

(Ebook pdf) The Superhero Reader

The Superhero Reader

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Despite their commercial appeal and cross-media reach, superheroes are only recently starting to attract sustained scholarly attention. This groundbreaking collection brings together essays and book excerpts by major writers on

comics and popular culture. While superhero comics are a distinct and sometimes disdained branch of comics creation, they are integral to the development of the North American comic book and the history of the medium. For the past half-century they have also been the one overwhelmingly dominant market genre. The sheer volume of superhero comics that have been published over the years is staggering. Major superhero universes constitute one of the most expansive storytelling canvases ever fashioned. Moreover, characters inhabiting these fictional universes are immensely influential, having achieved iconic recognition around the globe. Their images and adventures have shaped many other media, such as film, video games, and even prose fiction. The primary aim of this reader is twofold: first, to collect in a single volume a sampling of the most sophisticated commentary on superheroes, and second, to bring into sharper focus the ways in which superheroes connect with larger social, cultural, literary, aesthetic, and historical themes that are of interest to a great many readers both in the academy and beyond.

"Hatfield, Heer, and Worcester...perform admirably in conveying the rich, evolving intellectual heritage of superhero studies. Perhaps the greatest strength of this collection is its integration of modern academic essays with works of public intellectuals from the earliest days of superhero comics to the present." - Robert F. Kilker, *The Journal of American Culture* "Charles Hatfield, Jeet Heer, and Kent Worcester have assembled a strong collection of articles and excerpts...For the intellectual fan of the superhero, and for the academic who wants to explore relatively uncharted territory in the genre, this collection is an excellent read." Robert T. Koch, Jr., *Studies in Popular Culture* "The editors provide an excellent analysis of the current state of superhero studies. They have also assembled an impressive sampling of intelligent commentary on the cultural, aesthetic, and historical aspects of the superhero." - Randy Duncan, Matthew J. Smith and Paul Levitz, *The Power of Comics*, 2nd edition "The Superhero Reader is an excellent introduction to commentary on superheroes, easily supplemented by the enterprising instructor. The introductory materials and editorial commentary by Hatfield, Heer, and Worcester usefully supplement and contextualize the readings. While not quite 'one stop shopping', it is a book that makes the teaching of superhero coursework more possible, while opening up the existing academic conversation about the genre to a wider audience." - Eric Berlatsky, *ImageText* "This collection presents essential essays addressing issues of the genre's historical development, its theoretical underpinnings, and ways of understanding how it represents culture and identity." - Matthew J. Smith, *The Routledge Companion to Comics* From the Inside Flap A full exploration of the history, politics, and aesthetics of the superhero genre About the Author Charles Hatfield is an associate professor of English at California State University, Northridge, and is the author of *Alternative Comics: An Emerging Literature* (2005) and *Hand of Fire: The Comic Art of Jack Kirby* (2011). Jeet Heer is a senior editor at the *New Republic* who has published in a wide array of journals including *The New Yorker*, *The Paris Review*, and *VQR*. Kent Worcester is the coeditor (with Jeet Heer) of *Arguing Comics: Literary Masters on a Popular Medium* (2004) and *A Comics Studies Reader* (2009).