

SUPERHEROES



How did they originate?

Why did they originate?

What are the attributes/characteristics of a hero?

Who was the first superhero?

British Literature

Essential Questions

- ▶ What is a hero?
- ▶ Do the attributes of a hero remain the same over time?
- ▶ What is the role of a hero in culture?
- ▶ How do the various cultures recognize their heroes?
- ▶ In the face of adversity, what causes people to prevail while others fail?
- ▶ Have the forces of good and evil changed over time? If so, how?
- ▶ How do different cultures shape the definitions of good and evil?

Does culture (society) dictate/shape the make up of a hero?

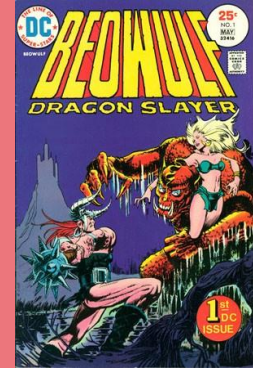
Superheroes created by DC Comics



Superheroes created by Marvel



(Super)Hero created during the Anglo-Saxon Period



Beowulf

Common Attributes for (Super)Heroes

- ▶ 1. Extraordinary powers and abilities
 - Mastery of relevant skills
 - Batman & Green Hornet – Martial Arts Skills and Master of Forensics Sciences
 - Advance/special equipment
 - Iron Man's Powered Armor; Green Lantern's Power Ring
 - Enhancement of the senses
 - Superhuman strength

Common Attributes for (Super)Heroes

- ▶ 2. Strong Moral Code (A willingness to risk own safety/life for the service of good without expectation of reward) ... in other words, they are Selfless in their actions
- ▶ 3. Special Motivation (Sense of Responsibility; Strong Sense of Justice; A Formal Calling; Personal Vendetta against Criminals)
- ▶ 4. Secret Identity used to protect family and friends from being targets (Most use a Descriptive or Metaphoric Code Name for their public deeds)

Common Attributes for (Super)Heroes

- ▶ 5. Flamboyant and Distinctive Costume
- ▶ 6. Underlying Motif or Theme
 - Influences their name/costume/personal effects
 - Example: Batman resembles a large bat, calls his headquarters – the Batcave, and has a special automobile, the Batmobile
- ▶ 7. Trademark Weapon
 - Captain America's Shield
 - Wonder Woman's Lasso of Truth
- ▶ 8. Supporting Cast of reoccurring characters
 - Friends
 - Co-Workers
 - Love Interest
 - These people may or may not know the superheroes secret identity
 - Usually, their personal relationships are complicated by their dual life

Common Attributes for (Super)Heroes

- ▶ 9. Arch Enemy(Number of Enemies they fight repeatedly)
 - Nemesis (Often a nemesis is the superheroes opposite/foil)

- ▶ 10.Independent Wealth or Occupation that is allows for minimal supervision
 - Batman (Bruce Wayne)
 - X-Men's benefactor Professor X
 - Superman's civilian job as a News Reporter

- ▶ 11.Secret Headquarters/Base of Operations
 - Superman's Fortress of Solitude

Common Attributes for (Super)Heroes

- ▶ 12. An Origin Story
 - Explains circumstances by which they acquired their abilities as well as their motivation to fight evil
 - Many back stories contain Tragic Elements & Freak Accidents
- ▶ Some superheroes have a *weakness/Achilles' heel*
 - Superman's Kryptonite
 - The Incredible Hulk's psychological/internal conflict (anger triggers biological metamorphosis)

Characteristics of An Anglo-Saxon Hero

- ▶ **Bravery/Courage**
- ▶ **Honor**
- ▶ **Intelligent**
- ▶ **Loyalty to lord/Lord**
- ▶ **Sense of Duty (not for rewards*)/Selfless**
- ▶ **Sense of Justice**
- ▶ **Strength (Larger than Life)**
- ▶ **The Boast/Boasting**

