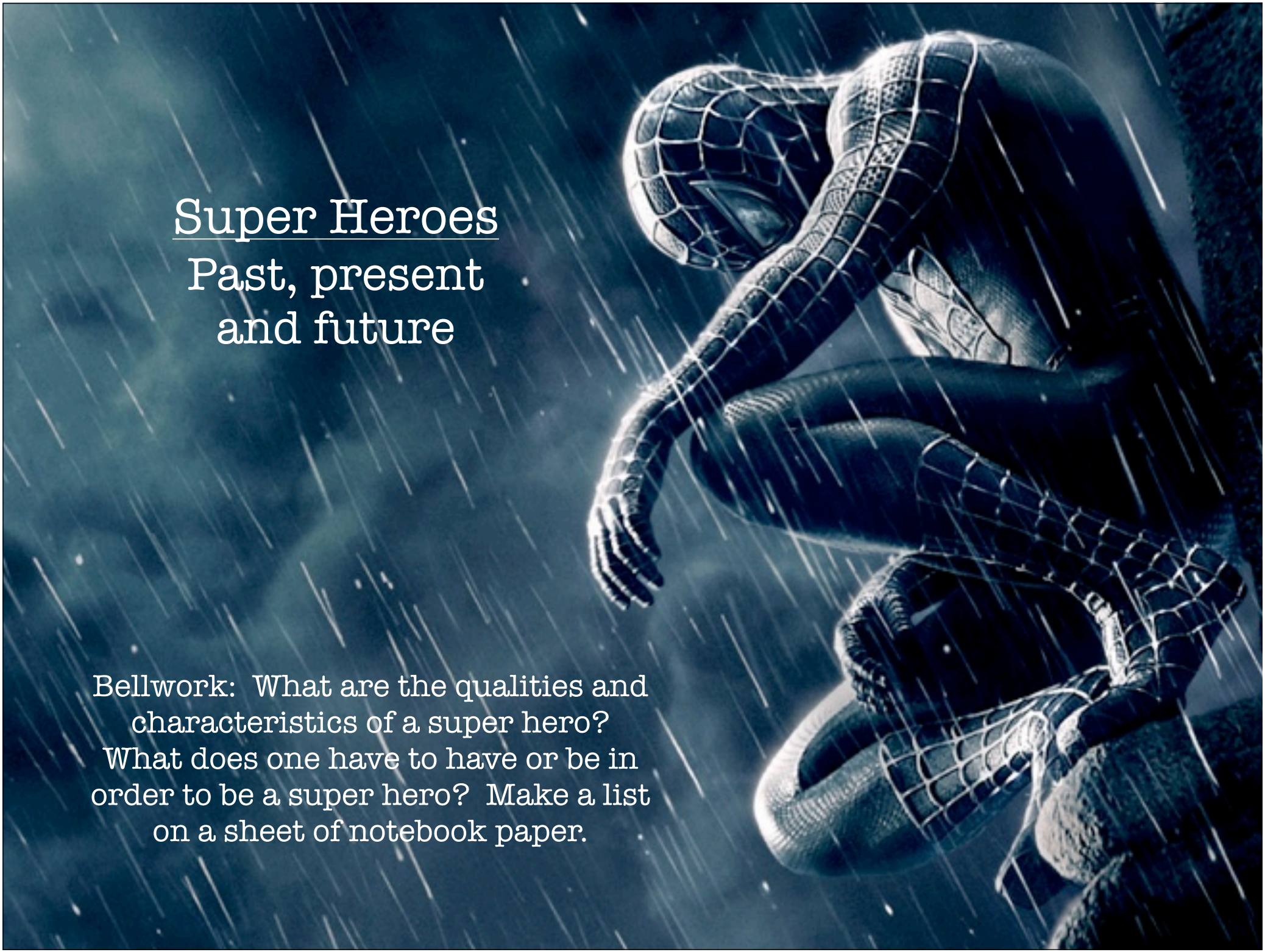
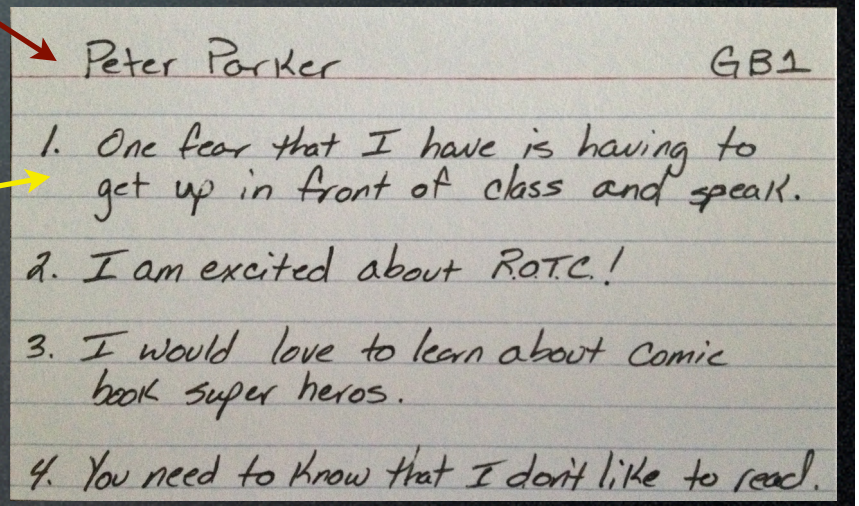

Super Heroes
Past, present
and future
Bellwork: What are the qualities and characteristics of a super hero? What does one have to have or be in order to be a super hero? Make a list on a sheet of notebook paper.

# Warm-Up:

**Step 1:** Write your name (first + last), on the top line of the card followed by the color of the day and the class period. You can abbreviate, such as P1, P2, P3, etc.

**Step 2:** Answer the four questions below on the lines of the card. You may use the back if you run out of room.

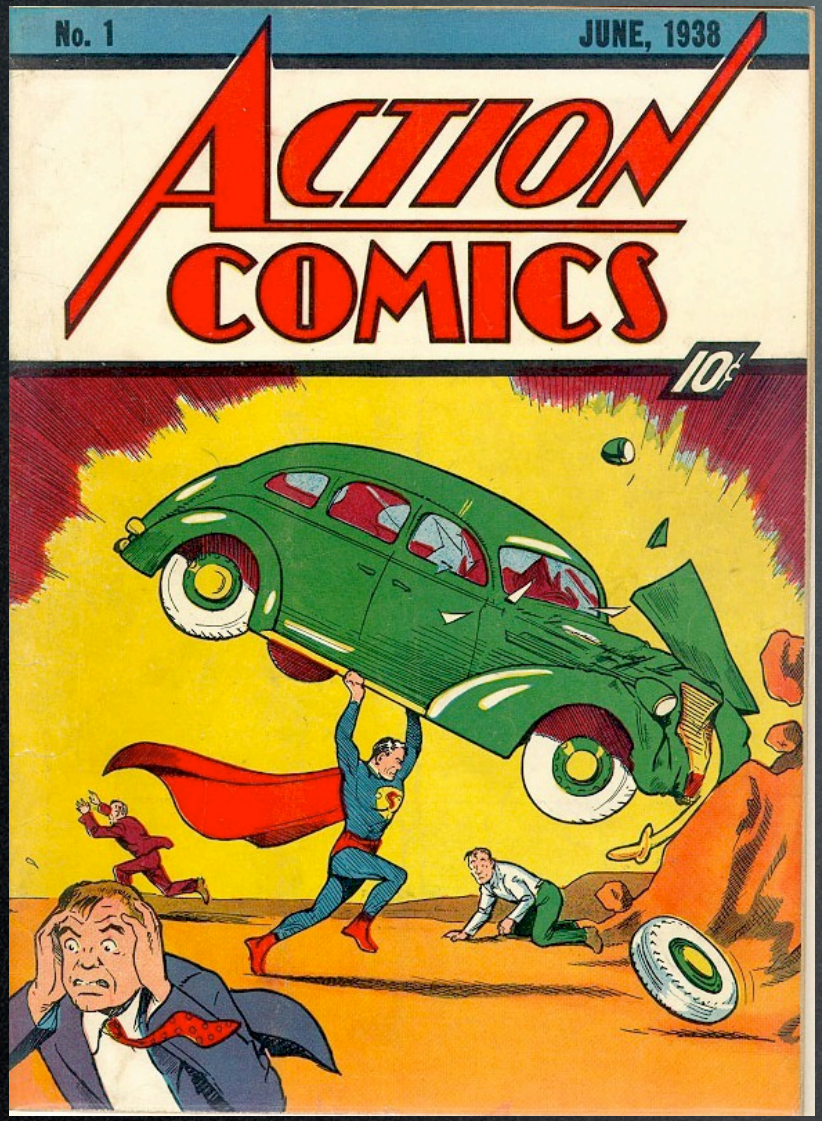
1. What is one fear you have coming into this year?
2. What is one thing you are excited about this year?
3. Why did you choose to take this class? What do you hope to get out of it / What would you like to learn?
4. What is one thing you want me to know about you?
5. Are you a D.C. or a Marvel person?
6. Who is your favorite superhero and why?
7. If you could have one super power what would it be and why?



