



The Golden Age of Comic Books 1938-1950

No. 1

10c



Step Inside the World of SUPERHEROES!
and learn how political events and social issues inspired
the work of Jewish comic book creators

SUPERHERO
MEMORABILIA

RARE
COMIC BOOKS

STUDIO COSTUMES
and MORE!

Jewish Museum of Maryland
January 27th - August 18th 2013

The Jewish Museum of Maryland

Zap! Pow! Bam! The Superhero: The Golden Age of Comics, 1938-1950

Educator's Resource Guide

January 27, 2013 – August 18, 2013

The JMM will host the travelling exhibition, *Zap, Pow, Bam! The Superhero: The Golden Age of Comic Books 1938-1950* from January 27, 2013 through August 18, 2013. Most people don't think of comic books as being Jewish, but most of the artists and publishers during the Golden Age of Comic Books were Jewish, including the creators of the greatest Superhero of all time: Superman. The exhibit will include rare early comic books, superhero memorabilia, and objects belonging to the first comic book creators and publishers which included Superman, Captain Marvel, and Wonder Woman. Other features of the exhibit include interactive stations like a drawing studio, a comic book nook, the "batmobile," and a telephone booth for quick costume changes.

THE MUSEUM CAN OFFER FREE ADMISSION AND BUS TRANSPORTATION TO JEWISH DAY AND CONGREGATIONAL SCHOOLS FOR FIELD TRIPS TO THE JMM DUE TO A GENEROUS GRANT FROM THE CHARLES CRANE FOUNDATION. THIS OPPORTUNITY IS ON A FIRST COME-FIRST-SERVE BASIS THROUGH JUNE, 2013.

In addition to the *Zap, Pow Bam*, your students can deepen their appreciation for their Jewish heritage by seeing our two other acclaimed exhibits:

- ***The Synagogue Speaks***: explores the historic landmark, the Lloyd Street Synagogue, and the three different congregations that worshipped in the building. Each congregation was made up of European immigrants who faced the challenge of adapting to American life while trying to maintain religious traditions rooted in the old country.
- **See the newly restored mikveh, which is believed to be the oldest documented one in the United States.**
- ***Voices of Lombard Street: A Century of Change in East Baltimore***: The area surrounding the Jewish Museum of Maryland was the center of immigrant life in Baltimore in the early 1900's, but today only a few remnants of its Jewish past survive. *Voices of Lombard Street* tells the story of this historic neighborhood from then until now.

To learn more about the JMM's education programs or to make a reservation for your class group, contact Abby Krolik, Visitor Services Coordinator at akrolik@jewishmuseummd.org or call 410.732.6400 x235.

Contact Information

The Jewish Museum of Maryland

15 Lloyd Street

Baltimore, Maryland 21202

410-732-6400

www.jewishmuseummd.org

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WHY THIS EXHIBIT?

Young or old—nearly everyone has a comic book memory. We can all recall a time when we were able to enter a world of fantasy and escape by reading a comic book about our favorite superhero. When you are reading a comic book, you travel to an imaginary world—free of stress and full of thrills. So what does this have to do with the Jewish Museum of Maryland? This Museum is about preserving Jewish history and our most precious memories. Maybe you don't think of comic books as being Jewish, but most of the artists and publishers during the Golden Age of Comic Books were Jewish, including the creators of the greatest superhero of all time, Superman.

Through this exhibit, organized by the William Breman Museum of Jewish Heritage in Atlanta, Georgia, you will retrieve memories that span an era beginning prior to World War II. The comics in this exhibit reflect the WWII era and extend into the postwar period. For readers during this time period, including the soldiers on the battlefield, the comics represented a world of endless possibilities and infinite hope. It was a time of despair in America following the stock market crash of 1929. A great depression and a world war threatened to drain the American people of their confidence and their spirit. Comic books gave us heroes with incredible powers and strong values. We looked to them for inspiration and a rare brand of escapist entertainment. They delivered to us a kind of triumph and energy that was greatly needed and deeply appreciated.

