“HELP IS ON THE WAY!”

Comic Books and Superheroes in Special Collections

A Display in the Exhibit Gallery
Smathers Library (East)
George A. Smathers Libraries
University of Florida

October 25 - December 17, 2004
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The exhibit, “‘Help Is On The Way!’ Comic Books and Superheroes in Special Collections,” features comics selected from the Baldwin Library of Historical Children’s Literature. The focus is mainly on popular superheroes/comic books that appeared in DC comics published during the so-called “Silver Age” (roughly from the late 50s through the early 70s). This is an “era” of increasing interest in collecting and scholarship. The period is also of personal interest to me, since I was an avid comic book reader from the early 1960s until about the time I began high school in 1969. As I went through the collection to select items for display, I re-discovered titles, heroes, villains, and story lines that I had been exposed to when younger. It was a good experience, to be sure. The collection held in Special Collections contains more than DC’s comics—Marvel Comics are represented in the collection—but our holdings in superhero-oriented mags are strongest (in depth and breadth) in titles published by DC.

As it turns out, the heroes and magazines selected comprise to a large extent the composition of The Justice League of America. This super-group, predated by the Justice Society of America (from the DC “Golden Age”), features Superman, Batman, the Flash, Green Lantern, Green Arrow, Hawkman, Aquaman, the Atom, the Martian Manhunter, and Wonder Woman. Therefore, the display begins with Superman, regarded as the first superhero, and then moves on to Batman, Flash, Green Lantern, and so on. We try to discuss a bit of the hero’s history (in the world of comic book superheroes and in print), beginning with the hero’s first appearance in the Golden Age, revival in the Silver Age, and through the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Information about the individual comics in the exhibit includes title of the featured story, publication information about the title in which the story appeared, and (when available) the writer(s) of the story and the artist(s). Naturally, there are abundant illustrations throughout the catalog and in the exhibit because, of course, comics are a combination of words and images.

Three talented graduate students from the University of Florida Department of English provided the context by preparing an introduction to comics as a field of study, as well as an historical overview of comics from the early days to modern times. Their bibliography concludes the catalog and offers current and future devotees, aficionados, and “fanboys” further reading on the subject. Thanks go to Laurie Taylor, Cathlena Martin, and Trena Houp for their contribution to the catalog and exhibit, and for organizing the University of Florida’s Third Annual Conference on Comics (October 29-30, 2004). It was my pleasure to work with them on the project.

As with other exhibits and accompanying publications and programs, several individuals provided time and talent to help get the job done. Susan Lupi processed our comics collection and created a database that made it possible for me to select and locate items for the exhibit. Her work also facilitates the collection’s use by students, scholars, and others interested in its contents. Mil Willis and student assistants in Special Collections (Andrew Riggs, Sergio Borges, Luis Loayza, and Reza Hajikondestani) scanned covers and pages for use in the exhibit and the catalog. Barbara Hood created the catalog, shepherded the creation of the exhibit’s interpretative and illustrative material, and publicized the various programs and events related to the exhibit. Others providing technical expertise and assistance include Joe Aufmuth, John Freund, Bill Hanssen and Russ Fairman. I am delighted to acknowledge the generous financial support of the Howe Society.

The idea to showcase holdings from our comics collection came from Rita Smith, Curator of the Baldwin Library, but I was glad to take the lead on the exhibit. Some days the work progressed more slowly than others, no doubt because I made time to read (again) the exploits of Superman, Batman, the Flash, Green Lantern, and others. I invite you to visit the Special Collections Research Room in Smathers Library (East) to do the same.

Robert A. Shaddy, Chair
Special and Area Studies Collections
While we aren’t your typical comics readers and we didn’t grow up during the “Golden Age” of comics, each of us has developed personal enjoyment and professional respect for comics. Although we buy comics for pleasure reading, we also recognize their cultural importance and their influence on other forms. We find comics fascinating for their interplay between image and text, and we study this interplay as it applies to comics, children’s picture books, digital media such as video games and other forms of visual rhetoric.

Comics in the Early Days

Comics have long been regarded as popular and disposable reading for all ages. Now preservationists and collectors meticulously place comics in mylar plastic bags to protect them and to keep them for years to come. Many have recognized the need to save comics because of their massive influence despite their often-transient form.

Comics around the turn of the twentieth century were primarily found in newspaper inserts. Newspapers quickly realized that they could use comics to entice readers and they competed for the best strips. The fierce competition between two newspaper moguls, Hearst and Pulitzer, over the Yellow Kid comic strip, led to the term “yellow journalism.” This term generally means slanderous writing, the type that both Hearst and Pulitzer engaged in when trying to win the Yellow Kid.

Later, these comic strips were bound together and sold as books. From these, comic books in their contemporary form arose. Along with this, comics moved from being an adult’s medium in newspapers to a comic book medium, which was often believed to be for a younger audience. Early comic books presented many genres, including romance, mystery, horror, action, and many others. Horror comics were some of the most popular, with titles like Tales from the Crypt and The Vault of Horror, which regularly featured zombies and other monsters along with murder, betrayal, and sex. In 1954 at the urging of Senator Joseph McCarthy and Frederic Wertham, the comics code was enacted.

Comics bearing the approval of the comics code removed almost all sex, blood, horror, and graphic depictions of violence. The code also required several stifling conditions, including that divorce could never be shown positively and “policemen, judges, government officials, and respected institutions shall never be presented in such a way as to create disrespect for established authority” (Comics Code).

Rise of Superheroes

The code resulted in the demise of horror comics. In their place rose superhero comics with the likes of single superheroes, Captain America, Superman, Batman, Spiderman, Green Lantern, and superhero teams like the X-Men. While these are the most familiar comics, for most people, the history of comics doesn’t
stop there. In fact, soon after the boom of superheroes, Under-
ground Comics, or Comix, were born. Emerging in the culture of
the 1960s, Underground Comix flagrantly disregarded the com-
ics code and included scenes of graphic sex, violence, and drug
use. Comic artists like Robert Crumb, Bill Griffith, Diane Noo-
min, and Kim Deitch all wrote Comix and their works proved
revolutionary for comics. It was during this time that Sol David-
son received the first PhD in comics in the United States; it was
the beginning of comics scholarship in the United States, which
was desperately needed.

Another revolutionary moment in comic history occurred in
1978, when Will Eisner, famous for his work on comic strips,
comic books, and comics for military, published his newest
that he wanted to use the term graphic novel instead of comic
because there was nothing comic about these stories. *A Contract
with God* focused on the lives of several people in a tenement
building during the Depression and their battles with everyday
life and their faith in God. Eisner wrote the story in typical il-
lustrated form. On the heels of his publication came many other
graphic novels dealing with serious themes, including superhero
stories that dropped the comics code.

**In Search of Legitimization**

Completing this revolutionary opening Art Spiegelman’s *Maus*,
which told the story of his family in the Holocaust, was released
starting in the 1980s in *Raw* magazine. While comics had ad-
dressed significant events, Art Spiegelman’s *Maus* received the
recognition it deserved by winning the Pulitzer Prize, being
taught in colleges all around the country, and by putting comics
back into the vital place they deserve.

