

Comics Books: The American mythology

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[...] The popularity of "Spider-Man," "Spider-Man 2," "X-Men," "Sin City" and the upcoming release of "Batman Begins" proves that while there is still a stigma* surrounding the books, the stories are in fact entertaining. But why? Because comic books, as outlandish* as it sounds, are in the same tradition as the myths of ancient Greece.

Comic books are merely fantastic stories about the American experience. Superman is the immigrant story. Spider-Man and Batman encapsulate the ideas that, in America, anyone can do great things. These stories [promote] the collective values on which America was founded.

Superman, for example, is just a fictionalized version of the immigrant experience. Superman, born "Kal-El" on the planet Krypton, was sent to Earth as a baby when Krypton exploded. When he landed on Earth his adopted parents changed his name to the particularly waspy* Clark Kent.

Countless immigrants who passed through the gates at Ellis Island shared this experience. [...] These children grew up, just as Superman, to espouse "American values." They grew up believing wholeheartedly in things like truth, justice and the American way.

[...] Superman isn't the only character whose story is merely a fictionalized version of an American experience or idea. Two other characters are based on a truly American and mythical idea: that ordinary people in extraordinary situations are capable of amazing things. Take Spider-Man and Batman, for instance. These two stories exemplify that idea.

Remember, Batman does not have any superpowers; he is merely a man who is put in extraordinary circumstances.

Spider-Man does have superpowers, but the

means by which he got them was completely random.

A radioactive spider bit Peter Parker (Spider-Man's real name), giving him the source of his power. [...] It could happen to anybody. [...]

Like the myths of ancient Greece, superheroes live in a very black and white world.[...]. They convey* a larger message of good and evil. And good does not need fame or fortune, just the knowledge that today a life was saved and the world was spared one more heartbreak.

So next time you see a comic, don't roll your eyes or immediately dismiss* them as childish. Remember that in 2,000 years, when students are studying the ancient civilization of America, it is quite possible that they will be studying the myth of Superman, the legend of Batman and the tale of the amazing Spider-Man.

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stigma: shame

outlandish : strange and unusual

waspy : referring to White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (an upper- or middle-class American white Protestant

convey : express

dismiss : reject

Questions

1. Name all the comic books and comic book characters mentioned in the text. Which ones does the author specifically focus on?
2. In his opinion what do Superman and immigrants have in common? Find 3 common points
3. In his opinion, what traits make Batman and Spider-Man real American archetypes?
4. According to the author what parallel can be drawn between ancient Greece and America? Justify your answer with 2 quotes
5. **In your opinion :**
Do you agree with the author that comic book superheroes are real modern American myths?