Comic books have a lengthy literary foundation. Our human fascination for heroes and superheroes can be traced back to the classic tales of world mythology, the legends of gods and goddesses. A list of heroic figures might include biblical figures like Samson or David. It might include heroes in many forms, especially when we feel a connection to them. We often recognize ourselves in these characters or secretly wish that we could achieve, or at least simulate, their greatness in our own lives. We crave their power and their confidence, and we strive to emulate their noble thoughts and deeds.

Although a 20th century phenomenon, the American comic book had its roots in the 19th century. Civil War “dime novels” and elaborate western “paper pulp” tales cultivated the public's fascination with tales of bravery and daring. In 1895, newspaper comic strips satirized and poked fun at politics, local and world events, and everyday life. Economically, comic books were a big business. They appealed to a wide base of readers, and it soon became evident that young adults and children were among them. Like all mass media, they had an impact and, most importantly, they had potential.

BALTIMORE HEROES RESOURCES

Geppi's Entertainment Museum

301 West Camden Street, Baltimore, MD 21201

www.geppismuseum.com (410) 625-7060

Pioneer Spirit: Baltimore's Heroes

In 2006, comic book and pop culture collector and entrepreneur, Stephen A. Geppi, CEO of Diamond Comic Distributors, opened a museum dedicated to the celebration of American pop culture and entertainment. Now GEM has turned its sights to the very city it calls home by establishing a Hall of Fame in its "Pioneer Spirit" room. This gallery had its grand opening on March 26, 2011, and Geppi's Entertainment Museum wants visitors, pop culture collectors, and fans to be a part of the excitement—and let us know whom they'd like to see included in later updates.

This unique exhibition includes personal items donated by inductees and other memorabilia, all focused on celebrating the cultural contributions of "Charm City." "I've been called Baltimore's biggest cheerleader," said Geppi. "Now through GEM, I get to show everybody how many wonderful entertainers, leaders, and other important pop culture icons came from this wonderful city. This is about Baltimore's place in the pop culture landscape."

Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African-American History and Culture

830 East Pratt Street, Baltimore, MD 21202

www.rflewismuseum.org (443) 263-1800

Defining Moments: An Exhibition of Works by Bryan Collier.

Organized by the National Center for Children's Illustrated Literature, this rich and vibrant exhibition showcases the works of award-winning illustrator Bryan Collier, who grew up in Pocomoke, Maryland on the lower Eastern Shore. Collier, the youngest of six children, had an interest in art from an early age. "At home and at school, I was encouraged to read. I liked the stories, but I really liked the pictures." As a teenager, he began to paint the world around him—the bay, ducks, water, and marshland. He quickly began to develop a unique style of painting that incorporated both watercolors and collage.

HOW STUDENTS BENEFIT

Comics are multi-dimensional, and they embody the power of both words and images. They can be used as a platform to teach a multitude of concepts and ideas: character development, social issues, literary conventions, ethics, values, and artistic symbolism. Comic books can also help students to develop a moral compass and critical thinking skills. This exhibit presents a unique opportunity for students to learn how traditional comic books have influenced society ever since they were first created. Through this exhibit, students will be introduced to the universal themes of respect for humanity and responsible citizenship. They will meet a colorful selection of comic book heroes who stand for strong values and noble causes. After absorbing the meaningful messages of comics, students will be encouraged to apply the ethics and actions of these conscientious heroes to their own lives and their own communities. Through this exposure to superheroes, young people may well consider real solutions to community and global problems of the present day. Experiencing the **Zap! Pow! Bam!** exhibit will generate a strong appreciation for the creative artists and publishers who brought these heroes to life. It will also give students an inspiration to create their own literature and artwork and to embody some of the many ideas and actions of this fascinating genre.

EDUCATIONAL THEMES AND FOCUS AREAS

Tikkun Olam (Repairing the world)

This is an essential Jewish value and initiative, but you don't have to be Jewish to cherish it. The concept suggests that we have a responsibility to contribute to the betterment of the world in which we live. It suggests that we can perform *mitzvot* as part of our daily lives. The heroes of the comics are generally characters who regard this as their purpose in life. They are seekers of justice, protectors of the weak, and they are willing to sacrifice themselves for the good of society. They are role models for anyone who embraces these ideals and wishes to be a better person.