Following serious works like *Maus* as well as more serious takes
on superhero and romance comics, comics and graphic novels
have only continued to grow. However, their place in academia
has only recently begun to truly prosper. In some ways, aca-
demic research on comics still struggles to gain the legitimacy it
deserves, but help is on the way. Comics scholars and programs
on comic scholarship are popping up in numerous universities
around the country. ICAF, the International Comic Art Festival,
brings together artists and academics at its annual meeting. In
addition, Ohio State University has a library devoted to com-
ics and other schools are slowly acquiring comics libraries and
special collections, like the comics from our special collection in
this display. Ohio State also hosts an annual conference, as does
the University of Florida. Other schools focus more heavily on
teaching the production side of comics, like the Ringling School
of Art and Design and the Savannah College of Art and Design.
Part of the difficulty with and the benefits from studying com-
ics arises from their hybrid form, which requires interdisciplin-
ary approaches. Many schools have begun incorporating comics
into their programs specifically because of their hybrid form and
its implication for digital media. For example, programs like the
University of Florida’s Digital Arts and Sciences program fuse
art and computer programming for comics in the digital age.

With all of these programs, and many others that are developing
daily, the University of Florida is helping comics to earn the le-
gitimate place in academic scholarship that they deserve. In ad-
dition to the numerous classes on comics taught each semester,
the University hosts an annual comics conference, the comix-
scholars list-serve where academics discuss comics scholarship,
and the new online journal *ImageTexT* (http://www.english.ufl.
edu/imagetext/) which is devoted to publishing articles on com-
ics scholarship.

Laurie Taylor, Cathlena Martin, and Trena Houp
DC Comics was the leading publisher of comics during the first three decades of the comic book industry and is credited with being largely responsible for the look and content of mainstream American comic books. By the end of the twentieth century, the company had become the longest established purveyor of comic books and one of the most important and influential in the history of the business. Many of the genre’s most popular characters, including Superman and Batman, were found at DC. The company experienced peaks and valleys, but overall DC comics have been noted for their consistent quality and class.

DC Comics began in 1935 as National Allied Publishing and was started by Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson, a former U.S. Army major and pulp magazine writer. Based in New York, Wheeler-Nicholson launched *New Fun* and *New Comics*, titles that featured original material instead of reprinted newspaper funnies. The Major had good intentions but insufficient capital and business acumen and soon fell into debt. He sold the company to his distributor, the Independent News Company, and its new owners (Harry Donenfeld and Jack Liebowitz) eventually built the small operation into a multi-million dollar company.

Donenfeld and Liebowitz began a third comic book title, *Detective Comics*, in 1937. *Detective* featured a collection of original comic strips based on detective-adventure themes. Utilizing their own distribution company, the new owners developed important contacts with other national distributors to provide their titles the best circulation network in the business. Their publishing arm was officially called National Periodical Publications, but it soon became known by the trademark—DC—printed on its comic books and taken from the initials of its flagship title.

By 1938 the stage was set for DC to move to the top. During that year, DC acquired the rights to Superman from his creators Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster. Superman’s debut in *Action Comics* immediately affected the comic book industry—by the end of 1938 sales of the title reached half-a-million per issue. DC had achieved the industry’s first original comic book star. In 1939 Bob Kane and Bill Finger created Batman as a follow-up to Superman and the “caped crusader” soon became as popular as the “man of steel.” Of course, DC’s competitors noted the winning formula and costumed imitators soon flooded the market. DC immediately moved to protect its creative property and place in the market by suing the Fox Syndicate (Wonderman) over an imitation of Superman. The company also went to court with Fawcett Publications over Captain Marvel, in a lawsuit that went on for over ten years.

During the 1940s DC developed its foundation as the comic book industry’s Establishment when it established a policy designed to elevate the standards of its material over that of the competition. In 1941 DC assured parents that all of its comics were screened for appropriate moral content by setting up an Editorial Advisory Board consisting of prominent educators and
child-study experts. The strategy served to deflect from DC the growing public criticism being directed at comic books in general. It also deprived their publications of the edgy qualities that had made the early Superman and Batman stories so compelling. DC maintained this conservative editorial policy over the next several decades.

As with most other comic book publishers, the years of the Second World War were a boom time for DC. New and popular characters were launched, including Wonder Woman, the Green Lantern, the Flash, and the Justice Society of America. During the war, DC tried to educate readers on the issues of the conflict (although it, like other publishers, also featured malicious stereotypes of the enemy). The principles of national unity across ethnic, class, and racial lines were featured along with a simplified and positive vision of the postwar era proclaimed by the Roosevelt administration. After the war, DC consistently celebrated a liberal postwar order although through added educational features separated from adventure stories.

During the 1940s and 1950s DC strengthened and consolidated its leading position in the comic book industry. DC avoided the growing criticism of the industry during this time by avoiding the excessively violent crime and horror subjects put out by competitors. Thus, when the Comics Code was adopted in 1954 (to self-police and self-censor comics publishers), the content of DC was scarcely affected. DC spokesmen led the way in extolling the virtues of the Code-approved comics and dominated the market as never before. By 1962, DC comics accounted for over 30 percent of all comic books sold.

DC Comics was diversified and published in a variety of genres, including science fiction, humor, romance, westerns, war, mystery, and adaptations of popular television programs and movie star comics (such as Jerry Lewis and Bob Hope). Its main strength continued to rest upon the popularity of its superheroes, especially Batman and Superman. The popular television series, The Adventures of Superman (1953-1957), served to promote DC Comics although the overall impact of television was to hurt comic book sales throughout the industry. Beginning in 1956, DC revised and revamped a number of its 1940s superheroes, and the new look Flash, Green Lantern, Hawkman, and Justice League of America launched what comic book historians have termed the “Silver Age” of superhero comics (with the “Golden Age” occurring during the 1930s-1940s).

According to Bradford Wright (Comic Book Nation, 2001), DC comics were grounded in the culture of consensus and conformity, thus making them the comics best representing the values of the Establishment. The superheroes championed high-minded and progressive American values and were always victorious in their struggles. They all could be held up as decent role models for children; they all held respected positions in society. When they were not in costume, most of them were members of either the police force or the scientific community. The characters put forth by DC stressed the importance of the individual’s obligation to the community, even at the expense of their own individualism. Therefore, most if not all of the DC heroes spoke and behaved in a similar fashion, were in control of their emotions, and rose above the usual failings of the human condition. Their world was also under control: they resided in clean green suburbs, modern cities with shining glass skyscrapers and futuristic unblemished worlds. The DC heroes of the Silver Age exuded American affluence and confidence.

However, the “squeaky-clean” DC superheroes proved to be vulnerable to the challenge posed by the “flawed” heroes and anti-heroes of Marvel Comics. During the 1960s, anti-establishment figures such as Spider Man, the Incredible Hulk, and the Fantastic Four meshed well with emerging trends in contemporary youth culture and were popular with readers, young and older. Although DC tried to introduce similar themes and story lines as Marvel, DC was surpassed as the industry’s leading publisher by the mid-1970s. In 1968 Warner Brothers purchased the company and throughout the 1970s DC enjoyed far greater success with licensing its characters for TV series and toy products than it did selling the actual comics. Ultimately, Warner Brothers would produce a series of blockbuster films featuring Superman and Batman. In 1976 Jeanette Kahn became the new DC publisher and through the early 1980s several top writers and artists were attracted to the company.

From the late 1980s DC was successful in the direct-sales market to comic book stores with a number of titles labeled “For Mature Readers Only” and also led the way in the growing market for “graphic novels.” Established superheroes such as Batman and Green Arrow gained new life as violent vigilante characters and a new generation of surreal post-modern superheroes like the Sandman and Animal Man were created. Such innovative and ambitious titles helped DC to reclaim much of the creative cutting edge from Marvel although its sales lagged behind throughout the 1990s. Due to its historical significance as the prime founder of the American comic book industry, DC continued to be supported by loyal fans as well as longtime collectors.
The first and most important comic book superhero, Superman looms large not only in comic books but in all of twentieth-century American popular culture. Among the few American characters instantly recognizable in virtually every corner of the globe, Superman is truly a pop culture icon. Certainly there is no purer representative of the fantastic possibilities inherent in the comic book medium. Superman became the most widely imitated character in comic books, spawning a host of superheroes that established comic books as a viable commercial entertainment industry. Superheroes have been the mainstay of comic books ever since.