# Qualities and Characteristics of a Super Hero

- Brave
- Super powers / or are able to do things that the average person can not.
- Has an arch nemesis (enemy).
- Costume/uniform
- Selfless acts
- Is someone we look up to.
- They have a calling.
- They die and are reborn.
- Quest / Cause

# The Golden Age




- 1930's - 1950
- The archetype of the superhero was created and defined.
- Joe Shuster & Jerry Siegel
- Superman
- Action Comics
- D.C. Comics
- Batman, Wonderwoman, etc.

# Propaganda Machine

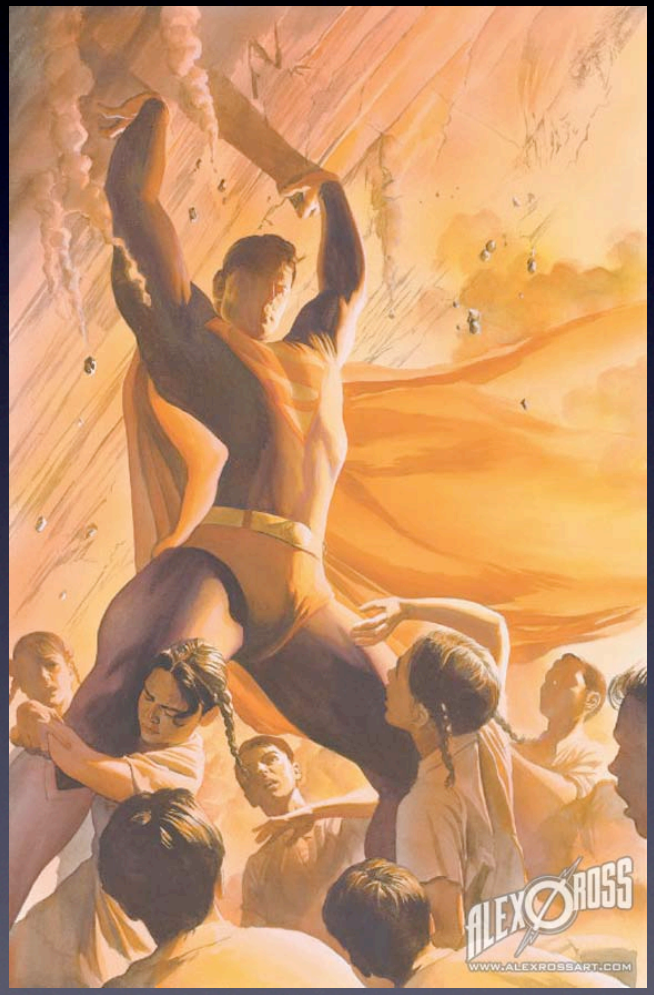
- Superheroes of the Golden Age were very patriotic.
- The superheroes encouraged nationalism and social conformity.
- Many of the superheroes went to war and were fighting Hitler and the Japanese before the U.S.A was.
- Comics were recycled for the war effort.

# Modern Mythology

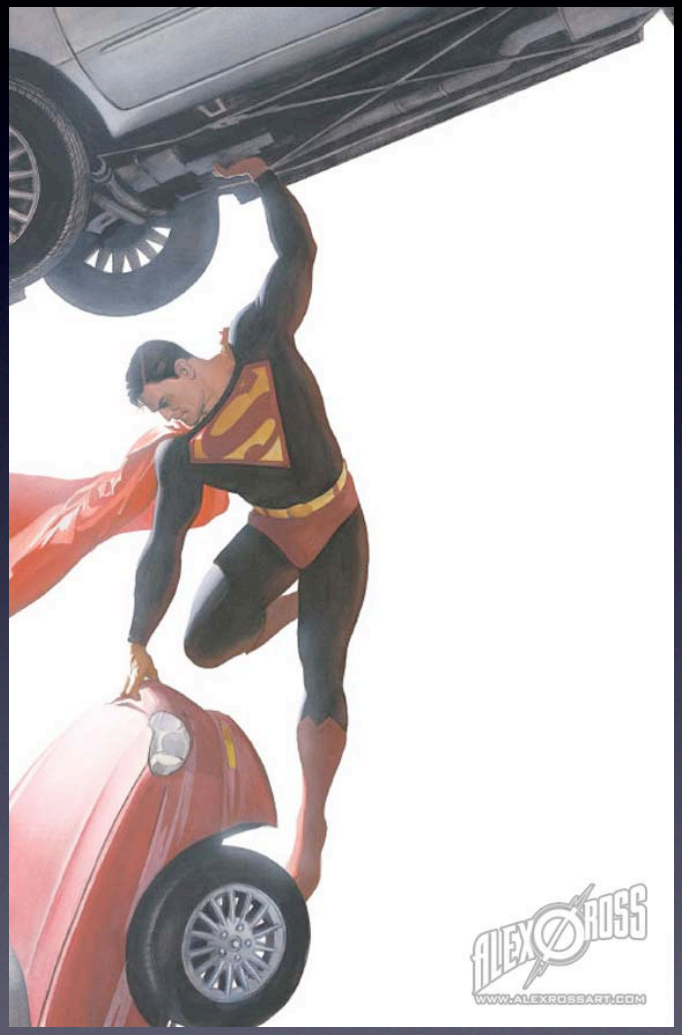
# Superman

- Both a literal and **allegorical** immigrant.
- Superman's real name, Kal-El is Hebraic.
- He is patriotic and is partially clothed in the colors of the American flag.
- Unique in that Superman's alter ego is his human identity rather than his superhero one.
- This unique mythology can be seen as a critique of humanity.

