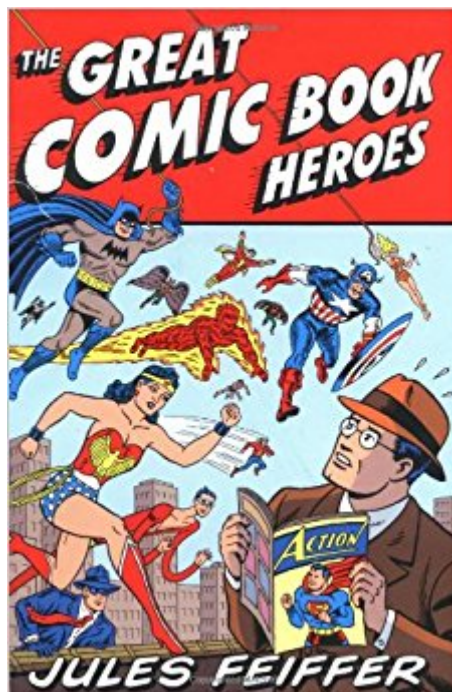


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# The Great Comic Book Heroes



## Synopsis

Jules Feiffer's historic essay, available again in a compact and affordable size. Fantagraphics is proud to publish Jules Feiffer's long out-of-print and seminal essay of comics criticism, *The Great Comic Book Heroes*, in a compact and affordable size. In 1965, Feiffer wrote what is arguably the first critical history of the comic book superheroes of the late 1930s and early 1940s, including Plastic Man, Batman, Superman, The Spirit and others. In the book, Feiffer writes about the unique place of comics in the space between high and low art and the power which this space offers both the creator and reader. *The Great Comic Book Heroes* is widely acknowledged to be the first book to analyze the juvenile medium of superhero comics in a critical manner, but without denying the iconic hold such works have over readers of all ages. Out of print for over 30 years, Feiffer's book discusses the role that the patriotic superhero played during World War II in shaping the public spirit of civilians and soldiers, as well as the escapist power these stories held over the zeitgeist of America. With wit and insight Feiffer discusses what the great comic book heroes meant to him as a child and later as an artist.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Feiffer ends his fabulous 1965 essay on comic book history with an argument that comics are "junk," but that junk is good, even necessary. Taken on their own terms, comics deliver exactly what they should: base, escapist entertainment. This work was first published as a hardcover volume accompanied by 127 pages of color reprints, now omitted. The new, slim volume is a personal and

critical history of the medium from 1937 to the early 1950s, mixing Feiffer's impressions of comics, and labor in them, with a powerful history of the business. He begins by recounting his love of comic strips, then dissects the appeal of the first comic books: "The daily strips, by their sleek professionalism, held an aloof quality which comic books, being not quite professional, easily avoided. They were closer to home, more comfortable to live with, less like grown-ups." He follows the comic book medium as it births Superman, Batman and all of the rest and cheekily examines various art techniques. Feiffer also looks at the comic book/juvenile delinquency controversy of the 1950s and the effect WWII had on the medium. His commentary is still relevant (and still among the best) today because it explains comics' appeal panel by panel, making immediately clear why this "junk" is so exciting. In the final chapter, Feiffer describes his own late entry into comic books (he worked for Will Eisner, of Spirit fame) with awe and regret. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc.

It belongs in every fan's library, and this is an excellent way to pick it up painlessly. -- Craig Shutt, "Ask Mr. Silver Age", Comics Buyer's Guide, 16 May 2003 One of the first of the early writer/artists to emerge from the comic book ghetto into the literary/art world. -- Will Eisner, creator of The Spirit The first book to discuss comics seriously....it is fascinating. -- Atomic, Fall 2002, Lloyd Chesley The modern, non-editorial-page cartoon of social and political commentary was pretty much invented by Jules Feiffer. -- Booklist Today's cartoonists owe huge debts of gratitude to Jules Feiffer. -- Los Angeles Reader

...Of this book only contains the essays. It does not contain the original comics, nor are the illustrations in color. The essays are wonderful and thoughtful. Bottom line: If you want the comics the original version contained (and which the essays reference), you will need to buy the hardcover version. I'd actually rate this book 3.5 stars, but can't give half stars.

Jules Feiffer was a comic book artist soon after comics were born. He was one of the first serious writers (if not literally the first) to look back seriously at the subject...to say nothing of writing hilariously about the medium, the milieu, and the heroes themselves. His assessment of Superman and Batman--and Superman vs. Batman--and the nature and power of "junk" should not be missed by either the fan boy or the casual fan.

A very serviceable collection of Golden Age comic reproductions. Light on text, but chock-full of

origin stories for some of the early heroes, primarily those of DC comics.

The ORIGINAL of this was a couple-hundred pages which included reprints of the stories discussed. This paper-thin (!?) volume just TALKS about them, which is not the same by a long shot. Try to find the original if you can.

Jules Feiffer's "The Great Comic Book Heroes" is a loving appreciation of the golden age of hero comics. The book is slender and offers little text by Feiffer, but reprints (in color) early stories of the original superheroes. It's an enjoyable and nostalgic, if brief, ride, and worthwhile if the price is right.

This book has the same title and author of a book that included several first pages of the comics discussed. All respect to the author, who was probably not involved in the degrade.

great item!

I received a copy of this book for Christmas of 1966. It was years before I actually read Feiffer's essay but oh, how I adored the comics themselves. I wrote a barely-readable letter to the editor of Hawkman urging them to try to make Hawkman more like the original character I had seen in the book. It was never mailed, and wound up in my baby book, but for the record I still think that would be a good idea. You could make an argument that there are plenty of venues for reading old comics (hardcover, softcover, online, Kindle, microfiche), so really Feiffer's words are what is worth having. That argument is what bumps this up from two stars to three. But no, I think the book is too much diminished if it doesn't include the reprints.

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