

Superheroes are considered the lifeblood of comics, and there are so many tales to choose from it's almost impossible to select so few. Superhero comics are often considered the fairy and folk tales of our time, and are right up there with **Buffy the Vampire Slayer** and **The X-Files** for containing mythology, action, and kick-butt characters. Here's a sampling of a variety of superheroes, some familiar, some not, but all worth your time.

for a printer friendly version of this list, click [here](#)

Batman

Whether you are just getting started or looking to explore the Batman universe even deeper, there are dozens of Batman titles to entertain you. Here's what we have to say about some of them:

Batman Titles Reviewed:

[Batman: War Drums](#)

[Batman: War Games: Act 1](#)

[Batman: War Games: Act 2](#)

[Batman: Broken City](#)

[Batman: Child of Dreams](#)

[Dark Knight Dynasty](#)

[Bruce Wayne: Murderer](#)

[Batman: No Man's Land](#)

[Bruce Wayne, Fugitive \(Volume 1\)](#)

[Bruce Wayne, Fugitive \(Volume 2\)](#)

[Bruce Wayne, Fugitive \(Volume 3\)](#)

[Batman: Hush \(Volume 1 & 2\)](#)

[Batman: Evolution \(New Gotham 1\)](#)

[Batman: Officer Down \(New Gotham 2\)](#)

[Batman: The Dark Knight Returns](#)

[Across the Universe: the DC Universe of Alan Moore](#)

[Batman: Huntress](#)

[Batman: Death in the Family](#)

While Batman is one of its central figures, Gotham City holds many other stories. Looking for titles about **Robin**, **Batgirl**, **Nightwing** and the others? Check out their reviews elsewhere on the [Superhero Soup](#) page!

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Ultimate Fantastic Four: The Fantastic (Volume 1)

ISBN: 0785113932

By Brian Michael Bendis, Mark Millar

Art by Adam Kubert

Marvel Comics 2004

Normally I would be hard pressed to say anything bad about something written by Brian Michael Bendis, but apparently I've just found the exception that proves the rule. This is not to say that **Ultimate Fantastic Four** was bad, it just lacked spark. In Marvel's continuing line of Ultimate Universe stories this volume establishes the background of the Fantastic Four. The four main characters - Richard Reed, Susan Reed (nee Storm), Johnny Storm, and Ben Grimm - are introduced. Richard and Ben are mismatched high school friends; the twins and the jock. When Richard is turned

characters - Richard Reed, Susan Reed (nee Storm), Johnny Storm, and Ben Grim - are introduced. Richard and Ben are mismatched high school friends, the brain and the jock. When Richard is tapped by the government to work for the specialized technology development group he escapes to New York where he meets Sue and her brother Johnny, and his mentor Professor Storm, Sue's father. Richard's ongoing experiments with accessing alternate dimensions ends up going horribly wrong and alters the 'fantastic four' giving them superhuman powers - Richard is elastic man, Susan can turn herself invisible, Johnny is the human torch, and Ben (visiting his old friend by chance) is turned into stone. This is as good an introduction to the Fantastic Four canon as any, but I can't say that I'm desperate for the next volume. The art has Kubert's usual elegant style and gorgeous color palate.

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Ultimate Spiderman: Power and Responsibility

ISBN: 078510786X

By Brian Michael Bendis and Bill Jemas

Art by Mark Bagley

Marvel Books 2001

What would you do if you could suddenly wallop the bullies who tease you? If you could literally climb the walls? Come on, I bet even the best of us would be up the side of a building in about two seconds flat dropping water balloons. Peter Parker learns the hard way that superpowers provide many temptations and that in order to be a true hero, he has to temper his abilities with a careful mind and strong heart.

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Ultimate Spiderman: Learning Curve

ISBN: 0785108203

by Brian Michael Bendis

Art by Mark Bagley and Art Thibert

Marvel Books 2001

Still struggling with his powers and secret identity, not to mention recovering from the death of his uncle, teenage Peter Parker is still trying to convince the world that Spiderman is not a crackpot vigilante. He lands a job at the city paper and works toward proving his good intentions by attempting to take down the city's largest menace, both literally and figuratively, Kingpin. Peter soon learns, however, that no matter how much might his new powers have given him, his wits are what will save him in the end. Now, if he could only figure out Mary Jane, life might be close to perfect. The Ultimate Spiderman team continues to update the Spiderman myth with the best in witty reparte, exuberant action, and teenage emotional rollercoasters.