Villains/Arch Enemies

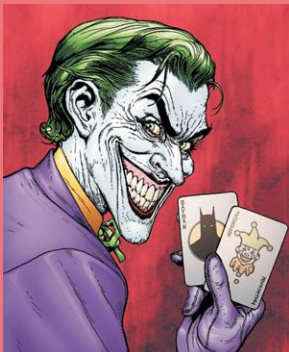
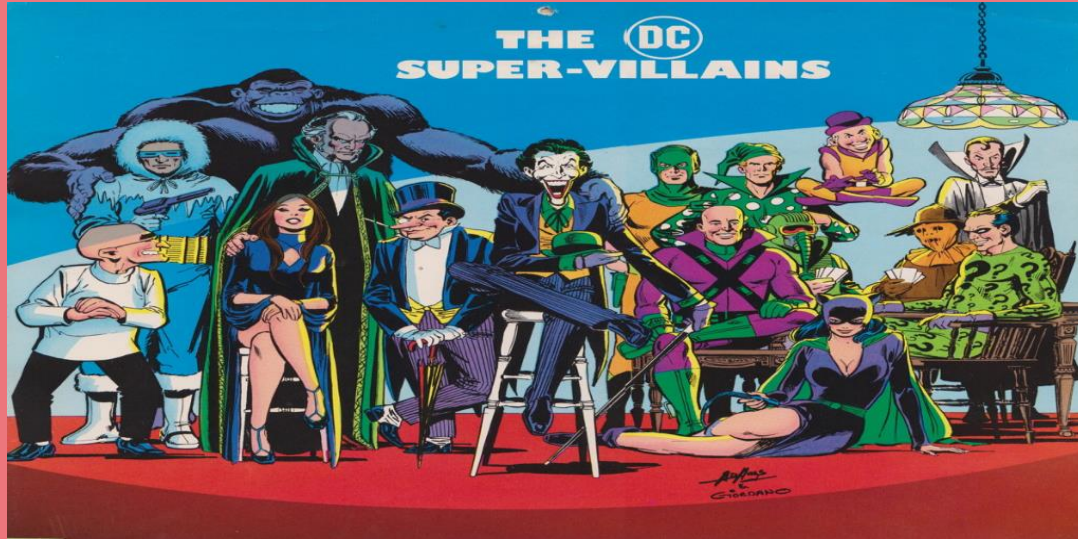


What do all
Villains
have in
common?



How do
Villains
become so
evil?

Villains created by DC Comics



The Joker



Two-Face



Lex Luthor

Villains created by Marvel



Green Goblin



Venom



Dr. Doom



Magneto

Villains created in Beowulf



Faces of Grendel



Grendel's Mother



The Dragon

Common features of a Villain/Arch Enemy

- ▶ 1. Superheroes and villains often mirror each other in their powers, abilities, or origins.
- ▶ 2. Whereas superheroes often exercise/exert fantastic powers, villains possess matching powers and abilities so they would present a daunting challenge.
- ▶ 3. While superheroes used their power selflessly to help others, villains use their powers for selfish, destructive, and ruthless reasons.
- ▶ 4. Genius intellect (evil genius; evil scientist) that allows him/her to draft complex schemes or create fantastic devices with considerable resources at his/her disposal
- ▶ 5. Whereas some Superheroes have a sidekick, Villains have henchmen.
- ▶ 6. Aspirations of World Domination

Common features of a Villain/Arch Enemy

- ▶ 7. Bizarre Costumes
- ▶ 8. Some villains have mystical/super-alien powers or are powerful mutants.
- ▶ 9. Intelligent Psychopath and Cruel Sense of Humor (Ex. The Joker)
- ▶ 10. An arsenal of high-tech weapons
- ▶ 11. Evil lair; hideout
- ▶ 12. Psychological Weaknesses
- ▶ 13. An Origin story which could include their “falling out” with the superhero.
 - Batman vs. Two-Face
 - Spiderman vs. Green Goblin