Superman sprang from the imagination of two Jewish teenagers growing up in Cleveland during the Great Depression. Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster were both lower-middle class sons of immigrants who believed in the American dream. They were avid readers of science fiction and pulp magazines and aspired to write and draw their own adventure comic strip. In 1934, the two hit upon the idea they hoped would be a salable comic strip. In his striking red-and-blue costume with flowing red cape and red “S” emblazoned on his chest, Superman was the ultimate strongman, capable of achieving almost any physical feat. He was a fantastic being from a doomed planet (Krypton), come to be in the service of his adopted world. He assumed the persona of an undistinguished mild-mannered newspaper reporter named Clark Kent. Superman was a superhero who would retreat into the anonymity of American society when his spectacular deeds were accomplished. Here was the crucial point of reference for a Depression-era culture that extolled the virtues of the “common man.”

Siegel’s concept of Superman rested on three now clichéd themes: the visitor from another planet, the superhuman being, and the dual identity. However, the creators failed to sell the idea to the newspapers and reluctantly sold it to fledgling DC. Siegel and Shuster gave up their rights to the character in exchange for $130 ($10 per page for the 13 page story). It proved to be one of the most infamous contracts ever signed in the history of the American entertainment industry. When the duo sued DC in 1947, the court eventually ruled against them and they were fired (they were, however, compensated for the creation of Superboy). Only after several decades did the company relent and offer support to the aged creators.

Superman first appeared in Action Comics (June 1938) and soon was a huge hit. By 1941 he was being advertised as “The World’s Greatest Adventure Strip Character” and was appearing in a half-dozen comic books, a series of short animated films, and on a popular radio program (that opened with the immortal lines: “Faster than a speeding bullet! More powerful than a locomotive! Able to leap tall buildings in a single bound! Look! Up in the sky! It’s a bird! It’s a plane... It’s Superman!”). At a time when most successful comic book titles sold between 200,000 and 400,000 copies per issue, each issue of Action Comics—featuring only one Superman story—consistently sold around 900,000 copies. DC soon featured him in a second title, Superman, which established industry records by selling a staggering 1.3 million copies per bimonthly issue.

Superman’s origin is part of Americana: born on the doomed planet Krypton, Superman was launched into space just before the planet’s collapse. Landing on Earth, he was adopted by Jonathan and Martha Kent and discovered his Krypton heritage endowed him with great abilities. He later came to Metropolis, adopted the guise of a Daily Planet reporter and devoted his life to fighting for “truth, justice, and the American way.”

As the prototype for all comic book superheroes, Superman has received a great deal of psychological study. While the majority of his superheroic imitators were normal men transformed into superhumans, Superman was born super and adopted the alter ego of the somewhat craven Clark Kent. Critics are constantly analyzing the peculiar juxtaposition of Superman, who could easily have been a king, and Clark Kent, who accepted a badgering boss (Perry White), an unceremonious attire, a less-than-brilliant companion (Jimmy Olsen), and the constant irony of being in competition with himself for the woman he loves (Lois Lane). Despite already having great powers, Superman soon developed others: the power of flight and invulnerability and several types of x-ray vision. His powers became so immense green kryptonite (fragments from his home planet that could kill him) was developed to help balance things out. Superman’s writers also created a rainbow of other kinds of kryptonite (red, white, black, gold) with varying effects on the “Man of Steel.” Although Superman became almost god-like in terms of his powers by the end of
the Forties, during the Fifties and Sixties, he suffered under the impact of editor Mort Weisinger. Superman had to put up with innumerable strange, bizarre, and downright silly adventures. His editor created a fairy-tale mythos that incorporated Superman’s youth (as Superboy in the Midwestern town of Smallville), his friends, villains like Lex Luther and Braniac, and spin-off characters like Supergirl and Krypto the Superdog. During the 1960s, Superman evolved into a kind of elder statesman among superheroes—staid, predictable, paternalistic, and usually adhering to the strict letter of the law. When Weisinger departed DC in 1970, Superman’s popularity in print had slipped dramatically.

The rise of Marvel Comics’ wave of “human” superheroes like Spider Man, the Incredible Hulk, and the Fantastic Four provided a contrast to Superman’s irreproachable “Boy Scout” image. New generations of young people expected and favored the “anti-establishment” ethos of Marvel’s heroes. By the mid-1970s, Superman’s comic book sales were at an all time low, although his image remained lucrative for toys and other products. And, Superman continued his popularity in other forms of media, with a successful television series airing from 1953-1957 (The Adventures of Superman) and a mid-1990s series (Lois and Clark: The New Adventures of Superman). The pinnacle of the character’s earning power came in the late 1970s and early 1980s in a series of Warner Brothers Superman movies starring Christopher Reeves in the title role.

Periodically DC has attempted to revive the sales of Superman’s titles (Action Comics and Superman) by making him less “super.” In 1971 Superman’s powers were halved. In 1988, DC hired writer/artist John Byrne to rewrite the Superman origin, hoping to spark fan interest. In 1992, the much-hyped “Death of Superman” was published. The event produced a short-term boom in sales and concluded in the “Rebirth of Superman.” In 1997, Superman received a new costume change. Clark Kent switched to television and Superman married Lois Lane. While nostalgic fans disapproved, DC responded that it had little choice but to try new things to reverse the hero’s steady commercial decline. This recent decline does not decrease the significance of the Man of Steel on comic books and the industry. For the generations who grew up with his adventures, Superman will forever remain the quintessential champion of truth, justice, and the American way.

POWER AND WEAPONS (Silver Age)
Superman has tremendous strength, invulnerability, super-speed (which can even break the time barrier), flight, super-breath, and various super-visions including X-Ray, heat, microscopic and telescopic visions. Superman also possesses a super-brain. His only vulnerabilities are kryptonite and magic.

Comics on Display
“Superman’s Rival, Mental Man!” Action Comics 272 (January 1961)

“Superman’s Toughest Day!” Action Comics 282 (November 1961)

“The Day Superman Became the Flash!” Action Comics 314 (July 1964)

“The Ultimate Enemy!” Action Comics 329 (October 1965)

“The Leper From Krypton!” Action Comics 363 (May 1968)

“Krypton Dies Again!” Action Comics 489 (November 1978) Story by Cary Bates; art by Curt Swan and Frank Chiaramonte

“The Life Story of Superman!” Action Comics 500 (October 1979) Story by Curt Swan and Frank Chiaramonte; art by Gaspar Saladino and Adrienne Roy

“…With But a Single Step!” Action Comics 545 (July 1983) Story by Marv Wolfman; art by Gil Kane and Todd Klein

“Showdown!” Action Comics 546 (August 1983) Story by Marv Wolfman; art by Gil Kane and Ben Oda

“Superman and the Demon: Cityscape!” Action Comics 587 (April 1987) Story by John Byrne; art by Dick Giordano

“Not of This Earth,” Action Comics 651 (March 1990) Story by Roger Stern; art by George Perez, Kerry Gammill, and Brett Breeding

“For a Thousand Years…” Action Comics 761 (January 2000) Story by Joe Kelly; art by German Garcia and Joe Rubinstein

“The Man With the Self-Destruct Mind!” Superman 323 (May 1978) Story by Martin Pasko; art by Curt Swan and Dan Adkins
“Let My People Grow!” *Superman* 338 (August 1979)
Story by Len Wein; art by Curt Swan and Frank Chiaramonte