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Ultimate Spiderman: Double Trouble

ISBN: 0785108793

by Brian Michael Bendis

Art by Mark Bagley and Art Thibert

Marvel Books 2002

Peter Parker just can't win. The city's now convinced that Spiderman is a wacko in PJs despite Peter's many miraculous saves. On top of convincing the world that his alter-ego is a white hat, Peter is also inching forward in his relationship with Mary Jane, only to have an entrancing new girl throw a wrench in the works. Then Dr. Otto Octavius, whose massive metal arms, once his surgical tools, have been melded to his ribcage in freak accident, breaks out of his holding cell. Intent on destroying the men responsible for his condition, Dr. Octavius goes on a rampage, and Spiderman does his best to run to the rescue. Facing mysterious men in black, a reality TV hunter determined to catch Spiderman on live TV, and the ever more confusing signals of teenage girls, Peter fights to win back his good name both in the spotlight and at home. The quips just get better and better (this volume had me cheerily giggling on the bus) - when Spiderman can insult his foe's hairdo with flair, you know you're in the hands of a great writer. The artwork remains it's fine, brilliant best. All I can say is more!

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Birds of Prey

What about the women? Well, two of the hottest female superheroes in DC's universe Black Canary and Oracle together form Birds of Prey. Black Canary is sassy, deadly, and fully capable of wiping the floor with the bad guys. Oracle, once Batgirl until the Joker's violent trick confined her to a wheelchair, is Black Canary's lightning fast link to all information via the Internet. She's also often Black Canary's conscience and more often than she'd like, her mother hen. Together, they're a force even the Dark Knight himself is impressed by. [...read more](#)

The Complete Series:

[Black Canary/Oracle: Birds of Prey \(1\)](#)

[Birds of Prey: Old Friends, New Enemies \(2\)](#)

[Birds of Prey: Of Like Minds \(3\)](#)

[Birds of Prey: Sensei and Student \(4\)](#)

Astro City: Life in the Big City

ISBN: 156389551X

By Kurt Busiek

Art by Doug E. Anderson and Alan Davis

By Kurt Busiek
Art by Brent E. Anderson and Alex Ross
DC Comics 2000

Ever wondered what superheroes do in their off time? Do they even *have* off time? Go on dates? Go shopping? Hang out with their friends? Kurt Busiek has created a wonderful series considering these burning questions with **Astro City**, and with Alex Ross and Brent Anderson creating such vibrant visuals, there's never a boring moment.

If you like **Astro City**, you should definitely check out Kurt Busiek's **Marvel**, another team up with Alex Ross. This time the author takes a look at the history of the Marvel Universe from the everyman's perspective -- not to be missed!

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Brand Building: Wildcats Version 3.0

ISBN: 1401201199

By Joe Casey

Art by Dustin Nguyen and Richard Friend

DC Comics (WildStorm) 2003

"You people aren't just readers, you're consumers. How special do you feel...?"

Jack Marlowe, who some readers might remember as the alien warrior Spartan from the original WildC.A.T.S. series, has focused his superpowers on the project of creating The Halo Corporation (slogan: "your life... only better!"). Halo's goal is to use its vast marketing, product placement, advertising, and media clout to quietly take over control of the known world. Marlowe benevolently oversees all aspects of the company, from public relations to product development (including a line of batteries that literally last forever) but keeps some time in his schedule to supervise Cole Cash and Mr. Wax, his team of undercover investigators, mercenaries, and general men-of-all work. While Halo expands its grasp, swallowing up smaller companies and expanding ever faster into the global entertainment business, Wax and Cash labor behind the scenes to solve the mystery of the connection between the beautiful and deadly C.C. Rendozzo and the FBI's secret "nuclear family" project. Casey et al have created an interesting story line which is regrettably short as the 2003 trade paperback includes only issues 1-6 of **Brand Building**, closing the story at a tantalizing point. These first issues hint at a clash between the power of government intelligence and the might of mass marketing, played out in the design of human bodies and the smallest details of everyday life.

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Young Justice: A League of Their Own

ISBN 1563896265

By Peter David, D. Curtis Johnson

Art by Todd Nauck, Ale Garza

DC Comics 1998

Art by Todd Nauck, Ale Garza
DC Comics 1998

If this book had a plot I would summarize it. However, the sheer lack of plot is precisely the problem. This is a pity since Peter David has some remarkably funny gags that poke fun at comic book writing conventions. Unfortunately, there is not more to this book except a series of jokes. There is no character development or larger theme to tie the jokes together. All in all this isn't really worth buying or reading unless you have rabid fans.