Overcoming Weaknesses and Vulnerabilities

We often find that our comic book heroes have special abilities or strengths, and yet, inevitably, they also have weaknesses. We may be able to relate to these vulnerable areas because, although we strive to be strong, we may also encounter a sense of vulnerability in our own lives. How do we overcome such obstacles? How do we use our creative talents and moral fortitude to overcome the pitfalls of life? These dramatic tales present meaningful life lessons for young readers. The stories teach determination and perseverance.

The Mirror of History

This genre is rich in historical knowledge, details, and local color. The pages of comic books can bring historical events to life in very imaginative ways. They can involve young people participating in historical events in a way that help students connect to past events. In this unit of study, teachers use many examples of comic book stories that seem to draw directly from history. There are, in fact, some stories that bring actual historic figures into their plots and settings, engaging young readers in a very compelling way.

Ethics and Values

Comic book critics may take issue with the idea that superheroes often resort to aggressive physical action or violence in their endeavors. They may be overlooking the ethical, moral decision-making that comes into play prior to such actions. The creators of comic book heroes were profoundly aware of the powerlessness that pervaded the general population of their era. They knew that they had to create characters that actually had the power to make the world a better place. They gave their heroes the power to rescue children from a burning building. They gave them the power to stop a crime as it was being committed. They gave them the ability to stop a catastrophe looming in the distance, whether it was an evil villain, an invasion of aliens, or a hurricane. Moreover, they gave their heroes the power to make conscientious decisions. The readers of comics see heroes fighting to save others or to protect themselves. They never saw their heroes starting a fight or abusing their powers. There are valuable moral lessons to be gleaned from this genre.

Science Fiction and Science Fact

Much in these comic books deal with fantasy and legend, yet a great deal is rooted in real science. Experiments, machines, and imaginative devices are prominent in many comic books and graphic novels. We find that the writers have used science as a foundation to then go far beyond the current capabilities of science as they create super worlds or future worlds. They tempt the imagination of their readers, encouraging new ways of looking at technology. They toy with the limitations of computers and spaceships as they challenge us to evaluate our technological culture.

Vehicles for Political Messages

Like any form of literature, comics reflect political thinking. A comic book could be pro-war or anti-war. It could have a religious or social agenda. It might intend to parody or satirize the government or a particular issue of the day. Words and images are powerful, and they have a great deal of potential to influence the minds of its readers. Comics can be, and have been, used as propaganda. They can also be used to present wholesome, responsible, worthwhile concepts as well. They can be used in a pro-active, positive way. This approach is worth exploring in the classroom.

SUGGESTED LESSON PLANS

Grades 3-5: How super is Superman?

OVERVIEW:

Comic books can be valuable tools for teaching students critical reading skills. They can learn to identify the qualities and attributes of characters in the story.

OBJECTIVES:

- Define character traits in superheroes.
- Engage in critical analysis by exploring these traits and explaining their importance.
- Introduce specific concepts represented by the actions of the characters: consideration for others, seeking justice, promoting safety.

PREPARATION (pre-visit):

- Familiarize students with traditional character development as seen in standard stories of heroic figures: Davy Crockett, John Henry, Paul Bunyan, Johnny Appleseed. Discuss characteristics of these figures. Describe the actions that display those characteristics.
- Present Superman comic for the class. Discuss the character's origin, capabilities, intentions, and values.

PREPARATION (post-visit):

- Make a list of the qualities of a superhero. Discuss the ways in which heroes are like common people. Discuss ways in which they are special.
- Use the blackboard to create a chart depicting all of the students' favorite superheroes. Have each student tell the class what they like most about their hero.
- Assign small groups of 5 or 6 to create a master list of the abilities and powers of the superheroes they know and love.
- Have the students share their group findings and discuss the creation of a superhero of their own. Let every student contribute characteristics and ideas.
- Have students nominate and vote on the name and image of the new superhero.
- Distribute a variety of comic book covers to show the style and presentation of superheroes.
- Have each student attempt to draw and create their version of the class superhero in a comic book cover format.
- Make a display of all of the covers depicting their hero.

