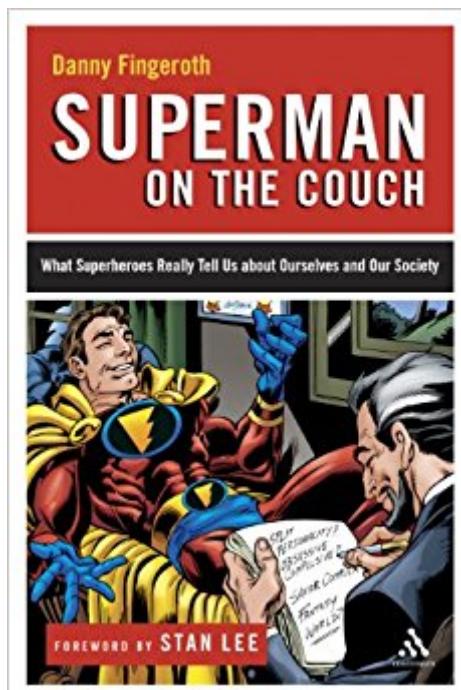


The book was found

Superman On The Couch: What Superheroes Really Tell Us About Ourselves And Our Society



Synopsis

Why are so many of the superhero myths tied up with loss, often violent, of parents or parental figures? What is the significance of the dual identity? What makes some superhuman figures "good" and others "evil"? Why are so many of the prime superheroes white and male? How has the superhero evolved over the course of the 20th and early 21st centuries? And how might the myths be changing? Why is it that the key superhero archetypes - Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Spider-Man, the X-Men - touch primal needs and experiences in everyone? Why has the superhero moved beyond the pages of comics into other media? All these topics, and more, are covered in this lively and original exploration of the reasons why the superhero - in comic books, films, and TV - is such a potent myth for our times and culture.

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Customer Reviews

The golden age of comic books may be over, but our "hope (and fear) that there may be more to this world than what we see" draws us to pop culture heroes who mesh otherworldly powers and smarts with a sense of duty and even some human frailty. This is part of a global "superhero comic consciousness" that, observes Fingeroth, transcends religious and national boundaries to infect us with do-gooder inclinations while still letting us delight in violent retribution against imagined villains. Connecting the dots from ancient warriors and biblical figures to modern-day superheroes, Fingeroth analyzes archetypes like the angry young man (Wolverine), the avenging orphan (Batman), the dual personality (Superman) and other modern derivatives like Dirty Harry and

Rambo. Not surprisingly, super-heroines have struggled for decades to achieve the popularity of their male counterparts. Powerful women are threatening whether drawn or born, concludes Fingeroth, and until the 1990s advent of Buffy and Xena, Wonderwoman was a lonely lady at the top. With humor and a touch of comic book hyperbole, the author capably mines the genre's cultural morphologies and the societal changes it reflects ; a subject largely overlooked by contemporary pop psychologists and academics. While this psychological journey through comic hero history can seem reductive at times with page-filler statements like "We achieve immortality through the superheroes," the book, like the escapist but enduring media it chronicles, proves an illuminating read. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Adult/High School
Fingeroth offers a lucid and accessible social critique of the mainstream comics' preternatural characters as well as reasoning why and how the public welcomes such stories. Although he rightfully reaches back to earlier literary uses and developments of heroic character types, these discussions don't demand strong academic knowledge of world cultures, nor do his analyses of superhero motives require readers to be grounded in theoretical psychology. Instead, this is an engaging discussion that may turn some readers into literary sleuths and deeper thinkers, simply because the writing is so solid and the presentation so balanced. Even those who aren't fans of Spider-Man or Batman will be able to understand the relevance of considering how fiction and culture interact with one another. An excellent resource for both research and pleasure reading.
Francisca Goldsmith, Berkeley Public Library, CA Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

I've long enjoyed Danny's work, both in comics and his subsequent writings about comics. Perfect companion to "Disguised as Clark Kent"

Where are most superheroes orphaned at an early age? What is the purpose of groups of superheroes? Why does Batman have a preadolescent sidekick? Why are there also superheroines? I'm afraid I can't answer any of these questions. The author of this book discusses all of these questions, but his discussion is a little too hazy for me.