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Young Justice: Sins of Youth

ISBN 1563897482

Art by Lary Stucker, Keith Champagne, Rob Haynes, Mark Lipka, Jaime Mendoza, Chris Ivy, Jason Baumgartner, Norm Rapmund, Walden Wong, Wayne Faucher, Juan Vlasco, Rich Faber, Rodney Ramos, Scott Koblish, Wade von Grawbadger, Cully Hamner
DC Comics 2000

Unlike **Young Justice: A League of Their Own** this book does not suffer from a lack of plot. If anything, it has far too much plot, and far far too many characters. On occasion it seemed as if every superhero the DC Universe has ever spawned turned up in this book. The basic plot is that Klarion (bum bum bum . . . the Witch Boy) orchestrates an occasion at which all members of the DC superhero universe both old and young will be in one place and then turns a magic ray on them, making the adult superheroes into teenagers and the teenage superheroes into adults. The amusement factor of Batman as a teenager aside, what follows is a heavy handed and unnecessarily lengthy and didactic demonstration that teenagers are misunderstood and that being an adult isn't all fun and games. I went looking for it because I was/am on a Bat-verse kick and I have a fondness for Tim Drake, and even I was bored. Again, if you have rabid fans you might want to consider this book, but otherwise skip it and suggest they read **Teen Titans: A Kids Game** instead.

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Nightwing

By Chuck Dixon
Art by Scott McDaniel
DC Comics 1998-2004

Introduction

As you may have noticed, I'm a big fan of the big Bat (as are many of our reviewers here at NFNT.) There's something about a superhero with that darker twinge of vengeance that appeals to me more than the wholesome Superman or the everyday good-guy Spiderman. In diving into Gotham's cityscape, though, I've met a slew of interesting characters, and Nightwing certainly stands alone in this excellent tale.

this excellent tale.

Nightwing, a.k.a. Dick Grayson, once Robin to Bruce Wayne's Batman, struggles to define himself as an independent superhero. Can you imagine trying to distinguish yourself compared to Gotham's hero, let alone trying to step out of his shadow and become a superhero of your own? He's determined to make it his own no matter the opposition (remind you of anyone?) Despite his skill, however, he may have reached a little too far. Chuck Dixon, a legend at work, writes great storylines and dialogue, with his black humor and talent for true-to-life dialogue in prime form. [read more...](#)

Other Series Titles

[Nightwing: Ties That Bind](#)

The Bludhaven Years

[Nightwing: A Knight in Bludhaven \(1\)](#)

[Nightwing: Rough Justice \(2\)](#)

[Nightwing: Love and Bullets \(3\)](#)

[Nightwing: A Darker Shade of Justice \(4\)](#)

[Nightwing: The Hunt for Oracle \(5\)](#)

[Nightwing: Big Guns \(6\)](#)

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Robin: Year One

ISBN: 1563898055

By Chuck Dixon, Scott Beatty

Art by Javier Pulido, Marcos Martin

DC Comics 2002

Chuck Dixon is one with his inner Dick Grayson. This is a good thing, because the original Boy Wonder leaps off the page at you. He is a real, engaging and endearing character. He takes the bad guys down with a well-placed kick and a bad pun, and he makes Batman smile. I'm not sure which is the more impressive feat. This is the story of Robin's first mission with Batman, the first time that he flies solo, and his first encounter with the big bads of the Batverse. His encounter with Two Face will haunt him for the rest of his life, and will force him to prove both to himself and to Batman that this life choice is not only something that he is capable of, but one that he wants. The artwork captures the feel of the old comics without looking dated. The clean lines and relatively spare color palette suit the story being told.

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The Authority: Relentless

ISBN: 1563896613

by Warren Ellis

Art by Paul Neary and Bryan Hitch

DC Comics 2000

DC Comics 2000

I had heard a great deal about The Authority, in general comments about the series' excellence and in specific about its groundbreaking characters (see my [random thoughts](#) on this distinction). As you may have noticed by now, I love superhero comics as much as the next guy, but I love them even more when the stories twist expectations. The Authority is a kind of descendant of Alan Moore's **Watchmen** and the familiar Justice League set-up. A group of empowered beings decide that they have a duty to change the world for the better. The difference here is that since attempting to convince the world to change has failed, they will enforce change. The world will be better, or face The Authority's judgement and sentence. The members of the Authority are familiar and different at the same time - key members Apollo and the Midnighter follow the Superman and Batman mold respectively. Other members exhibit inventive new powers, from Jack Hawksmoor's ability to feel and integrate with the spirit of cities to the Engineer's evolution into a human being with machines making up her very blood. Their unflappable and dangerous leader is Jenny Sparks, Spirit of the Twentieth Century, gifted with the power to focus and control electricity. Warren Ellis' writing is witty and suitably dark, and the artwork shows once again the depth and beauty computer aided color can bring to comics. For superheroes with one-liners, intelligence, and brawn to spare, flip to The Authority.

