

Superheroes and Comic Books

Comics contain illustrations. The illustrations are drawn within frames, also known as panels, and placed in order to tell a story. Story text or speech bubbles also help the reader to follow the plot.



Superhero comics became very popular in the 1930s. In the early days of superhero comic books, the well liked characters included Superman, Captain Marvel, Batman, Captain America and Wonder Woman. Characters such as Spider-Man, the Fantastic Four, the Hulk, X-Men and Iron Man came later. Some of these superheroes still have adventures today and are as popular as ever. Some superheroes have even had films made about them.

Superman

Superman is also known as the 'Man of Steel'. His powers include the ability to fly, X-ray vision, great strength and supernatural speed and hearing. Superman's powers came from the planet of Krypton, where he grew up. His only weakness is Kryptonite, a mineral which deprives him of all his powers.

Superman wears a blue, red and yellow costume, with a cape to help him fly. The yellow and red Superman symbol can be seen on his chest. He keeps his superhero identity



a secret by living his everyday life as newspaper reporter, Clark Kent. Clark is a good-natured and quiet man who is in love with Lois Lane, another reporter. Clark was found on Earth as a baby, rescued by a family and brought up to know the difference between right and wrong. He was taught to fight for what he believed in.

Superman's arch enemy is the evil genius, Lex Luthor. Lex doesn't have superpowers, but he uses different methods to try to defeat Superman, such as Kryptonite. Other enemies have included the Puzzler and the Galactic Golem.

Final Fact: Superman has secret headquarters, known as the Fortress of Solitude.



Spiderman

Spider-Man was a teenager who had to deal with growing up, as well as having special powers.

His real name is Peter Parker, but he keeps his true identity a secret. Peter was bitten by a radioactive spider on a school trip, which left him with incredible superpowers. He had to learn about his powers without anyone finding out.



Spider-Man has incredible strength and shares many of a spider's capabilities. He has the ability to climb almost any surface, he has excellent reactions, can shoot spiderwebs from his wrists and can use these to grab items which are far away. His webs can also be used to trap people or to swing himself from place to place.

Spider-Man believes that, 'With great power, comes great responsibility.' This means that he only uses his special abilities for good, such as protecting people from crimes in New York City. Peter designed a costume for himself to wear, in order to conceal his true identity. It is red and blue and has web designs on it. A black spider symbol can be seen on his chest.

Some of Spider-Man's enemies have included Kingpin, Dr Octopus and the Scorpion. Like Spider-Man, they have gained powers through scientific accidents.

Final Facts: He marries Mary Jane Watson in one episode and his best friend is Harry Osborne, the son of the Green Goblin – one of his enemies! By day, Peter is a photographer for a newspaper.



Superheroes and Comic Books **Questions**

1. In addition to the illustrations, what also helps readers to follow the plot in a superhero comic book?

2. List three of the earlier comic book superheroes.

3. List three of the later comic book superheroes.

4. What are the three main colours of Superman's costume?

5. What is Kryptonite?

6. What might happen if Superman and Spider-Man's true identities were discovered?

7. Apart from wanting to keep their superhero identities a secret, write down two other similarities between Superman and Spider-Man.

8. How are Spider-Man's webs useful?

9. What does the phrase 'With great power, comes great responsibility.' mean?