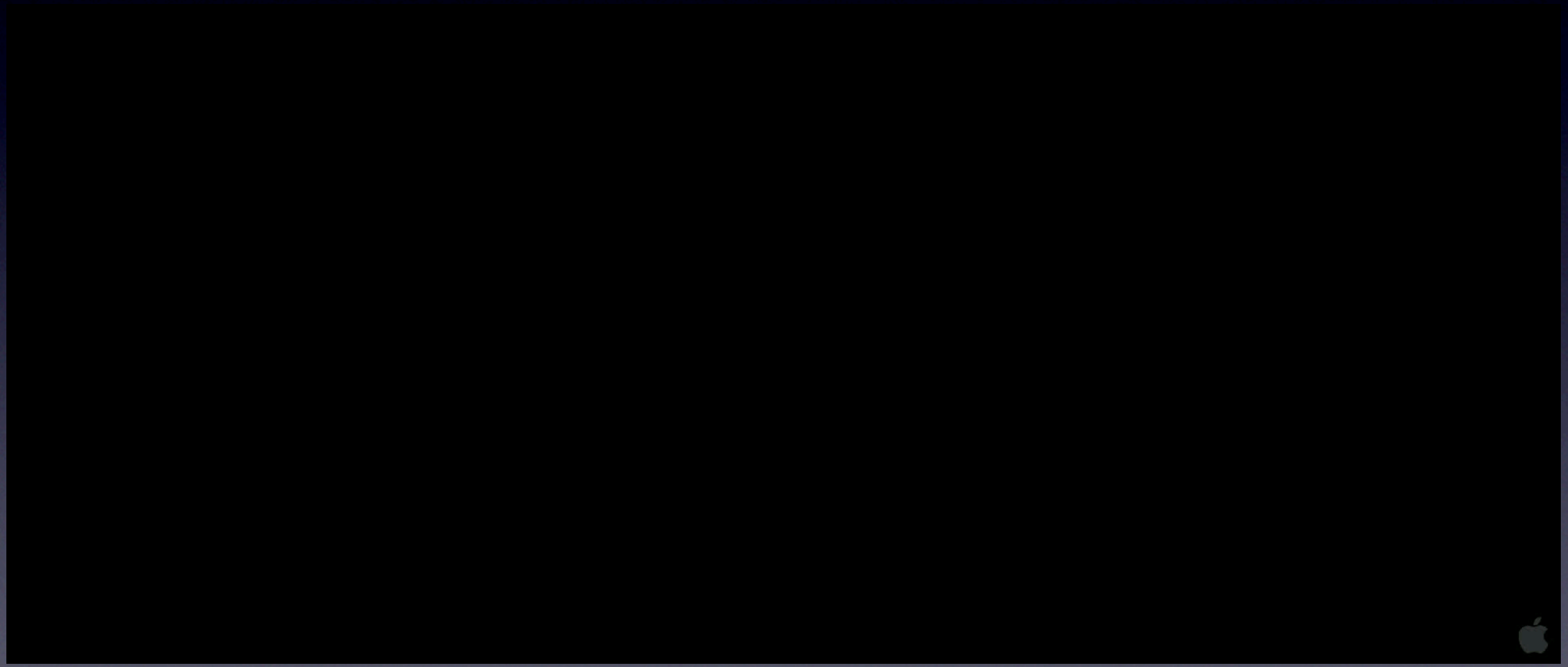
# The Man of Steel




- Superman is based in part on the Greek myth of Hercules and many elements of the Superman myth reflect this.
- Superman symbolically represents natural order.



# Allegorical Christ



# Batman

- The second major superhero created by D.C. and of the Golden Age.
- First appeared in D.C. Comics # 27 in May, 1939.
- Inspired by the Greek god Hades (Pluto), and the Scottish patriot Robert Bruce (Braveheart).
- **Thematically** the opposite of Superman in many ways. This is even expressed in the architecture of their respective cities.
- Batman has a dark, tragic beginning, rather than the positive inspirational one that Superman has.
- Batman is unique in that, unlike most superheroes, he does not posses superpowers or abilities.

# The Dark Knight

Batman makes use of intellect, **detective skills**, science and technology, wealth, physical prowess and **intimidation**.

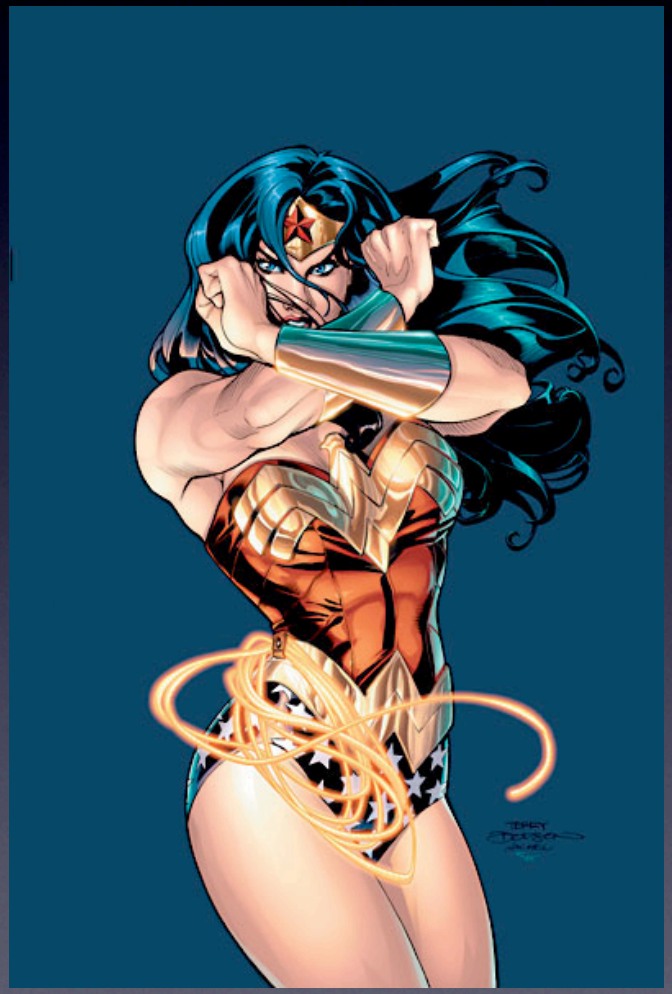
Meant to be a dark **vigilante** of the night rather than pushing a liberal, social agenda like superman.

# Wonder Woman

- Created by psychologist Dr. William Marston, Wonder Woman debuted in December of 1941.
- Wonder Woman was designed to appeal to a female audience and get girls reading comic books.
- Unlike other superheroes which are just inspired by Greek mythology, Wonder Woman is directly taken from Greek myth.
- Wonder Woman is Princess Diana of the Amazon warrior tribe.
- Diana is the Roman name for the Greek goddess Artemis on whom the character is based.

# Amazon Princess

- The Amazon ambassador to the larger world, Diana is awarded several gifts by the Olympian gods.
- Lasso of Truth created from the Golden Girdle of Gaea.
- Indestructible bracelets formed from the shield of Aegis.
- She is described as beautiful as Aphrodite, wise as Athena, swifter than mercury, and stronger than Hercules.



# American Gods

Like all art, comics evolve to reflect social and political change.

# Silver Age

- 1950's - 1970's
- Science fiction concepts begin to appear.
- Superheroes become more human and troubled.
- Timely becomes Marvel Comics.
- Comics begin to incorporate more adult themes such as...
- Sex
- Drugs
- Violence
- Death

# Sign of the Times

- Superheroes became less nationalistic and patriotic.
- More critical of the government.
- Less trusting of the government.
- The government/ military now become the enemy.

