficult to figure out where he fits in. A trip to Japan leaves the boy with his grandfather, in a country he does not know. And one night Ichiro gets dragged down a hole by a monster. When he awakens he isn't in Japan nor the mortal world. He has entered into the domain of the gods. Will Ichiro ever find a place to call home?

Maus: a survivor's tale
Art Spiegelman
D810 J4 S643 1986
The author-illustrator traces his father’s imprisonment in a Nazi concentration camp through a series of disarming and unusual cartoons arranged to tell the story as a novel.
Persepolis
Marjane Satrapi
PN6747 S245 P4713 2003

In powerful black-and-white comic strip images, Satrapi tells the story of her life in Tehran from ages six to fourteen, years that saw the overthrow of the Shah’s regime, the triumph of the Islamic Revolution, and the devastating effects of war with Iraq.

Still I rise: a cartoon history of African Americans
Roland Owen Laird, Taneshia Nash Laird, and Elihu Bey
E185 L35 1997

A complete documentary history of African Americans in one cartoon narrative. As National Book Award winner Charles Johnson points out in his Introduction, the history of African American cartooning is itself a vibrant one, and almost unknown. Still I rise is a great contribution that not only recounts history, but also makes history.

Stitches: a memoir
David Small
PN6727 S54465 S75 2009

One day David Small awoke from a supposedly harmless operation to discover that he had been transformed into a virtual mute. A vocal cord removed, his throat slashed and stitched together like a bloody boot, the fourteen-year-old boy had not been told that he had cancer and was expected to die.

Explore the Library’s Comic Books Collection

Gardner Francis Fox Collection

Gardner “Gar” Francis Fox (1911-1986) wrote adventure stories and comics, creating Steve Malone, Ghost Rider, and The Flash, and contributing to Detective Batman, Dr. Fate, Spectre, and Starman. He wrote pulp paperbacks in several genres under an assortment of pen names. His collection consists of a variety of materials, including 950 comics.

For more information or to inquire about viewing the collection, contact Special Collections & University Archives in the Knight Library.

*Descriptions from book jackets and borrowed from other sources such as amazon.com and worldcat.org.*