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Even More Secret Origins

ISBN: 761941236773

DC Comics, 2003

Jumping jets! It's Kid Flash, and he's about to subdue a zoo full of angry circus animals! Yes, the year is 1962 and DC Comics has just published the shocking story of how The Flash accidentally ended up with a young partner-in-crime-fighting. Just a few pages away in 1960 Jimmy Olsen and Robin are hiding out in the Fortress of Solitude and planning to fake their own deaths to protect Superman and Batman from a fortune-telling enemy. Somewhere high above the city Hawkman is in pursuit of an extraterrestrial criminal, and Green Lantern is explaining the origin of his Oath to a man named "Pieface." The six Comics-Code-approved tales reunited in this volume reveal origin stories and little-known adventures of many of the DC stable of superheroes, and provide an interesting taste of how they talked (stiltedly), thought (slowly), and flew (horizontally) during their earliest incarnations. Although it can be hard to take these big-jawed, heavy-eyebrowed characters seriously, **Even More Secret Origins** is a fascinating look back in time for modern-day fans of Green Lantern, Superman, Batman, The Flash and others.

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X-Men: Evolution

ISBN: 0785109404

by Devin Grayson

Art by Udon, Long Vo, and Charles Park

Marvel 2003

Art by Udon, Long Vo, and Charles Park
Marvel 2003

The X-Men have had so many incarnations and character shifts over the years that they would make soap opera writers jealous. It can be confusing beyond belief to try to disentangle as a newbie, as any can tell you, especially all those intrigued viewers of the recent movies who now want to get in on the story. My friends, I wish you luck.

One of the most fun by far, however, is the recent cartoon **X-Men: Evolution**, speculating on the teenhood of many of our favorite X-Men under the care of Professor Xavier. The cartoon has gained a large audience of both kids and adults alike -- deservedly so, given its smart dialog, streamlined animation, and true to character storylines and issues. It seems ridiculous that their teen years weren't explored before -- when were any of us not an outcast of some kind in high school? This graphic novel takes one step further back from the cartoon and shows us the origin of the show's arrangements, tracing Xavier's discovery of all of the mutants we've come to know and love on the show. The artwork, though certainly in the style of the cartoon, has more detail and shading and works well. The story, though not terribly deep, gives a welcome background to the show's set-up.

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Teen Titans: A Kid's Game

ISBN: 1401203086

By Geoff Johns

Art by Mike McKone, Tom Grummett

DC Comics, 2004

My initial reactions to **Teen Titans: A Kid's Game** were:

1. It is possible that I have the tiniest crush on Tim Drake (Robin III).
2. Conner Kent is the clone of Superman and Lex Luthor, and for anyone who's watching Smallville on the WB that's just endlessly amusing.
3. I'm starting to think that Starfire's hair is actually one of her superpowers. People are just so frightened of it that they don't stick around to find out what else she might do.
4. This series has potential. There are some clunky bits, and sometimes the dialogue is a little cheesy (witness Superman giving Superboy Krypto, the Superdog), but a lot of it is also funny, the characters are endearing, and the story line is sound.

When the volume starts none of the characters want to be involved in a new iteration of the Teen Titans, which is a nice bit of self-reflective narrative on the part of DC Comics. Robin thinks he gets enough training and mentoring from the Bat. Superboy doesn't really want to get up early on the weekends. Kid Flash has some serious guilt issues and wants to be taken seriously for a change. Cassie, Wonder Girl (II), wants to be there but Wonder Woman is adamantly opposed to the idea. It takes the reappearance of Slade, a classic villain from the Titans universe, a realization that the Titans Tower offers them some freedom, and the uninvited and unwelcome intervention of the JLA for the new Titans to come together as a team.

The book is an appealing combination of fluff -- teenage superheroes actually being teenagers for a change -- and a story line that asks the question of what determines who we grow up to be -- is it predetermined or is it our choice?

predetermined or is it our choice?