“A Mind-Switch in Time!” *Superman* 380 (February 1983)
Story by Cary Bates; art by Curt Swan and Dave Hunt

“Where Trouble Goes…Euphor Follows” *Superman* 382 (April 1983)
Story by Cary Bates; art by Curt Swan and Dave Hunt

“Luther Lashes Back!” *Superman* 386 (August 1983)
Story by Cary Bates; art by Curt Swan and Dave Hunt

“The Man Who Would Be President!” *Superman* 394 (April 1984)
Story by Elliot Maggin; art by Curt Swan and Dave Hunt

Story by Louise Simonson; art by Jon Bogdanove and Dennis Janke

Story by Louise Simonson; art by Jon Bogdanove and Dennis Janke

Story by Louise Simonson; art by Curt Swan and Jon Bogdanove

“Funeral Day,” *Superman: The Man of Steel* 20 (February 1993)
Story by Louise Simonson; art by Jon Bogdanove and Dennis Janke

“Sins of the Father,” *Superman: The Man of Steel* 47 (August 1995)
Story by Louise Simonson; art by Jon Bogdanove and Dennis Janke

“To Save a World,” *Superman For Earth* (1991)
Story by Roger Stern; art by Kerry Gammill and Dennis Janke
Batman is one of the most popular and important characters created for comic books. In the entire pantheon of comic book superheroes, only Superman and Spiderman rival him in significance. Indeed, Batman has become an American icon and an international marketing industry in and of himself.

Batman was created out of DC editor Vincent Sullivan’s desire to exploit the success of DC’s first superhero, Superman. In 1939, a year after the introduction of the Man of Steel, artist Bob Kane, took inspiration from various Hollywood adventure, horror, and gangster movies and prepared a design for a masked crime-fighter in the costume of a bat. Writer Bill Finger contributed the vigilante concept for the hero incorporating ideas from current pulp magazines. The resulting character was unique, a visual and thematic synthesis of the lurid and bizarre representations of popular culture available to a 1930s mass audience.

Like Superman, Batman wore a costume, maintained a secret identity, and battled crime and injustice. Unlike Superman, though, Batman possessed no superhuman powers, relying instead upon his own wits, technical skills, and fighting prowess. He was introduced to readers in Detective Comics (Spring 1939) and has continued in print ever since. Batman’s motives and origins were initially obscure, but readers soon learned that as a child Bruce Wayne had witnessed the brutal murder of his parents. Traumatized by the event, he determined to avenge their deaths by using his inherited fortune to assemble an arsenal of crime fighting gadgets while training his body and mind to the pinnacle of human perfection. He selects a bat as the ideal persona to use in intimidating criminals.

Kane and Finger originally cast Batman as a vigilante pursued by the police even as he preyed upon criminals. Prowling the night, lurking in the shadows, and wearing a frightening costume with a hooded cowl and a flowing Dracula-like cape, Batman often looked more like a villain than a hero. In his earliest episodes, he even carried a gun and sometimes killed his opponents. As Batman himself once put it, “If you can’t beat [criminals] ‘inside’ the law, you must beat them ‘outside’ it—and that’s where I come in!” In his early adventures, he waged a grim war against crime in a netherworld of gloomy castles, fog-bound wharves, and the dimly lit alleys of Gotham City—an urban landscape that seemed perpetually ensnared in a nightscape. Kane was one of the first comic book artists to experiment with unusual angle shots, distorted perspectives, and heavy shadows to create a disturbing mood. The early issues also rank among the most graphically violent of their time. Murder, brutality, andbloodshed were common until 1941 when DC Comics responded to public criticism by “cleaning up” its comic books. As a result, Batman’s adventures gradually moved out of the shadows and became more conventional superhero adventure stories.

A sidekick, Robin, was introduced in the April 1940 issue of Detective and this also served to lighten the mood of the series. Young Dick Grayson, like Bruce Wayne, witnessed the death of his parents and becomes the ward of the older man who trains him in the ways of crime fighting. Although some readers through the years have found the character a hindrance to the solitary image of the original Batman concept, the “Dynamic Duo” was popular nonetheless. In an influential polemic against comics, published in 1954, Frederick Wertham even charged that the relationship between Batman and Robin was rife with homosexual implications, hence posing a danger to young readers. After the introduction of Robin, many other superheroes took on boy sidekicks.

Batman and Robin encountered some of the best and most appealing villains in comic books. They included the Joker (first appearance, Batman #1 early in 1940), the “clown prince of homicide;” the Penguin, an over-stuffed, umbrella-toting snob; Two-Face, an insane former district attorney with a deformed visage; the Riddler, a crazed criminal who gave clues before he attacked; and the Catwoman, a feline-themed villainous who fell in love with Batman.

Batman was given his own magazine in 1940, the second superhero (after Superman) to have his own title. Batman and Robin also showed up in the 1940 edition of New York World’s Fair Comics and thereafter in its successor, World’s Finest Comics. In World’s Finest #71 (July-August 1954), Batman and Robin entered into a partnership with Superman and started working as a trio in that magazine. During the middle 1950s, many of the original creators left the strip and this ushered in a low-point in the Batman feature. Saddled with new and outlandish
characters like Bathound, Batwoman, Batgirl, and Bat-Mite, and crippled by poor science fiction scripts about monsters, robots, aliens, time travel and crackpots, Batman quickly slumped in sales and popularity. In the mid-1960s, Batman worked without Robin and teamed up with a series of other heroes in The Brave and The Bold, including Green Lantern, the Flash, Aquaman, and the Green Arrow. Those team-ups continued into the early 1980s.

Although sales of Batman’s comics slipped beginning in the early 1960s due to a drifting presentation of the hero, and the rise of Marvel Comics and its “anti-establishment” anti-heroes (e.g., Spiderman, the Fantastic Four, the Incredible Hulk), the “Caped Crusader” received a boost from a new source in 1966—television. ABC launched a prime-time live action series Batman, a campy program that ridiculed every aspect of the comic book series. For a few years, the show was a phenomenal hit as major stars clamored to appear on it. Sales of comic books increased dramatically for several years, but most believe the overall impact of the television series was negative since the show’s producers seemed to be making fun of the hero’s many fans. The Batman show reinforced the popular perception that comic books were strictly for children and “morons.” Four major motion pictures have worked to overcome that image and introduce Batman and Robin in a more serious way to new generations of fans.

In the 1980s and 1990s new generations of writers and artists sought to rescue Batman from the perils of his own multi-media success by exploring the darker implications of Batman as a vigilante. In a 1986 “graphic novel” titled Bat Man: The Dark Knight Returns, writer Frank Miller cast the hero as a slightly mad middle-aged fascist out to violently purge a dystopian future Gotham City gutted by moral decay. The success of The Dark Knight led to a series of graphic novels and comic book limited series, including Batman: Year One (1987), Batman: the Killing Joke (1988), and Batman: Arkham Asylum (1989) that delved into the most gothic, violent, and disturbing qualities of the Batman mythos. The new Batman industry even killed off a new Robin (who had replaced the grown-up Dick Grayson) and, in Frank Miller’s “Dark Knight” work, Robin was portrayed by a red-haired girl named Carrie Kelly.

Like Superman, Batman has generated popular interest and revenue from exposure in media other than comic books. There were two movie serials in the 1940s, two newspaper strips (1943 and 1966), and a radio program in addition to the “blockbuster” film versions of the late twentieth century. He remains, though, a product of comic books and it is in this medium that he has been most influential. The whole multitude of costumed avengers driven to strike fear into the hearts of evil-doers owe much to Bob Kane and Bill Finger’s Batman—an original comic book crusader.