What do superheroes mean to culture? In 'Disguised As Clark Kent', Danny Fingeroth established the basis of Superman and other heroes in Jewish and Eastern mythologies. 'Superman On the

Couch' takes a step back, and discusses what superheroes tell us about ourselves and society. For instance, this tome contains fascinating discourses on The history of superheroes, dual identities, the storm of the orphan, our amazing feminine superheroes, the groups like the Justice League of America, The X Men, and Fantastic Four, anger and superheroes, changing of the guard, and villains. Now, as a 'mature' reader, I can understand how superhero mythology developed. So much for a simple comic book I guess. But, all things in balance. Comics can be comics, and enjoyment is enjoyment. As a reader, I still enjoy reading comics. So here comes Mr Fingeroth and his verbalization of arguments that have been around in academic circles for years. Did the early creators and writers of comic books know what they were doing when they produced the books of our youth? Were they that smart? Did they research their stories in advance? Are modern educated writers with college and university degrees any more thoughtful in drawing on classic influences? Whether we are more intelligent or not, we draw on our references. Shuster and Siegel drew on Zorro, Gladiator, Doc Savage, and Gladiator for Superman. Modern writers use Superman, Batman, and Spiderman as templates. We stand on what has gone on before. Superhero convention and archetypes will always be present. I guess that is the point of the book. Superheroes reflect how we see what our potential is with respect to our own limitations. Even Jesus reflected on that when he compared faith the size of a mustard seed that could move a mountain. Tell a man he cannot triumph against forces of evil, and constrain him, and he will not. Give him 'superhuman' abilities, and he will. Such are superheroes, and Mr Fingeroth presents strong arguments on the validity of superheroes for today. Are you a superhero? Read this book and find out how close you might be! Tim Lasiuta[...]

I am a fan of comic book superheroes; I try to see all the major Hollywood movies on superheroes like X-Men, Batman, Superman, etc... I am also a fan of the Sunday comics. But I have never read a comic book. So I picked this book up last month thinking it would be a good way to learn about comic book lore and history. This book accomplishes that. It covers the origins (and conclusions) of all the major comic book heroes. It also goes a little into the history of the authors / creators / publishers of these comic books. The pace is quick, the book is short, and most teenagers should be able to read the whole book in a weekend. But as a piece of literary criticism, it is okay. This book to the comic book genre is like having one Cliff Notes book for all of Shakespeare; you sacrifice depth for breadth. Overarching themes are emphasized over storylines of the individual comic book heroes. There are a lot of interesting facts though; such as Harry Potter being an orphan, just like Batman, Superman, and the Hulk. In all, this book is worth reading if you have the time to spare. I

definitely would recommend it as reading material for a college class on say 20th century American culture, or Mass Media / Entertainment.

It is clear to me that this book is not aimed at people who actually READ superhero comics. Though relatively well-written, it is incredibly superficial. The conclusions drawn about the superheroes themselves are often basic and flawed from the point of view of a diehard fan (though diehard fans come in many shapes and some may love him). The conclusions drawn about why we relate to superheroes are the obvious ones. Fingeroth chooses to look only at the surface, saying, for instance, that because Superman is an alien, Clark Kent is the 'unreal' identity when compared to Superman. The name 'Kal-El', Superman's Kryptonian name, is never mentioned. Fingeroth also can't account for the fact that Clark was raised human, and his canon reasons for being Superman stem from his childhood as Clark. Even the name Superman isn't something he chose--Lois Lane slapped it on him the first time he saved her. That is just an example, but the whole book reads like that. Fine if you're only interested in pseudo-pop psychology, with no depth into the history or variation of the characters. And THEN there's the fact that the only place women are mentioned in this book is in the chapter set aside for them (I thought 'separate but equal' was a thing of the past), and Fingeroth never mentions any comic book superheroine other than Wonder Woman. WW, Xena and Buffy are the focus of this chapter--legitimately, and with good discussion. However, he neglects so many women from the original superhero medium that I couldn't stand it: Black Canary, Storm, Rogue, Elektra, Supergirl, Batgirl, Oracle and Catwoman to name a few--who he doesn't name. As for the things Fingeroth claims superheroes tell us about ourselves, well, he simply repackages the obvious: Superman=immigrant, adolescent power fantasy, outsider belonging, joy in having another secret, powerful identity. I think he makes some original claims, but everything is biased toward his own experience and I honestly don't remember any. I won't say this is a bad book, but if you're looking for a thoughtful analysis of superheroes, this is not it. This is pure surface.

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