THE FOLLOWING PREVIEW HAS BEEN **APPROVED** FOR

**APPROPRIATE AUDIENCES**

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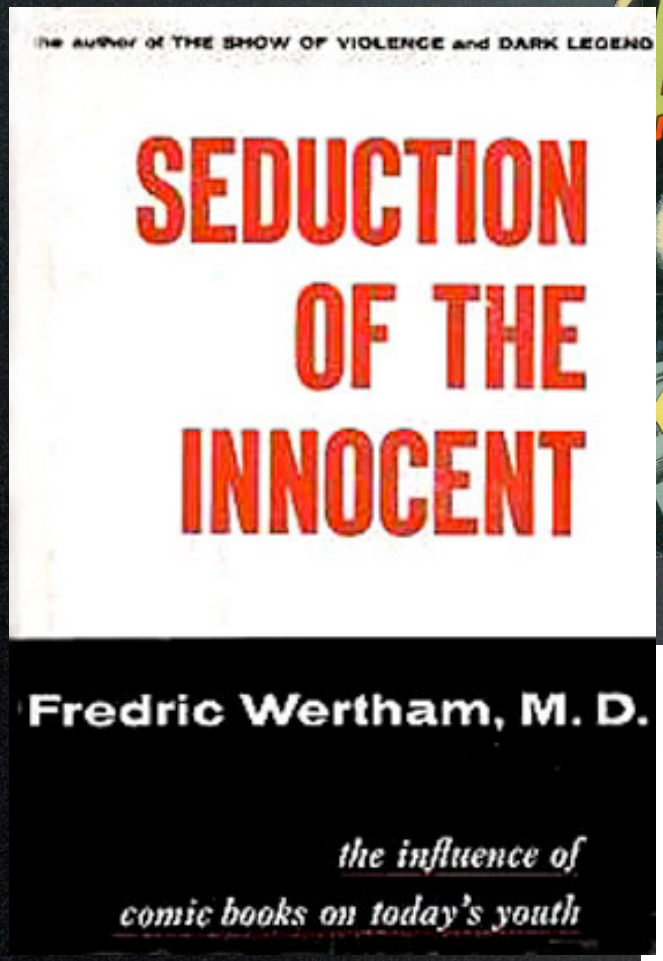
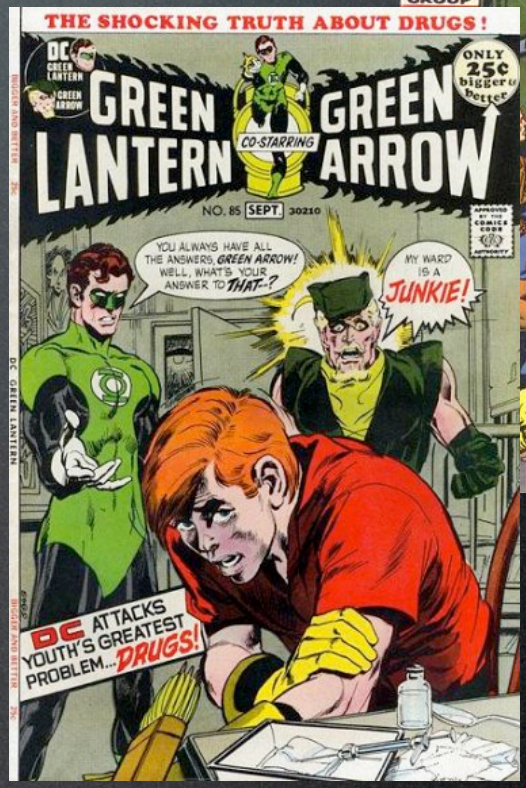
# Censorship

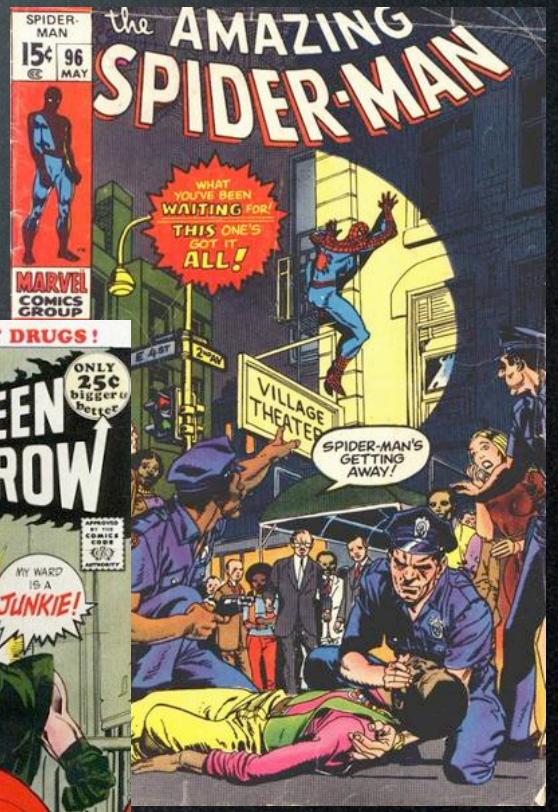


- Fredric Wertham, M.D. -- Psychiatrist studying the development of children.
- He published a book in 1954 called “Seduction of the Innocent” describing the harmful affects of comic books on children.
- Wertham believed that comic books held subversive messages and images that negatively influenced children.
- The book became a best seller and led to a Congressional inquiry into the comic book industry.
- The Comics Code Authority -- a form of government censorship -- was created as an alternative to banning comic books.

# Defying Authority

- In 1971 Stan Lee published a 3 part issue of Spider-Man detailing drug abuse and death.
- CCA refused to approve the story even though drug use was depicted as unglamorous and dangerous.
- Stan Lee and his editor published the comic anyways and it became hugely popular and sold out.
- This led to the first revision of the CCA in 1971 to allow for changing attitudes of appropriate subject matter.



# Metaphors for life

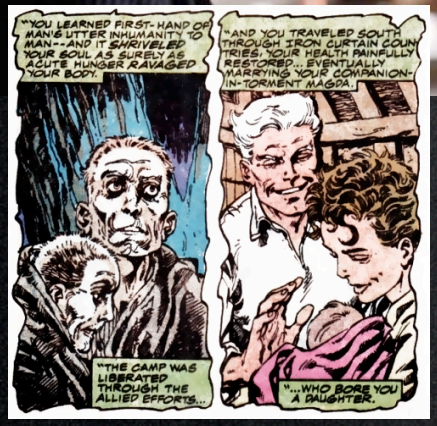
- Despite the censorship and government control, some of the most powerful images and metaphors of superheroes came from the Silver Age of comics.

- "The X-Men are hated, feared and despised collectively by humanity for no other reason than that they are mutants. So, what we have here, intended or not, is a book that is about racism, bigotry, prejudice and intolerance." - Chris Claremont, 1982

# The Uncanny X-Men

- X-Men debuted in 1963.
- The X-Men superheroes have come to represent, metaphorically and symbolically, everyone in society who is a minority or an outcast.
- Including: Jews, blacks, Communists, homosexuals and immigrants, just to name a few.
- The X-Men comics can also be seen as a comment on the relationship between humans and our planet and the irresponsibility and ramifications in developing such technology as nuclear weapons.