Grades 6-8 Superman: A Hero of Modern Mythology**OVERVIEW:**

Students will be able to create many parallels between classic literature and comic books. The process of comparison will enhance their sense that comic books are a dynamic literary form.

OBJECTIVES:

- To explore the qualities and characteristics of mythological stories and legends.
- To define the attributes of a hero.
- To recognize common themes in mythology and comic books.
- To familiarize students with the concept of origin or back story.
- To identify the inherent lessons and values found within heroic tales.

PREPARATION (pre-visit):

- Read and discuss the story of Hercules from Greek mythology. Emphasize the responsibility of his heroic tasks (the Twelve Labors).
- Tell the Biblical story of Moses. Emphasize the concept of his being cast off for his own protection. Describe his growth, his actions, and his use of power.
- Review the story of the Sword in the Stone. Define the fellowship and responsibilities of the Knights of the Round Table. Discuss the code of chivalry.

- Review the story of a fictional or real life hero that your class has recently studied. Create a list of heroic traits that your hero exemplifies along with the struggles and challenges he/she overcame.

ACTIVITIES (post-visit):

- Create a chart comparing the attributes of legendary and mythological heroes to those of superheroes. Emphasize areas of commonality and areas of difference. Include the themes of abandonment, destiny, duty, and emerging as a savior.
- Have students research the origin of Superman. What similarities exist between Superman and Moses? Superman and King Arthur? Superman and Hercules?
- Screen the 1978 feature film, *Superman*. Discuss Superman as a traditional myth.
- Create a storyboard of a sequence from *Superman*, the movie.

Grades 9-12 Comic Book History

OVERVIEW:

The history of comic books can provide a rich platform for addressing a wide scope of historical events and social issues. The comics reflect the events of history in a way that is designed to gain and hold the attention of young audiences. They also open up avenues for study of symbolism, satire, parody, and political commentary.

OBJECTIVES:

- To study the history of immigrants coming to America during the wave of immigration in the late 19th century and in the early portion of the 20th century.
- To analyze the lifestyles and cultures represented by many ethnic groups as they assimilated into American society.
- To become familiar with key historical events around the turn of the century and through the two World Wars.
- To observe economic trends and their influence on American citizens of that era.
- To evaluate the impact of comic books as a cultural reflection of the times.

PREPARATION (pre-visit):

- View The History Channel film *Ellis Island* to establish the history of immigration to America, 1880-1920.
- Show opening scene from Barry Levinson's film, *Avalon*. Discuss the feelings experienced by immigrants to this country. Have students write a short story from the perspective of an immigrant.
- Students will research the lives and accomplishments of several cartoon artists: Jerry Robinson, Will Eisner, Bob Kane, Bill Finger, William Moulton Marston, Jerry Siegel, Joe Shuster, Joe Simon, and Jack Kirby. Highlight the aspects of their lives that were influenced by real historical events.

ACTIVITIES (post-visit):

- Students will choose a specific comic book hero and create a project highlighting the characters, the themes, the artistic styles, and the possible impact that the comic book stories may have

had on its readers. The project should include complete written explanations of these elements as well as illustrations or other artistic accompaniments.

- Students will create their own comic book heroes. Each hero should have a name, an origin, a costume, an alter-ego (dual-identity), a sidekick, and a weakness. Describe or illustrate the comic book existence of this hero and explain the hero's purposes. Divide into groups. Group One will create an origin story. Group Two will create a costume and accessories. Group Three will create a setting and time period. Group Four will create a plotline with additional characters.

TIMELINE

As the dynamic events of world history unfolded in the pre-war and post-war eras, the comic book industry served as a “mirror of the times.” This timeline intends to show some of the ways in which the industry tracked and responded to political events and social issues of the day.

