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Enter the Superheroes: American Values, Culture, and the Canon of Superhero Literature

Alex S. Romagnoli, Gian S. Pagnucci

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Ever since the first appearances of Superman and Batman in comic books of the late 1930s, superheroes have been a staple of the popular culture landscape. Though initially created for younger audiences, superhero characters have evolved over the years, becoming complex figures that appeal to more sophisticated readers. While superhero stories have grown ever more popular within broader society, however, comics and graphic novels have been largely ignored by the world of academia.

In *Enter the Superheroes:American Values, Culture, and the Canon of Superhero Literature*, Alex S. Romagnoli and Gian S. Pagnucci argue that superheroes merit serious study, both within the academy and beyond. By examining the kinds of graphic novels that *are* embraced by the academy, this book explains how superhero stories are just as significant. Structured around key themes within superhero literature, the book delves into the features that make superhero stories a unique genre. The book also draws upon examples in comics and other media to illustrate the sociohistorical importance of superheroes—from the interplay of fans and creators to unique narrative elements that are brought to their richest fulfillment within the world of superheroes. A list of noteworthy superhero texts that readers can look to for future study is also provided.

In addition to exploring the important roles that superheroes play in children's learning, the book also offers an excellent starting point for discussions of how literature is evolving and why it is necessary to expand the traditional realms of literary study. *Enter the Superheroes* will be of particular interest to English and composition teachers but also to scholars of popular culture and fans of superhero and comic book literature.

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