# Representing Culture



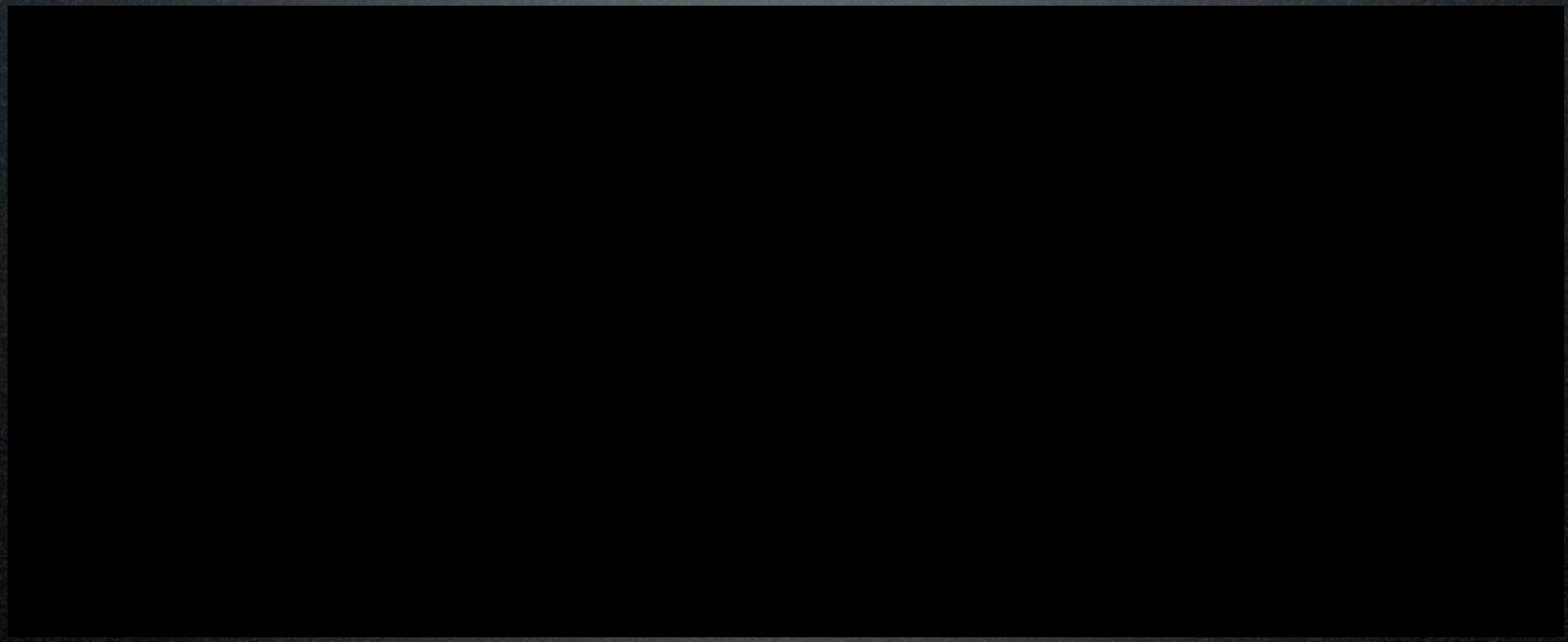

**Racism:** Professor X is to Martin Luther King Jr. as Magneto is to the more militant Malcom X.

**Diversity:** For the first time in comics, X-Men introduces a multinational, multicultural, multi-religious cast of heros.

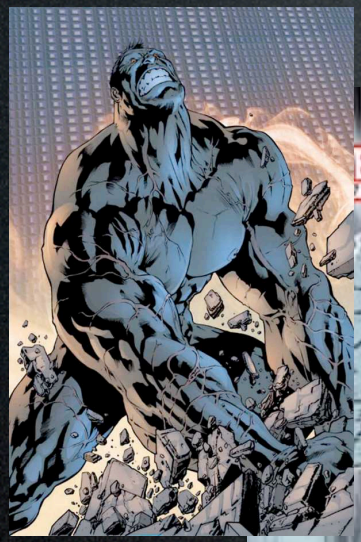
**GLBT Rights:** Comparisons have been made between the mutants' situation, including the concealment of their powers and the age in which they realize their powers, and homosexuality.

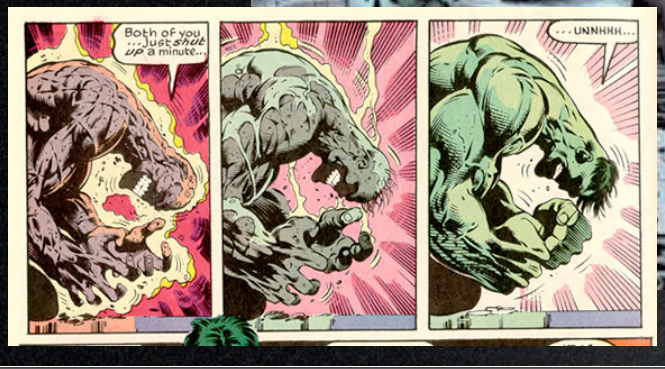
**Anti-Semitism:** Explicitly referenced is the comparison between anti-mutant sentiment and anti-Semitism. One of the main characters, Magneto, is a survivor of the Holocaust.

**Teenage Subculture:** Comparison between the age at which most teenagers hit puberty and begin to change physically and emotionally and the age in which mutants realize their powers.



# Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde



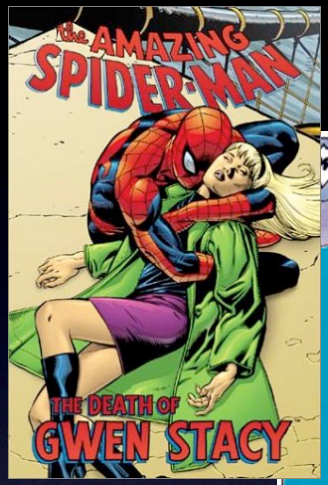


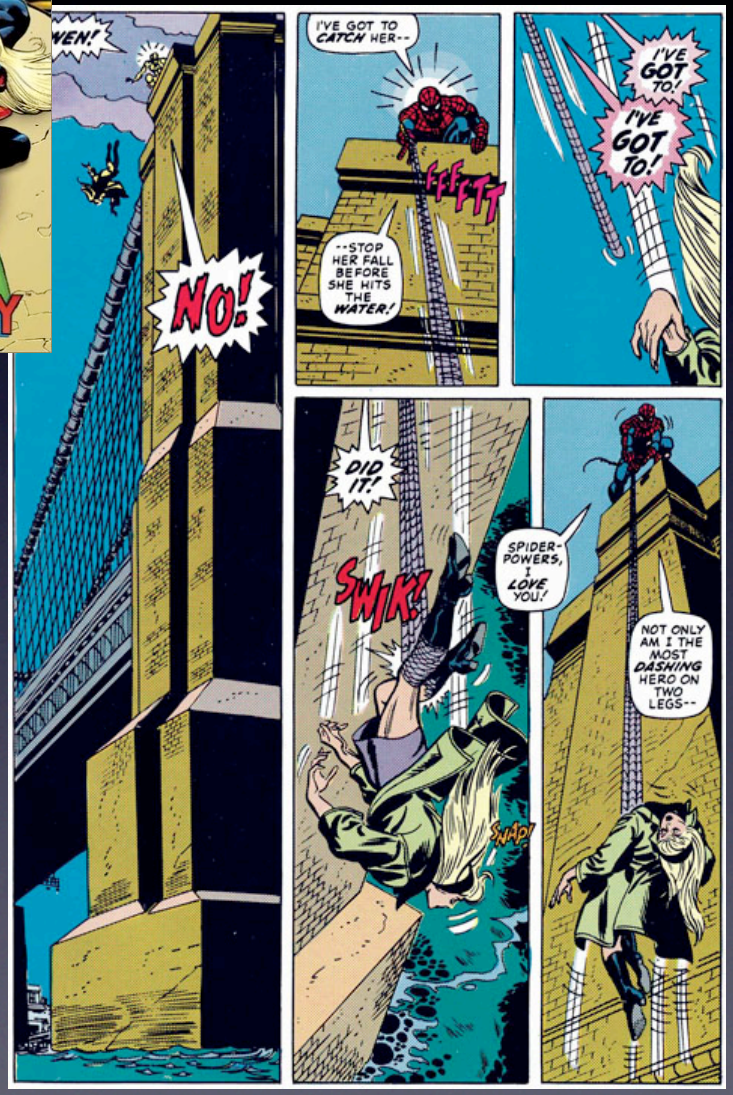

- The Incredible Hulk first appeared in May 1962.
- After physicist Dr. Bruce Banner was caught in the blast of a gamma bomb he created, he was transformed into the Hulk, a raging monstrosity.
- The Hulk has little intelligence or self-control, and can cause great destruction.
- As a result, the character, both as Banner and the Hulk, is frequently pursued by the armed forces and even other superheroes.
- As transformation into the Hulk is triggered by emotional stress and rage, the Hulk is often seen as a symbol of inner rage and Freudian repression.