**POWER AND WEAPONS (Silver Age)**

An incomparable athlete, far beyond Olympic level, the Batman is also a master of all known forms of physical combat, an unparalleled strategist and tactician, an expert in the art of disguise, and has been called by some the world’s greatest escape artist. His reasoning and deductive abilities are second to none.

The weapons in his arsenal against crime include items in the utility belt he wears around his waist, the sleek Batmobile, the Batplane, and the one-man Whirly-bat.

**Comics on Display**

“The Negative Batman,” *Detective Comics* 284 (October 1960)


“The Flame Master,” *Detective Comics* 308 (October 1962)

“The Joker’s Last Laugh!” *Detective Comics* 332 (October 1964)

“All My Enemies Against Me!” *Detective Comics* 500 (May 1983)

“Identity Crisis,” *Detective Comics* 633 (August 1991) Story by Peter Milligan; art by Tom Mandrake and John Costanza

“Burning Questions,” *Detective Comics* 662 (June 1993) Story by Chuck Dixon; art by Graham Nolan and Scott Hanna


“Death Comes Home,” *Detective Comics* 716 (December 1997) Story by Chuck Dixon; art by Jim Aparo and Stan Woch

“The Riddle-Less Robberies of the Riddler!” *Batman* 179 (March 1966)
“Beware of Poison Ivy!” Batman 181 (June 1966)

“The Penguin Takes a Flyer Into the Future!” Batman 190 (March 1967)

“Murder Comes in Black Boxes!” Batman 281 (November 1976)
Story by David Reed; art by Ernie Chua and Tex Blaisdell

“Batman-Ex—As in Extinct!” Batman 287 (May 1977)
Story by David Reed; art by Mike Grell and Bob Wiacek

“Where Were You on the Night Batman Was Killed?” Batman 291 (September 1977)
Story by David Reed; art by John Calnan and Tex Blaisdell

“There’ll be a Cold Time in the Old Town Tonight!” Batman 308 (February 1979)
Story by Len Wein; art by John Calnan and Dick Giordano

“Once Beaten, Twice Sly!” Batman 314 (August 1979)
Story by Len Wein; art by Irv Novick and Frank McLaughlin

“Crimesmith and Punishment,” Batman 444 (February 1990)
Story by Marv Wolfman; art by Jim Aparo and Mike DeCarlo

“When the Earth Dies: Chapter One, Red Square! Bloody Square!” Batman 445 (March 1990)
Story by Marv Wolfman; art by Jim Aparo and Mike DeCarlo

“When the Earth Dies: Chapter Two, Underworlds” Batman 446 (April 1990)
Story by Marv Wolfman; art by Jim Aparo and Mike DeCarlo

Story by Alan Grant; art by Norm Breyfogle and Todd Klein

Story by Alan Grant; art by Bret Blevins and Adrienne Roy

“Marking Time,” Batman: Gotham Nights 1 (March 1995)
Story by John Ostrander; art by Mary Mitchell and Dick Giordano

“Tao: Part Two: Dragon,” Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight 53 (October 1993)
Story by Alan Grant; art by Arthur Ranson

“Criminals: Part One,” Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight 69 (March 1995)
Story by Steven Grant; art by Mike Zeck

By Gerard Jones and Mark Badger

“Playing Changes: Part II,” Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight: Jazz 2 (May 1995)
By Gerard Jones and Mark Badger

By Gerard Jones and Mark Badger

“The Sleeping,” Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight 76 (October 1995)
Story/art by Scott Hampton
There are two separate and distinct superheroes named “The Flash,” nicknamed “the fastest man alive.” The first Flash began in the winter of 1939 and the second appeared in the summer of 1956, sparking the Silver Age of comic book superheroes. The original Flash debuted in Flash Comics (January 1940) and shared the magazine with such characters as Johnny Thunder, the Whip, and Hawkman. In this first issue, scripted by Gardner Fox and drawn by Harry Lampert, college science student Jay Garrick came by his incredible speed after accidentally inhaling “the deadly fumes of the gas elements of ‘heavy water.’” He adopted a costume of red, blue and yellow, and wore boots and a wing-adorned steel helmet. Garrick’s first move was to join the football team to impress his blonde girlfriend Joan Williams, who quickly realized Garrick and the Flash were one and the same. The Golden Age Flash battled several inventive and offbeat villains such as The Fiddler, who wielded a magical Stradivarius, which could force others to do his bidding. The Fiddler, like the Flash, was also revived during the Silver Age. Flash Comics was published until the February 1940 issue with the Flash appearing in all 104 issues. He also appeared in all 32 issues of All-Flash (Summer 1941 to January 1949) and made appearances in All-Star and Comic Cavalcade.

In 1956, while other comic book editors were contemplating new genres, DC’s Julius Schwartz turned to superheroes. According to Schwartz, “Someone, I don’t know who, said, ‘The Flash was always one of my favorites and maybe we ought to take a crack at putting him out again.’ All eyes turned to me…So I said, ‘OK, I’m stuck.’” Thus the Flash was taken out of mothballs. However, Schwartz decided to do a new Flash with the same power of super speed but having a new costume, new secret identity, and a new origin. The new Flash was police scientist Barry Allen who became a super speedster after being doused by chemicals. This Flash’s costume was more aerodynamic, a more standard superhero costume—a skin-tight red and yellow suit with the Mercury/Hermes hat replaced by a cowl that covered his head. He was revived in Showcase (October 1956) and received his own title in March 1959. The definitive creators of this Flash were two veteran Flash artisans, writer John Broome and artist Carmine Infantino (who set the pattern for the illustration of super-speed characters). Over the years, Broome created many memorable villains, including Grodd, a super gorilla; Mirror Master, a felon with a reflection fetish; and Captain Cold, who controlled ice and frost with a cold gun. Under Broome and Infantino, the Flash became the quintessential superhero comic book of the 1960s.

At the same time, Gardner Fox was using Flash to develop an Earth-one and Earth-two theory, which allowed DC to revive all their old 1940s characters (including the heroes of the Justice Society of America) by claiming that they existed on Earth-two. Thus, Broome used Flash for character development, while Fox used Flash for character revival. In Flash #123, the Golden Age Flash, Jay Garrick, returned to team up with Barry Allen. In the parallel universe, Garrick was now married to college sweetheart, Joan Williams. Broome and Infantino left DC by the end of 1969, but both versions of the character have continued on. The Flash is also a member of the Justice League of America.

**POWER AND WEAPONS (Silver Age)**

The Flash possesses the power to move at superhuman speed, and can attain velocities equal to that of the speed of light (186,000 miles per second). His superhuman endurance enables him to run great distances without tiring.

The Flash possesses an aura of unknown energy that protects him from friction heat and the other adverse effects of motion at super-speed. He also has absolute mental control of his body’s atoms and molecules, and most often uses this power to vibrate his atoms at such high speeds that they can slip past the atoms of solid objects, enabling him to pass through such objects without damaging them. The Flash can travel to other dimensions through varying the vibratory rate of his atoms, and can also vibrate his clothing and even another human he is holding through a solid object or into another dimension with him.