The Wrath of Grendel

... A powerful monster, living down
In the darkness, growled in pain,
impatient
As day after day the music rang
Loud in that hall, the harp's rejoicing
5 Call and the poet's clear songs, sung
Of the ancient beginnings of us all,
recalling
The Almighty making the earth, shaping
These beautiful plains marked off by
oceans,
Then proudly setting the sun and moon
10 To glow across the land and light it;
The corners of the earth were made lovely
with trees
And leaves, made quick with life, with
each
Of the nations who now move on its face.
And then As now warriors sang of their
pleasure:
15 So Hrothgar's men lived happy in his
hall
Till the monster stirred, that demon, that
fiend,
Grendel, who haunted the moors, the
wild
Marshes, and made his home in a hell
Not hell but earth. He was spawned in
that slime,
20 Conceived by a pair of those monsters
born
Of Cain, murderous creatures banished

By God, punished forever for the crime
Of Abel's death. The Almighty drove
Those demons out, and their exile was
bitter,
25 Shut away from men; they split
Into a thousand forms of evil—spirits
And fiends, goblins, monsters, giants,
A brood forever opposing the Lord's
Will, and again and again defeated.
30 Then, when darkness had dropped,
Grendel
Went up to Herot, wondering what the
warriors
Would do in that hall when their drinking
was done.
He found them sprawled in sleep,
suspecting
Nothing, their dreams undisturbed. The
monster's
35 Thoughts were as quick as his greed or his
claws:
He slipped through the door and there in
the silence
Snatched up thirty men, smashed them
Unknowing in their beds, and ran out with
their bodies,
The blood dripping behind him, back
40 To his lair, delighted with his night's
slaughter.

The Coming of Beowulf

- ...So the living sorrow of Healfdane's son (Beowulf)
105 Simmered, bitter and fresh, and no wisdom
Or strength could break it: That agony hung
On king and people alike, harsh
And unending, violent and cruel, and evil.
110 In his far-off home Beowulf, Higlac's
Follower and the strongest of the Geats—
greater
And stronger than anyone anywhere in this world—
Heard how Grendel filled nights with horror
And quickly commanded a boat fitted out,
Proclaiming that he'd go to that famous king,
115 Would sail across the sea to Hrothgar,
Now when help was needed. None
Of the wise ones regretted his going, much
As he was loved by the Geats: The omens
were good,
And they urged the adventure on. So Beowulf
120 Chose the mightiest men he could find,
The bravest and best of the Geats, fourteen
In all, and led them down to their boat;
He knew the sea, would point the prow
Straight to that distant Danish shore. . . .
...My people have said, the wisest, most
knowing
150 And best of them, that my duty was to go to
the Danes' Great king. They have seen my
strength for themselves,
Have watched me rise from the darkness of
war,
Dripping with my enemies' blood. I drove
Five great giants into chains, chased
155 All of that race from the earth. I swam
In the blackness of night, hunting monsters
Out of the ocean, and killing them one
By one; death was my errand and the fate
They had earned. Now Grendel and I are
called
160 Together, and I've come. Grant me, then,
Lord and protector of this noble place,
A single request! I have come so far,
Oh shelterer of warriors and your people's
loved friend (Speaking to King Hrothgar),
That this one favor you should not refuse
me—
165 That I, alone and with the help of my men,
May purge all evil from this hall. I have
heard,
Too, that the monster's scorn of men
Is so great that he needs no weapons and
fears none.
Nor will I. My lord Higlac
170 Might think less of me if I let my sword
Go where my feet were afraid to, if I hid
Behind some broad linden shield: My
hands
Alone shall fight for me, struggle for life
Against the monster. God must decide
175 Who will be given to death's cold grip.

Beowulf vs. Grendel

- **Good vs. Evil**
- **Christianity vs. Paganism**
- **Anglo-Saxon Hero**
vs.
- **A Villainous Monster**
- **Who will win?**