# The Amazing Spider-Man

- First appeared in August of 1962.
- First adolescent super hero that was not a sidekick.
- The character of Spider-Man was self obsessed with rejection, inadequacy and loneliness.
- Young readers were able to relate to the character and Spider-Man quickly became one of the most popular super heros of all time.

# End of an Era




- Spider-Man was also the first super hero to have to deal with real death and tragedy.
- Gwen Stacy was Peter Parkers first true love before Mary Jane Watson.
- During a battle with the Green Goblin, Gwen Stacy is thrown off the Brooklyn Bridge. Spider-Man catches her by a leg with a string of web. The deceleration snaps her neck and she dies.
- The death of Gwen Stacy had an enormous impact in the world of comic-book art.
- Before her superheroes simply did not fail so catastrophically; nor did a loved one of the superhero die so suddenly, without warning, or so violently.
- Because of this, many historians take the death of Gwen Stacey as one marker of the end of the Silver Age of comics.

# The Modern Age

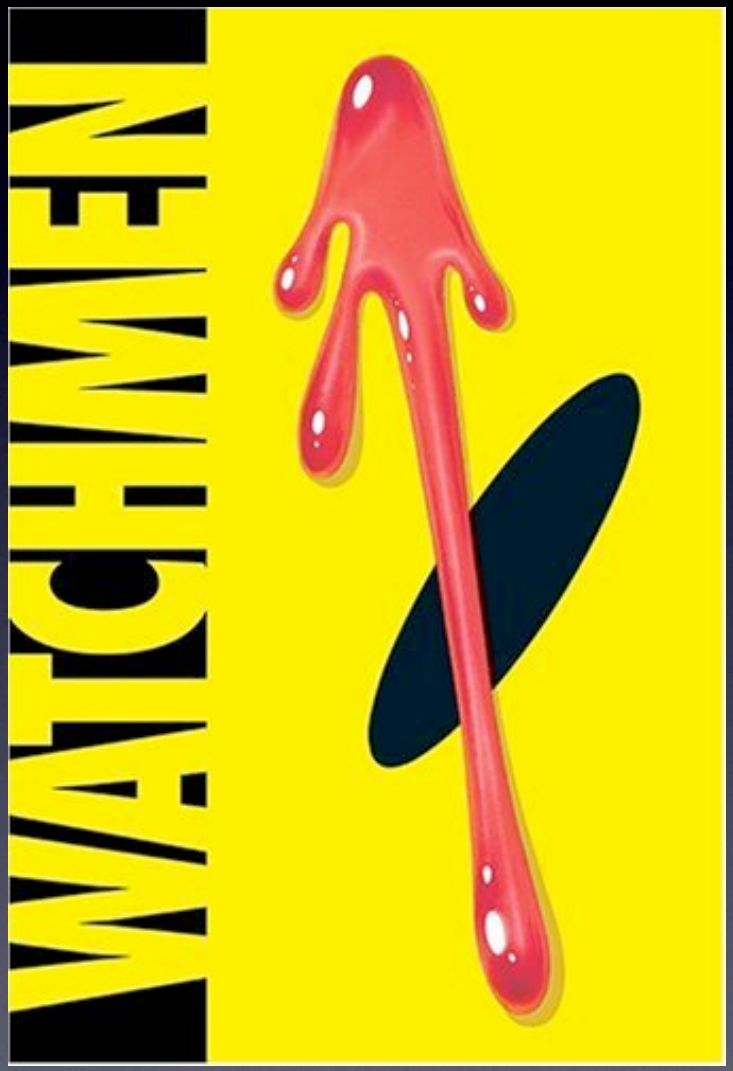
British graphic novel published during the 80's.

First superhero comic to present itself as serious literature -- Considered the "Moby Dick" of comic books.

First comic to win the Hugo Award.

Popularized the "graphic novel" format.

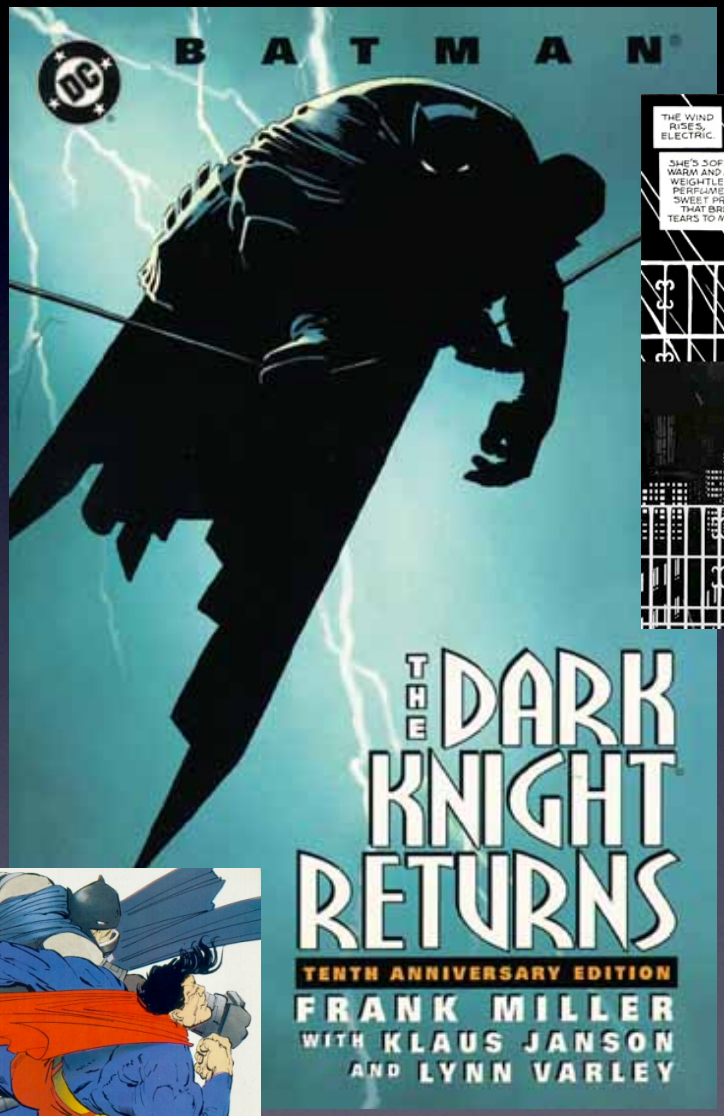
Appeared on Time Magazine's 2005 list of "Top 100 best English-language novels of the 20th century".



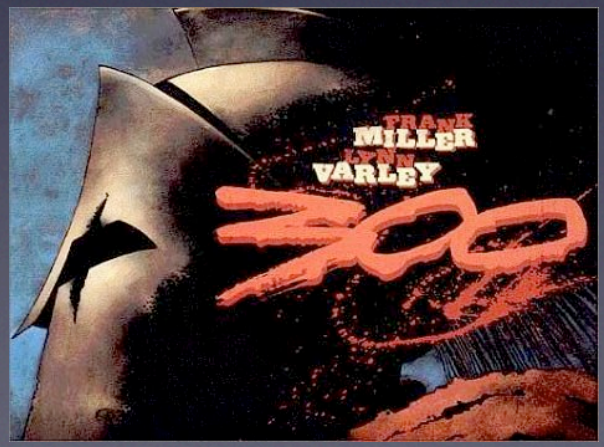

Watchmen is set in 1985, in an alternative history of the United States where costumed adventurers are real and the country is edging closer to a nuclear war with the Soviet Union (the Doomsday Clock is at five minutes to midnight).