The Flash has constructed a device called a “cosmic treadmill.” By running on it, the Flash can set up special internal vibrations within his body that protect him into other time periods. To return to his own time, the Flash need only will these internal vibrations to stop.
**Comics on Display**


“One of Our Green Lanterns is Missing,” *The Flash* 168 (March 1967)
Story by John Broome; art by Carmine Infantino and Sid Greene

“The Flying Samurai,” *The Flash* 180 (June 1968)
Story by Frank Robbins; art by Ross Andru and Mike Esposito

Story by Frank Robbins; art by Ross Andru and Mike Esposito

Story by Frank Robbins; art by Ross Andru and Mike Esposito

“Vengeance of the Immortal Villain,” *The Flash* 213 (March 1972)
Story by Gardner Fox; art by Carmine Infantino and Joe Giella

Story by Cary Bates; art by Irv Novick and Frank McLaughlin, with Dick Giordano; includes “Anything Can Happen,” (reprint of Golden Age Flash)

“Green Lantern: Master Criminal of the Universe,” *The Flash* 225 (January-February 1974)
Story by Cary Bates; art by Irv Novick and Dick Giordano

“Heart of Stone,” *Flash* 2 (July 1987)
Story by Mike Baron; art by Jackson Guice

“Misdirection,” *Flash* 67 (August 1992)
Story by Mark Waid; art by Greg LaRocque and Jose Marzan, Jr.

**THE GREEN LANTERN**

The Green Lantern was created by artist Martin Nodell and writer Bill Finger and first appeared in *All American* (July 1940). Wearing a loud black, red, green, purple, brown and yellow uniform, Alan Scott, a tall blond engineer, became the Green Lantern by charging a “power ring” which gave him near-omnipotent qualities. The ring was, however, virtually useless against wood and writers continually stressed this as the theme of an adventure. Furthermore, the ring had to be re-charged every 24 hours by touching it to a green lantern. Green Lantern had a horde of interesting villains to go against, particularly the Harlequin who wore a costume as outrageous as Green Lantern’s. Solomon Grundy, a villain who was a Frankenstein-like monster, was another intriguing foe. During the Golden Age, the superhero was drawn by dozens of artists none of whom were noteworthy. He appeared in *All American* through the October 1948 (102nd) issue, 48 stories in *All-Star Comics* (as a member of the Justice Society of America) between Fall 1940 and March 1951, and *Comic Cavalcade* from Winter 1943 through November 1948. Green Lantern had his own magazine from the fall of 1941 through 1949.

The new Green Lantern was first seen in *Showcase* (October 1959) and was part of DC’s Silver Age revival of Golden Age characters. He moved into his own title in spring 1960. DC editor Julius Schwartz recalled, “When the returns started coming in on the Flash and we saw we had a hit, the natural instinct was to do something similar. That’s how we decided to go ahead with Green Lantern, and I worked out the same theory of giving him a new personality, a new costume, a new everything.”

This reincarnation of the Green Lantern was test pilot Hal Jordan, who received his ring and lantern from an alien who had crashed on earth. The dying, red-skinned spaceman explained that he was a “space-patrolman in the super-galactic system” and that the ring was to be used “against forces of evil and injustice.” Jordan took over the ring and the alien’s uniform (a more conservative green and black jumpsuit) and became the Green Lantern. John Broome was the original scriptwriter and Gil Kane the artist.

Over the next three decades the hero’s background was embellished. Schwartz and Broome invented the Guardians of the Universe, a group of immortals who established the Green Lantern Corps, “a group of living beings chosen from all parts of the universe to fight evil and given rings of power.” In the early 1970s Green Lantern went through a
“relevance phase” and teamed up with Green Arrow to fight social ills. Stories handled contemporary social problems and topics like racism, politics, religion, cultism, and drug abuse. Later Green Lantern broke free of Earth’s problems and worked increasingly as part of the Green Lantern Corps, along with other Green Lanterns from other parts of the universe. He appeared as a member of the Justice League of America, DC’s Silver Age group of superheroes who replaced the earlier Justice Society.

POWER AND WEAPONS (Silver Age)

A skilled athlete and hand-to-hand combatant, Hal Jordan’s principal weapon is the power ring he wears on the middle finger of his right hand. After absorbing energy from the emerald power battery from which the Green Lanterns take their name, the ring is charged with power for a period of 24 hours and is capable of doing almost anything its wearer can think of and force into being through the power of his own will. Thus the power ring can enable its wearer to fly, to create giant objects formed of the ring’s emerald energy, and to survive the rigors of deep space, among other uses. During this 24-hour period, the power ring has only one weakness: due to a necessary impurity in the construction of the power battery itself, the ring is utterly ineffective against anything colored yellow. At the end of the 24 hours, the ring must be recharged at the battery to renew its power.

Comics on Display

“The Green Lantern,” Flashback #30 (reprint of All-America Comics #24 from 1941)
Story by Mart Dellon; art by Bill Finger

“This World is Mine!” Green Lantern 29 (June 1964)

“Once a Green Lantern, Always a Green Lantern,” 30 Green Lantern (July 1964)

“Secret Origin of the Guardians!” Green Lantern 40 (October 1965)
Story by John Broome; art by Gil Kane and Sid Greene

“Prince Peril’s Power Play,” Green Lantern 45 (June 1966)
Story by John Broome; art by Gil Kane and Sid Greene

“The End of a Gladiator,” Green Lantern 47 (September 1966)
Story by John Broome; art by Gil Kane and Sid Greene

“The Catastrophic Weapons of Major Disaster!” Green Lantern 57 (December 1967)
Story by Gardner Fox; art by Gil Kane

“Thoroughly Modern Mayhem!” Green Lantern 61 (June 1968)
Story by Mike Friedrich; art by Gil Kane and Sid Greene

“Shelf Life,” Green Lantern 171 (December 1983)
Story by Noel Naïve; art by Alex Toth and Terry Austin

Story by Len Wein; art by John Costanza and Anthony Tollin

“Defeat,” Tales of the Green Lantern Corps 2 (June 1981)
Story by Len Wein; art by Ben Oda and Anthony Tollin

“Triumph,” Tales of the Green Lantern Corps 3 (July 1981)
Story by Len Wein; art by Ben Oda and Anthony Tollin

Story by Paul Kupperberg and Len Wein; art by Gil Kane and Anthony Tollin

“Red Alert,” Tales of the Green Lantern Corps 209 (February 1987)
Story by Steve Englehart; art by Joe Staton and Mark Farmer
The Green Arrow was created by writer Mort Weisinger and artist George Papp and made its first appearance in More Fun (November 1941). Over the years the character has evolved from fighting conventional crooks to social problems. Teamed with a boy sidekick, Speedy, Green Arrow had an arrow for every occasion. The character was not particularly successful and was bounced from title to title until finally moving to a supporting feature in Adventure Comics in 1946, staying there until early in 1960.

In the early 1960s, Green Arrow joined the Justice League of America and began appearing in its magazine. At the end of the decade he was redesigned by artist Neal Adams and started looking and acting “like a hip, bearded rebel.” In 1970, working with editor Julius Schwartz, Adams and writer Denny O’Neil took over the Green Lantern title and teamed the hero with Green Arrow. The magazine ushered in the era of social relevance at DC.

Among the issues that O’Neil explored in his stories were racism, overpopulation, and drug addiction. The drug abuse problem was dramatized in an unusual way when Speedy was revealed to be a heroin addict. The relevant stories were popular with college-age readers and won awards for both art and writing. Sales, though, were poor and the crusading ceased by the mid-1970s. Another theme instituted by O’Neil and Adams was Green Arrow’s long-running romance with Black Canary. Green Arrow got a miniseries of his own in 1983 and returned in 1988 in a regular series written and first drawn by Mike Grell.

**POWER AND WEAPONS (Silver Age)**

Green Arrow is the world’s greatest archer and employs an extraordinary variety of specially designed arrows. Among many others are his explosive arrows, arrows which release smoke or knockout gas, arrows with strong, thin “arrow lines” attached, and arrows carrying nets. He does not shoot arrows to kill opponents.