World History

Comic Book History

	1895 Newspaper comic strips satirized politics, and local and world events.
1929 Great Depression/ Stock market crash.	
1933 Federal report reveals 85% of young Jewish people are unemployed.	1933 First “Funny Book” is published. Many Jewish writers find jobs in the comics field.
1938 Adolph Hitler is declared <i>Time</i> magazine’s “Man of the Year.”	1938 Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster introduce Superman in <i>Action Comics #1</i> .
1939 Murder, Inc. crime syndicate thriving in New York.	1939 Batman, created by Bob Kane and Bill Finger, appears in <i>Detective Comics</i> .
	1940 <i>Superman</i> sells 2 million copies per month.
	1940 Will Eisner’s <i>Uncle Sam</i> battles Nazis a full year before America enters WWII.
	1941 Will Eisner’s <i>Uncle Sam</i> depicts a Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor two months before the actual attack.
1941 America enters World War II.	1941 Jack Kirby’s <i>Captain America</i> fights Nazis.
	1941-1945 80% of reading material in Army camps is comic books. Many comics creators serve as heroically as their creations.
1941 Women enter the workforce due to the draft and labor shortages.	1941 DC Comics introduces Wonder Woman to embody female ideals of heroism.
1945 World War II ends.	1945 Superhero comic sales decline, DC switches to animal cartoon characters.
1954 Public and Congressional objections to comic books.	1954 Comics Code Authority is created.

Jewish Graphic Novels

A book list prepared by the Association of Jewish Libraries

www.jewishlibraries.org

King David. Kyle Baker. A biblically accurate but irreverent retelling of the life of David. Teen-adult.

Home Number One: A Graphic Novel Marion Baraitser and Anna Evans. Dinah, a bored Jewish girl living in the repressed city of Utopia in 2020 America, is sent on a life-changing journey to 1943, joining cousin Gonda and two friends in Theresienstadt. Teen-adult.

Kids' Cartoon Bible. Chaya Burstein. Using a comic book style format, Burstein offers familiar Bible stories in an easy and accessible format for children ages 9 and up.

I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors. Bernice Eisenstein. In part a graphic novel and in part a memoir, Eisenstein's book is a unique and, at times, humorous look at a sober topic.

The Contract with God Trilogy: Life on Dropsie Avenue. Will Eisner. Three classic Eisner works are contained in this new trilogy, published as a tribute to the "grandfather of graphic novels." This edition contains **A Contract with God and Other Tenement Stories**, **A Life Force** and **Dropsie Avenue: the Neighborhood**.

Fagin the Jew. Will Eisner. A graphic retelling of the story of Oliver Twist from the point of the view of the only Jew in the book.

The Name of the Game. Will Eisner. A multigenerational saga of a German Jewish family as they make their way in America.

The Plot: The Secret Story of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. Will Eisner. Graphic nonfiction. This is a history of the document that has fanned the flames of anti-Semitism for decades.

To the Heart of the Storm. Will Eisner. An autobiographical look at the effects of anti-Semitism on a young man's life.

Will Eisner's New York: Life in the Big City. Will Eisner. Contains four graphic novels originally published between 1981 and 1992: **New York: The Big City**, **The Building; City People Notebook**, and **Invisible People**.

Jews in America: A Cartoon History. David Gantz. Comic book style history of Jews in America. ,teen-adult.

Jews and the Graphic Novel is a spectacular visual history of Jewish graphic novels, created by David Gantz for JBooks.com. Access it at jbooks.com/common/uploads/graphic_novel/index.html.

A Jew in Communist Prague. Vittorio Giardino. This is a graphic novel series exploring the paranoia and anti-Semitism of post-WWII Czechoslovakia. Young Jonas Finkel, of a bourgeois Jewish family, finds his father arrested and his own way of life being stripped away by the Communist regime.

The Jew of New York. Ben Katchor. Katchor's dizzying novel brings together a cast of humorous characters in New York City in the 1830's.

We Are On Our Own. Miriam Katin. Miriam Katin's first graphic novel, told from the perspective of a young child, is a poignant memoir of her escape from Budapest with her mother during World War II.

Brownsville. Neil Kleid and Jake Allen. This graphic novel sheds light on a relatively unknown period of time in Jewish history, when Jewish gangsters violently ruled the streets.

