Superheroes: Under The Mask

By James Au - Posted on February 28, 2011

The word hero originated from ancient Greece and it means defender and protector. Greek legends about heroes typically described them as demigod warriors who were strong, brave, and courageous. Similar ideologies for heroes can be found in many other cultures as well. The depiction of heroes can be either real or fictional, but the stories about them all have the consistency of portraying them as good people with a strong sense for both justice and good.

As time progressed, the United States took the ideology of hero and heroism to a whole other level. Through creativity and innovation, Americans reinvented an entirely new culture for heroes and heroism. No longer are heroes just people with a good character and a strong sense of what is right and wrong. Heroes are now super; superheroes with superhuman traits that allows them to deliver justice and good.

Fictional superheroes have grown to become an authentic American staple. They are known for their superpowers, hidden identities, and courageous actions. However, even as iconic superheroes have become, they continue to evolve along with time and American culture.
The popularity and emergence of superheroes started with comic books. In 1939, comic book writer Jerry Siegel and illustrator Joe Shuster had the idea of writing about a new character that young children could look up to. This character they had in mind would set the standards: super powers, secret identity, costume, and signifying symbol. Superman was born. [...]

As the superhero universe expanded so did the formula for creating superheroes. The simplicity of superheroes became intertwined with ideas in reality. An example for such change was during World War II. Comic book writers were pressured into creating storylines and characters that would promote domestic propaganda during the wartime. Whether it was establishing patriotism or antagonizing the Axis Powers, comic books took on an entirely different role than just to entertain. Comic books became a medium for political agendas. Comic books became a medium that would deliver messages to its readers concerning patriotism and who are the enemies of United States. As it would continue to become a cultural influence, many different patriotic ideas emerged from it.
It was after WWII that the popularity of superheroes in comic books started to decline. However, the decline in popularity was a chance for new writers and artists to rework the superhero genre. Writers were incorporating other themes into their plots; themes such as romance, crime thriller, and horror. This was considered as the beginning of the second age of superhero comic books, the Silver Age.
Because of the incorporation of such themes, superhero comics were growing to be more explicit in the content that was shown. Superheroes comics were testing the limits of what could be shown and not shown. The Comic Association of America implemented the Comics Code Authority which regulated what kind of material can be shown and not shown, and it acted as somewhat of a censor for the comic book industry.
(Source : https://psupopculture.wordpress.com/2011/02/28/superheroes-under-the-mask/)