The Green Arrow is also a superb hand-to-hand combatant.

**Comics on Display**

Story by Robert Rozakis; art by Alex Saviuk and John Celardo

“Assault on Replikon,” Green Lantern 109 (October 1978)
Story by Denny O’Neil; art by Vince Grell and Vince Colletta

“All My Sins Remembered,” Green Arrow 1 (May 1983)
Story by Mike W. Barr; art by Trevor von Eeden and Dick Giordano

“A Slight Case of Vertigo!” Green Arrow 2 (June 1983)
Story by Mike W. Barr; art by Trevor von Eeden and Dick Giordano

“Hexagon of Death,” Green Arrow 3 (July 1983)
Story by Mike W. Barr; art by Trevor von Eeden and Dick Giordano

“Showdown at Sea,” Green Arrow 4 (August 1983)
Story by Mike W. Barr; art by Trevor von Eeden and Dick Giordano

“Images,” Green Arrow 91 (November 1994)
Story by Kelley Puckett; art by Jim Aparo and John Costanza

Story by Denny O’Neil; art by Neal Adams and Frank Giacoia

“Even an Immortal Can Die,” Green Lantern/Green Arrow 3 (December 1983)
Story by Denny O’Neil; art by Neal Adams and Dick Giordano

Story by Denny O’Neil; art by Neal Adams and Dick Giordano

Story by Denny O’Neil; art by Neal Adams and Dick Giordano

“They Say It’ll Kill Me…But They Won’t Say When,” and “What Can One Man Do?” Green Lantern/Green Arrow 6 (1983)
Story by Denny O’Neil; art by Neal Adams

“…and Through Him Save a World,” Green Lantern/Green Arrow 7 (1983)
Story by Denny O’Neil; art by Neal Adams

“How Many Times Can a Man Turn His Head?” The Brave and the Bold 4 (January 2000)
Story by Mark Waid and Tom Peyer; art by Tom Grindberg and Barry Kitson
Hawkman was created for DC by writer Gardner Fox and was first drawn by Dennis Neville. He made his first appearance in *Flash* #1 (January 1940); his second in 1961 and both used the alter ego, Carter Hall. The character wore a hawk-like headgear and a huge pair of furry, feather-like wings. Carter Hall was a reincarnation of the Egyptian Prince Khufu and his flying powers were derived from an anti-gravity belt known as “ninth” metal. He was able to communicate with birds and eventually added a partner, Hawkgirl (*Flash* #24), in 1941. The duo was fascinated with pseudo-Egyptian culture and their fighting arsenal included crossbows, maces, axes, shields, and spears—anything resembling ancient weaponry. The Golden Age Hawkman specialized in odd and unusual investigations, and encountered such antagonists as an off-planet giant, a talking alligator god, a golden mummy, and purple monsters who lived in New York’s harbor.

Most of the scripts were handled by Gardner Fox with Bob Kanigher contributing several outstanding tales during the 1947-1949 period. After Dennis Neville left the strip, Hawkman was drawn deftly by Sheldon Moldoff (late 1940 to early 1945), and Joe Kubert (from late 1944 until 1949) who used unique layouts and heavy blacks to give the strip a pleasing and appropriately moody look. Hawkman was a major DC supporting feature and lasted through all 104 issues of *Flash*, the last published in 1949. Hawkman also appeared in *All-Star* comics from the first issue through the last (Summer 1940-March 1951). He was a member of the Justice Society of America.

Hawkman, following the Flash and Green Lantern, was brought back in March 1961 (*Brave and Bold* #34). Carter Hall was cast this time as a visiting policeman from the planet Thanagar. He continued to use ancient weaponry although he was now based in an orbiting spaceship. Hawkgirl also reappeared and the artist was once again Joe Kubert. After several try-outs in *Brave and Bold*, Hawkman was given a regular feature in *Mystery in Space* (November 1967) and his own title beginning in April 1964. Murphy Anderson replaced Kubert and Anderson’s slick, pristine renditions matched the character well. *Hawkman* folded in September 1968 as the Silver Age of Superheroes began to fade, but Carter Hall was paired briefly with the Atom in a seven-issue run (*Atom and Hawkman*). He continued as a member of the Justice League of America without Hawkgirl. There was a brief revival of the *Hawkman* title in the mid-1980s and, in 1989, artist-writer Timothy Truman devised *Hawkworld*, which returned Hawkman and Hawkgirl (as Katar and Shayera) to their home planet Thanagar for rather somber science fiction adventures.

**POWER AND WEAPONS (Silver Age)**

Hawkman can fly at great speed by means of his artificial wings and anti-gravity belt. The anti-gravity belt also enables him to lift enormous weights aloft.

Hawkman utilizes various Thanagarian weapons and has a considerable knowledge of his homeworld’s advanced science. He prefers to use duplicates of ancient Earth weapons in battle, which he creates with a Thanagarian duplicator machine.

On coming to Earth in pursuit of Byth, Hawkman learned all Earth knowledge using a device called an absorbascon. With effort he can retrieve any of it from his subconscious. The device also taught him how to communicate with Earth’s birds.

Hawkman is a superb hand-to-hand combatant. His body has been treated to withstand extreme temperatures and air friction. He can survive unharmed in a vacuum for five minutes.

**Comics on Display**

“Return of the Death Goddess!” *Hawkman* 25 (April-May 1968)

“Last Stand on Thanagar,” *Hawkman* 26 (June-July 1968)
Story by Raymond Marais; art by Dick Dillin and Chuck Cuidera

“When the Snow-Fiend Strikes,” *Hawkman* 27 (August-September 1968)

“Earth’s Impossible Day,” *Adventure Comics* 413 (December 1971)
Story by Gardner Fox; art by Joe Kubert

“Adventures on Other Worlds,” *Showcase* 103 (August 1978)
Story by Jack C. Harris; art by Allen Milgrom and Murphy Anderson
The Atom was introduced in *All-American* (October 1940) as Al Pratt, a redheaded college student who stood just over five feet tall. His schoolmates “constantly kid him about his small size” and nicknamed him the “Atom.” Pratt vows to do something about his weakling condition and undertakes a grueling regimen of training and transforms himself into a muscleman who “now has a tremendous strength that is unbelievable in one so small.” Pratt adopts a costumed secret identity as the Atom and begins a career of crime-fighting. His costume was a unique facet of his appearance, featuring short leather trunks, leather wrist bands, a blue mask and cape, and a yellow tunic open to the navel. As DC heroes went, the Atom was one of the more anguished heroes of the 1940s since hardly anyone treated his civilian self with any respect.

The stories consisted mainly of the macho Atom thrashing criminals startled by the great strength in his tiny body. Artist Joe Gallagher began drawing the hero in 1942. His style suggested more of the action than he showed and his Atom stories were rich with the props and locations of the meaner edge of big-city life: ashcans and alleys, street cleaners, pushcarts, junk wagons, tenements and shanties, pool halls, junkyards, mom-and-pop grocery stores, lampposts and fire hydrants. He stayed with the Atom for several years and drew him as a member of the Justice Society in *All Star Comics* (Winter 1941 to March 1951). The Atom moved to *Flash Comics* in 1947 and acquired a new, flashier costume in 1948.

He also made sporadic appearances in *Comic Cavalcade* and several other titles.

The new Atom was revived in *Showcase* (October 1961) as Ray Palmer, a scientist who upon finding a piece of a white dwarf star constructed a device which allowed him to change his size and alter his weight. The new stories, mostly by John Broome and Gardner Fox, concentrated on scientific plots and sub-plots. For example, the Atom was able to transport himself through telephone lines and there were several well-received “time pool” stories. Chronos, the Atom’s major villain, was also scientifically based.