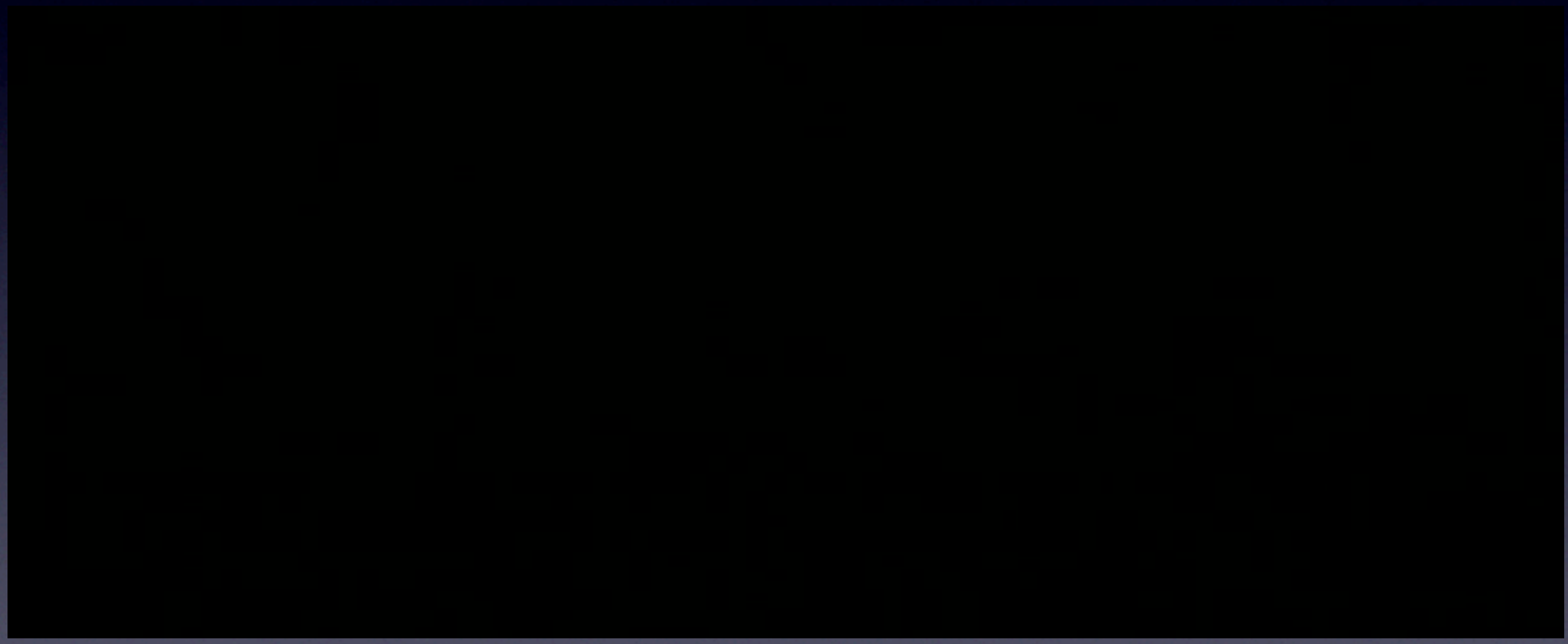
Watchmen depicts superheroes as real people who must confront ethical and personal issues, who struggle with mental distress (neuroses), and failings.

The comic is highly complex in its symbolism.

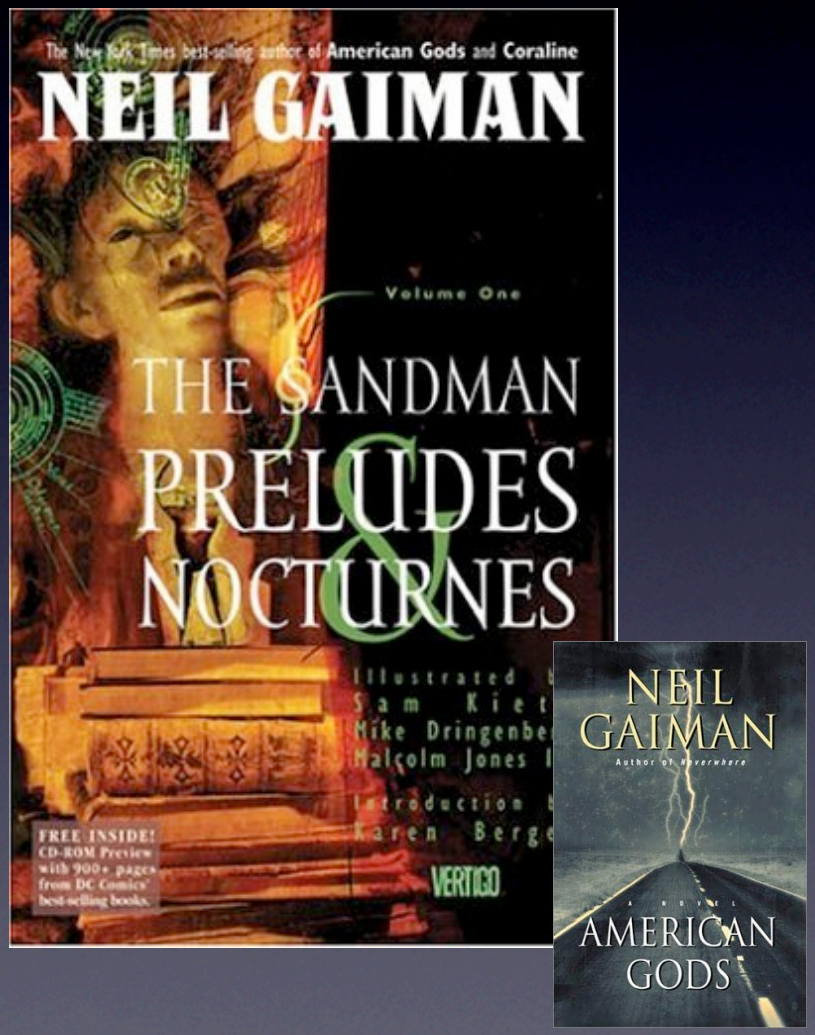


- One of the most widely-recognized and popular creators in comics, and is one of the most influential comics creators of his generation.
- Was profoundly influenced by the gritty realism portrayed in ground breaking comics like *Watchmen* and wanted to bring that realism to American comics... And movies!





