



# The Power of Comics: History, Form, and Culture

By Randy Duncan, Matthew J. Smith, Paul Levitz

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**The Power of Comics: History, Form, and Culture** By Randy Duncan, Matthew J. Smith, Paul Levitz

Fully revised and updated for its second edition, *The Power of Comics* remains the most authoritative introduction to comic books and graphic novels – the history of the medium, its many forms and manifestations and their place in contemporary culture.

The new edition includes:

An expanded historical section bringing the story of comic books up to the present and covering the rise of the graphic novel and the advent of digital comics

A new chapter on the memoir genre and a thoroughly revised chapter on the superhero genre

A revised chapter – “Exploring Meanings in Comic Book Texts” – introduces students to the theoretical tools they need to read comics critically  
Study objectives, discussion points, activities and annotated further reading guides in each chapter, helping students master the topics covered

Illustrated throughout, with an extensive glossary of key terms, *The Power of Comics* also includes further updated resources available online at [www.powerofcomics.com](http://www.powerofcomics.com), including additional essays, weblinks and sample syllabi.

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## **Editorial Review**

### Review

“If teaching a class on comic books or even teaching a specific graphic novel in your class, this is an excellent book to facilitate your teaching.” ?*Michael Niederhausen, The Journal of Popular Culture*

“At a time when there are an expanding number of college classes focused on comics and graphic storytelling, *The Power of Comics*, newly updated and enhanced, remains a core textbook, one which deals with comics as an industrial product, as an aesthetic form, as a system of genres, and as a cultural phenomenon, one which is equally encompassing in terms of the range of different kinds of comics discussed, equally at home dealing with superhero sagas, underground comics, and manga (not to mention examples from across comic's history and around the world.) This is one of the rare textbooks which also makes original scholarly contributions, providing rich insider insights into how comics publishing works, and refining our vocabulary for visual and narrative analysis.” ?*Henry Jenkins, author of 'The Wow Climax: Tracing the Emotional Impact of Popular Culture'*

“Randy Duncan, Matthew Smith, and Paul Levitz have delivered an outstanding and much-needed volume that should be required reading in any of the growing number of comics studies classes in academia today. *The Power of Comics* provides historical, cultural, and literary approaches that will not only deepen students' understanding of this medium but help them develop the critical tools required to engage meaningfully with a host of other subjects and issues. Highly recommended.” ?*Rocco Versaci, author of This Book Contains Graphic Language: Comics as Literature*

“Other studies have offered chapters which focus on readers and audiences amongst a range of other themes. A notable example is Randy Duncan and Matthew J. Smith (2009) *The Power of Comics: History, Form & Culture* which is an excellent teaching resource.” ?*Robert G. Weiner and Mel Gibson, Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics*

“The Power of Comics provides a solid introduction to comics with a distinct educational perspective that will hopefully become a standard text for students to expand their awareness of comics in our culture.” ?*David A. Beronä, The International Journal of Comic Art*

“The Power of Comics represents a major step forward in popular-culture scholarship . . . it's a splendid, wonderfully structured, intelligently argued, absolutely essential work.” ?*Bill Jones, author of Classics Illustrated: A Cultural History*

“As a textbook, it succeeds in content, scope, and execution. The chapters are well laid out, have thoughtful questions at their ends, and several chapters end with very practical examples of analysis that serve as models for students. Chapters also reference a broad range of experts . . . which further validates breadth and depth of this growing scholarship. . . . Overall . . . the book-including the theory chapters-is reasonably good for a 'first textbook on comics,' and I would imagine it will fast become a standard text for those sorts of classes” ?*Neil Cohn, author of 'The Visual Language of Comics'*

“Their chapter topics, overall approach, and extensive use of scholarship and academic jargon broken down into layman's terms really do allow for neophyte and fanboy alike to fully understand the 'power of comics.' Indeed, instructors looking to venture into the world of comics or think about pedagogical approaches to

using comics in any type of classroom would do well to make personal use of this book.” ?*Lance Eaton, NEPCA Journal*

“The influences of mass-communication scholarship are evident in this textbook's organization, featured topics, and student-oriented discussion questions and activities... It covers definitions, history, industry, creators, development of stories, readers, genres, ideology, research, and international comics... The authors go out of their way to make the book student-friendly: they state the objects of each chapter, highlight significant terminology, list important points, and provide vignettes of incidental information... [T]his book works serves well as the first full-scale text on US comic books and will also be useful in a library setting. Summing up: Recommended. Lower- and upper-division undergraduates, graduate students.” ?*Choice*

#### About the Author

**Randy Duncan** is Professor of Communication at Henderson State University, USA, and co-founder the Comic Arts Conference, the nation's first annual academic conference devoted solely to the study of comics. He is also the co-editor of *Icons of the American Comic Book: From Captain America to Wonder Woman*.

**Dr. Matthew J. Smith** is professor of Communication at Wittenberg University where he regularly teaches Comics Studies courses.

**Paul Levitz** is a former President and Publisher of DC Comics and teaches a course in the American Graphic Novel at Columbia University, USA. He has written for many of DC's major comic books series, including *Superman* and *Batman*, and is the only writer to have appeared on the *New York Times* Graphic Books Best Seller list for both his fiction and non-fiction work.

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**Joseph Mack:**

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