Julius Schwartz, DC editor who worked up the concept with Fox, remembered, “I always felt the Atom of the 1940s was misnamed. He was simply called the Atom because he was a short fellow. I got the idea of having him a regular six-footer able to reduce himself to any size he wanted to. It just struck us as we were groping around for a theme that wasn’t being done by any superheroes.”

The Atom was given his own magazine in the spring of 1962. It became *Atom and Hawkman* in 1968 and folded the next year. There have been subsequent revivals, including *The Sword of the Atom* which involved the hero in...

**POWER AND WEAPONS (Silver Age)**

The size and weight controls developed by Ray Palmer allow him to reduce himself to any, even subatomic, size. When changing size Palmer is also able to change his weight from 180 pounds to virtually nothing, though his average battle size is six inches and six pounds.

While no expert, Palmer has mastered hand-to-hand combat at a variety of sizes and weights and he has exhibited great adaptability to fighting at any size.

Over time, the Mighty Mite has learned to use his size controls to great advantage, including the ability to travel through phone lines, allowing electronic impulses to move him along, or travel through subatomic particles.

**Comics on Display**

“Thief With the Tricky Toy,” *The Atom* 23 (February-March 1966)
Story by Gardner Fox; art by Gil Kane and Sid Greene

Story by Gardner Fox; art by Gil Kane and Sid Greene

Story by Gardner Fox; art by Gil Kane and Sid Greene

Story by Gardner Fox; art by Gil Kane and Sid Greene

“Stowaway on a Hot-Air Balloon,” *The Atom* 27 (October-November 1966)
Story by Gil Kane; art by Sid Greene

“Meet Major Mynah!” *The Atom* 37 (June-July 1968)
Story by Gardner Fox; art by Gil Kane and Sid Greene

“Ragnarok Night,” *Super-Team Family* 13 (October-November 1977)
Story by Gerry Conway; art by Arvell Jones and Romeo Tanghal

Story by Bob Haney; art by Jim Aparo; and

Story by Gardner Fox; art by Gil Kane and Murphy Anderson

“Death has a Golden Grab,” *The Brave and the Bold* 152 (July 1979)
Story by Bob Haney; art by Jim Aparo and Jerry Serpe

“A Choice of Two Dooms,” *Sword of the Atom* 2 (October 1983)
Story by Jan Strnad; art by Gil Kane

“Mourning’s End,” *Sword of the Atom* 3 (November 1983)
Story by Jan Strnad; art by Gil Kane

“Look Homeward, Atom,” *Sword of the Atom* 4 (December 1983)
Story by Jan Strnad; art by Gil Kane
The Justice Society of America was created by editor Sheldon Mayer and writer Gardner Fox and made its first appearance in *All-Star* (Winter 1940). The group started a new trend in comic books—the grouping of a company’s heroes in a single adventure magazine. The group began with eight members: Flash, Green Lantern, Hawkman, Hourman, Sandman, Dr. Fate, Spectre and the Atom. Over the years, however, many others have entered and left the convocation. Batman and Superman made their joint appearance here, and Black Canary, Dr. Mid-Nite, Johnny Thunder, Mr. Terrific, Red Tornado, Starman, Wildcat, and Wonder Woman all became members or made brief cameo appearances.

Gardner Fox wrote 35 of the 57 adventures. The format for handling so many characters became formulaized: the heroes gathered for an introductory chapter, were each defeated by their enemies in an individual chapter, and finally reunited to defeat the villains in the last chapter. The stories were idealistic as well as exciting with a wide range of scenarios, including defending America against spies, traveling to the planets, feeding the starving of Europe and fighting such villains as the Brain Wave, the Psycho-Pirate, and Solomon Grundy. The later writers of the JSA were Robert Kanigher and John Broome. The final issue of *All-Star* was dated February-March 1951.

The Justice Society came out of retirement in the Silver Age thanks to the DC concept that the Golden Age characters and the Silver Age characters existed in parallel worlds known as Earth-One and Earth-Two. Now and then the JSA members joined up with their Silver Age counterparts, the Justice League of America. The JSA continues with its own magazine today.

**Comics on Display**

Story by Gardner Fox; art by Irwin Hasen

“Countdown to Disaster!” *Adventure Comics* 465 (September-October 1979)
Story by Paul Levitz; art by Joe Staton and Dave Hunt

“The Night of the Soul Thief,” *Adventure Comics* 463 (June 1979)
Story by Paul Levitz; art by Joe Staton and Dave Hunt
When it became apparent that the revival of DC’s superheroes was going to be a great commercial success, editor Julius Schwartz, writer Gardiner Fox, and artist Mike Sekowsky combined to create the Justice League of America, the Silver Age version of the Golden Age Justice Society. The membership roster included the Flash, Green Lantern, Aquaman, Wonder Woman, the Martian Manhunter, Superman and Batman. The super group (which inspired Marvel Comics to launch the Fantastic Four) was introduced in *The Brave and the Bold* (March 1960).

For DC’s older fans, it was a thrilling moment. Many of them sent letters of gratitude to the company and it created a revival of interest in superhero comics among people who would normally have put such things behind them.

After three tryout issues, the Justice League was promoted to its own magazine in the autumn of 1960 (*Justice League of America*). It continued through the spring 1987 issue. A new comic, titled *Justice League*, started up the following month. For a time it was called *Justice League International* and in the spring of 1989 a separate magazine, *Justice League Europe*, was launched. Like other super groups, the JLA experienced personnel changes in the three-plus decades of its existence. Other heroes coming on for a term included Green Arrow, Mr. Miracle, Blue Beetle, the Red Tornado, Black Canary, Captain Atom, Rocket Red, Captain Marvel, Elongated Man, and Booster Gold. As with the Justice Society before them, the Justice League battled many original villains, among them Felix Foust and the Royal Flush Gang.

**Comics on Display**

“Crisis on Earth-A!” *Justice League of America* 38 (September 1965)

“Metamorpho Says ‘No!’” *Justice League of America* 42 (February 1966)

“The Bridge Between Earths!” *Justice League of America* 47 (September 1966)  
Story by Gardner Fox; art by Mike Sekowsky and Sid Greene

“Threat of the True-or-False Sorcerer!” *Justice League of America* 49 (November 1966)  
Story by Gardner Fox; art by Mike Sekowsky and Sid Greene

“Missing in Action—5 Justice Leaguers!” *Justice League of America* 52 (March 1967)  
Story by Gardner Fox; art by Mike Sekowsky and Sid Greene

“Where Valor Fails…Will Magic Triumph?” *Justice League of America* 83 (September 1970)

“The Coming of…Starbreaker,” *Justice League of America* 96 (February 1972)  
Story by Mike Friedrich; art by Dick Dillin and Joe Giella

“The Day the Earth Screams!” *Justice League of America* 97 (March 1972)  
Story by Mike Friedrich; art by Dick Dillin and Joe Giella

“Crisis on Earth-X!” *Justice League of America* 107 (September-October 1973)  
Story by Len Wein; art by Dick Dillin and Joe Giella

“Thirteen Against the Earth!” *Justice League of America* 108 (November-December 1973)  
Story by Len Wein; art by Dick Dillin and Joe Giella

“Adam Strange…Strange Puppet of Time!” *Justice League of America* 138 (January 1977)  
Story by Cary Bates; art by Dick Dillin and Frank McLaughlin

“A Tale of Two Satellites!” *Justice League of America* 143 (June 1977)  
Story by Steve Englehart; art by Dick Dillin and Frank McLaughlin
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