# Sandman

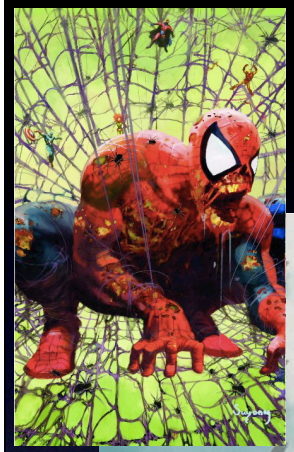


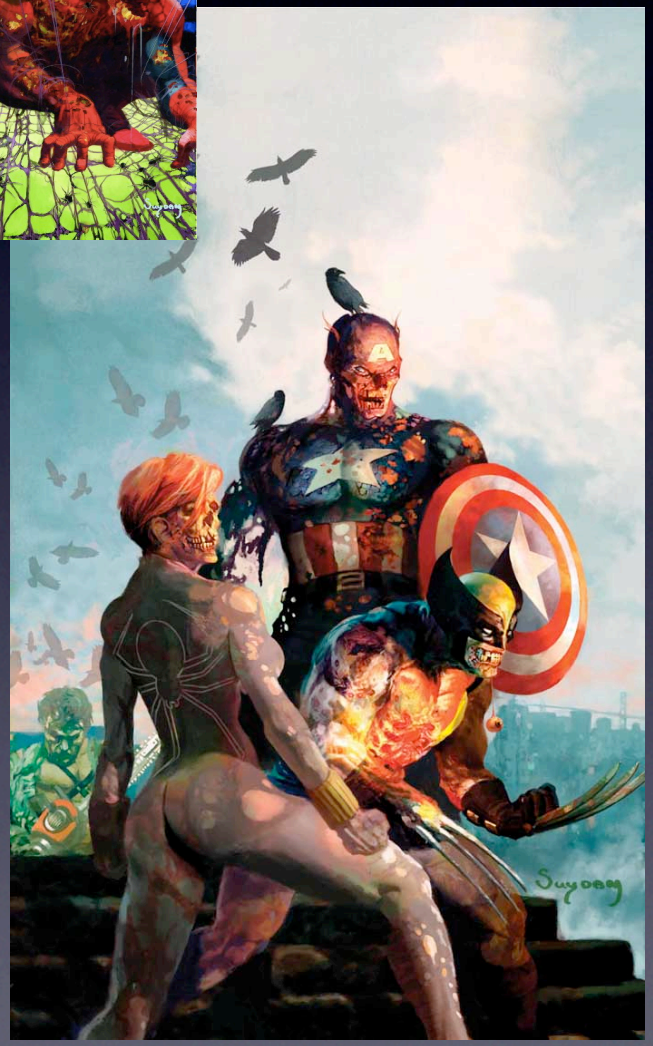

- Written by Neil Gaiman from 1988 to 1996.
- It is widely considered one of the most original, sophisticated and artistically ambitious comic book series of the modern age.
- Only comic book to ever win the World Fantasy Award.
- Made significant contributions to the artistic maturity of English language comic books and became a pop culture phenomenon in its own right.

# Death of Captain America

- With the Modern Age, comics have become darker and more psychologically complex.
- Because of this, the age is sometimes referred to as the "Dark Age of Comic Books".
- In 2006/2007, with the publication of *Fallen Son*, the gritty realism that had come to define this "Dark Age" of comics came to a climax when fans had to say goodbye to a cultural icon and one of the most popular superheroes of all time.

# Marvel Zombies

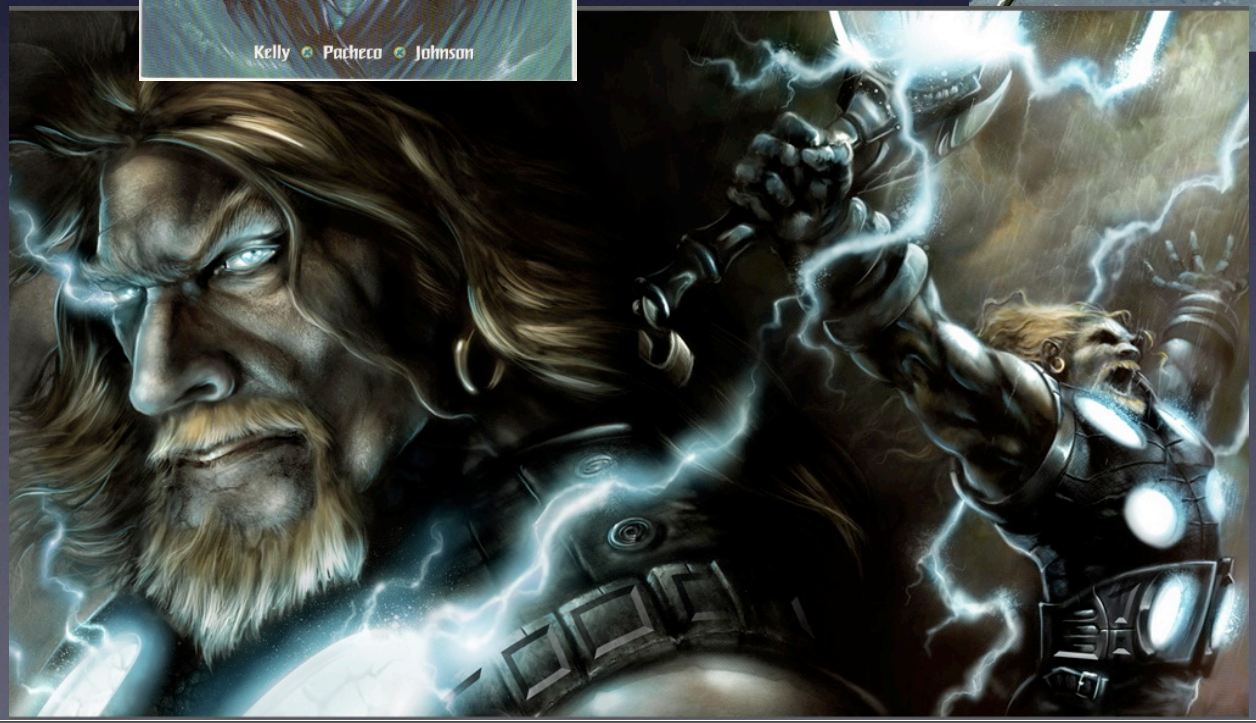




A first-of-its-kind comic book miniseries published in December 2005 where almost all superheroes and super villains have become flesh-eating zombies.

The term "Marvel zombie" is used in comics fandom to refer to readers who display an unusual amount of dedication to or knowledge of the Marvel Universe.

# Lessons in Allusions



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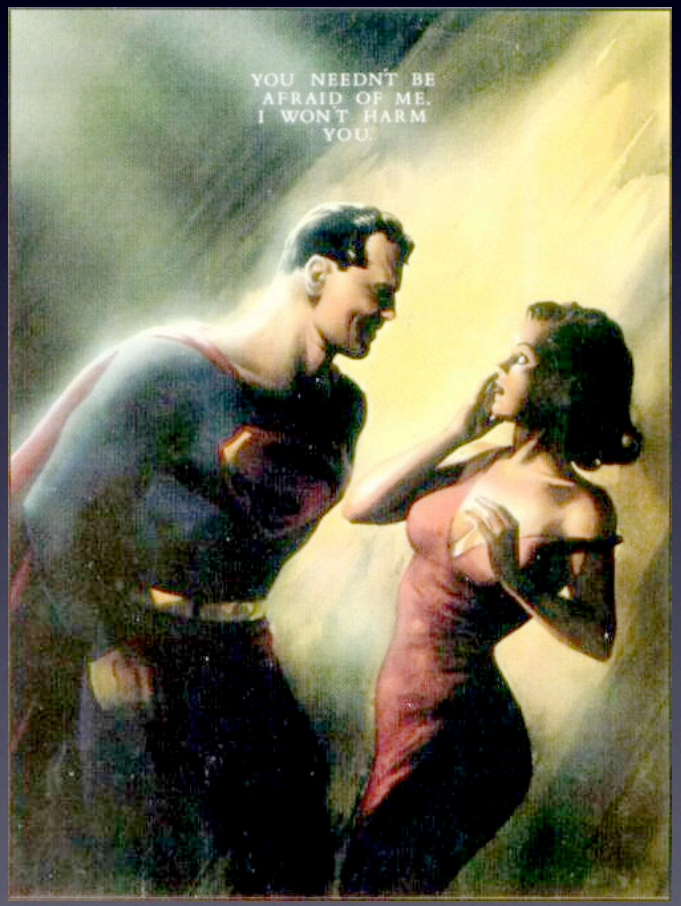
# Legacy