The Adventures of Yaacov & Isaac. Joe Kubert. Stories about two young brothers impart Torah values and Jewish history lessons in an exciting action-adventure comic book style that is likely to appeal to elementary school boys ages 10 and up.

Yossel, April 19, 1943: A Story of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Joe Kubert. Kubert imagines what his life would have been like had his parents not left Europe before the Holocaust. His namesake, Yossel, chronicles his time in the Warsaw Ghetto by illustrating the life and death around him.

Mendel's Daughter: A Memoir. Martin Lemelman. The author tells his mother's story of survival during the Holocaust.

The Lone and Level Sands. David A. Lewis. Ramses II, preoccupied with all of his political worries, must make time for his long lost cousin Moses. This is a powerful retelling of the Exodus story for older children and adults.

Houdini: The Handcuff King. Jason Lutes and Nick Bertozzi. This snapshot of one day in the life of the famous Jewish showman offers an edge-of-your-seat reading experience for children ages 10 and up.

The Story of the Jews: A 4000-Year Adventure. Stan Mack. A combination of humor, biblical quotes, cartoon sketches, and irreverence make this historically accurate overview a delight to read for ages 10 and up.

Shmuel Ha Nagid: a Tale of the Golden Age. Aryeh Mahr. The life of Shmuel Ha Nagid, a Talmudic scholar, statesman, and warrior, is told in a vibrantly-illustrated style, and is most suitable for an Orthodox audience ages 9-12.

Exit Wounds. Rutu Modan. Set in modern-day Tel Aviv, Modan's graphic novel tells the story of a young man looking for his estranged father who may have been a victim of a suicide bombing.

Miracle Lights: The Chanukah Story. Moshe Moscovitz. Benny learns the story of Chanukah from his grandfather in this "animated" book, suitable for children as young as 6.

Out of Egypt. Moshe Moscovitz. Shazak Productions' newest book focuses on the story of Exodus. Some scary images make this book more appropriate for children 10 and up.

The Queen of Persia: An Illustrated Adaptation of an Ancient Story . Moshe Moscovitz. Bold cartoon-style illustrations retell the story of Queen Esther. Since this version is somewhat irreverent, it may be more suitable for children older than 12.

The Quitter . Harvey Pekar. Pekar examines his childhood and adolescence growing up as a Jewish boy in an increasing African American community in Cleveland. Teen-adult.

Once Upon a Tale: Twelve Illustrated Parables from the Dubno Maggid. Gadi Pollack. This beautifully-illustrated book offers parables and lessons from the Torah for children ages 10 and up.

The Rabbi's Cat . Joann Sfar. The story of a widowed rabbi and his daughter in 1930's Algeria. Narrated by their precocious cat, the book depicts a time when Arabs and Jews peacefully coexisted and learned from each other's differences.

The Adventures of Rabbi Harvey: A Graphic Novel of Jewish Wisdom and Wit in the Wild West . Steve Sheinkin. An Old West setting combined with classic Jewish folktale themes. The humor is aimed at teens and adults.

Maus I: A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History and Maus II: A Survivor's Tale: And Here My Troubles Began . Art Spiegelman. Spiegelman's masterful two-volume graphic novel tells the story of his father's experiences during the Holocaust. Both volumes are widely available and should be required reading for high school students and adults.

The Golem's Mighty Swing. James Sturm. A Jewish baseball team travels through the Midwest in the 1920's. Beset with a losing record, they conjure a golem to help draw the crowds, but instead face fierce anti-Semitism. Teen-adult.

Megillat Esther . J.T. Waldman. The story of Esther is rendered in breathtaking graphic novel format. Teen-adult.

Up, Up, and Oy Vey! How Jewish History, Culture, and Values Shaped the Comic Book Superhero . Simcha Weinstein. Weinstein's valuable contribution to superhero literature is a must-read for teens and adults alike.

Homeland: The Illustrated History of the State of Israel. Marv Wolfman. The publishers hope to "revolutionize the understanding of Israel for everyone, regardless of religious background" in this graphic novel.