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Teen Titans: Family Lost (Volume 2)

ISBN: 1401202381

By Geoff Johns

Art by Mike McKone, Ivan Reis, Tom Grummett

DC Comics 2004

Raven is back . . . maybe. Or maybe it's something else that's wearing Raven's shape. Or maybe . . . any way you cut it, it's probably not good news. Raven is supposed to be dead, several times over, and the last time was supposed to be the final time; her body was destroyed thus freeing her spirit. But, perhaps not. Geoff Johns does a very good job of summarizing Raven's origin and downfall for the new Teen Titans and the new reader alike. Once again Johns manages to describe the tension between the new, young, Teen Titans who only know Raven as a negative and destructive force, and the older original Teen Titans who knew her first as their friend and were witness to her struggle against forces that were looking to use her because of her heritage. This volume also includes what is possibly one of the single funniest exchanges about hiding new batmobiles in batarang budgets (which is larger than you might think). The art work here has the same vibrant colors and dynamic movement of the first volume.

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Invincible: Family Matters

ISBN: 1582403201

by Robert Kirkman

Art by Cory Walker and Bill Crabtree

Image Comics 2003

In this era of violent superhero tales, in which we're led to question the nature and heroics of superheroes themselves, I every once in a while long for a story where the good guys are good (though still human) and the heroism is clear, without mixed motives or shady dealings. **Invincible** is just such a breath of fresh air. Not a terribly new idea -- the son of a superhero begins learning his own powers and place in the world -- the whole book is nonetheless wonderfully refreshing. It answers some of those long-standing questions about the pedestrian aspect of superheroes. What do you do when you return from an alternate dimension where time flowed faster? You go have a shower and shave. Where do all those vibrant, skin-tight costumes come from? Why, the same tailor, naturally. How do teams form up? Well, you just go out there, do your superhero thing, and hope you meet up with a compatible group who just might give you a chance. Mark Grayson, the teenage son of one of the most powerful superheroes on the planet, has been waiting all his life for his inherited superpowers to kick in, and when they do, he's right on board with the whole deal. There are some charming, light moments throughout the book, from Mark's first flight with his dad to conversations with a certain pretty member of Mark's new team, but the awareness of danger and

conversations with a certain pretty member of Mark's new team, but the awareness of danger and consequence within the heroes' roles keeps the book from being fluff or saccharine. Cory Walker and Bill Crabtree's work on the art is equally lovely and uncluttered, filled with eloquent expressions and light, energetic tones. This title is great for almost all ages, and might make a nice addition to graphic novel collections for kids who are thirsting for superhero stories and who aren't quite ready for **Dark Knight Returns**. Don't let that keep you from getting it for teens, or adults, though -- it's all around good stuff.

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Invincible: Eight is Enough (Volume 2)

ISBN: 1582403473

by Robert Kirkman

Image 2004

Robert Kirkman's excellent series just keeps getting better with this next installment, though in this volume the story takes a dark, gory turn that guarantees this title a place in the teen collection. Mark Grayson continues to grow up a superhero's son - trading a social life (and a good night's sleep) for saving the world, *again*, a bit too often for his taste. Happily, he's inherited his father's super speed and impeccable timing, so he's learning to balance it all. The tongue-in-cheek references continue in this title, most notably in the thinly veiled superhero team that just happen to resemble as certain Justice League we all know. The light moments of humor also keep the story framed in a teenage state of mind - the sequence of Mark catching up on his sleep over the weekend is priceless. Cory Walker's art continues to hit just the right note of superhero bulk softened by few shadows and quirky lines perfectly capturing expressions. In this volume, however, the story arc takes a surprising turn - a string of gruesome murders of high-ranking superheroes show the world to be a fragile and out of control place. In Mark's daily life, violence starts overshadowing the buzz of being a superhero. On top of that, Mark's father is far from blameless in the violence, though only the reader is privy to this knowledge. The tension between the picture of a man who seemed to be the perfect dad and the world's hero suddenly revealed to be a callous brute who's behaving worse than an archvillain is startling. This twist shows that despite this world's bright palette, the darkness is not far beneath the surface. The finish of this collection is not really an end - just a cliffhanger that turns the world upside down and intimates more upheaval to come. Although readers may be surprised by the shadows covering this volume, the telling is by no means clunky or sensational - Kirkman is telling a traditional story with a flair for understanding how to keep the ordinary in extraordinary experiences, whether it be fighting alien conquerors or confronting dangerous family secrets.

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Superman for All Seasons

ISBN: 0970355505

by Jeph Loeb

Art by Tim Sale, Bjarne Hansen, Richard Starkings

DC Comics 1999

DC Comics 1999

For a girl who loves **Smallville**, I realize it's really sad that this is the first Superman centric graphic novel that I've reviewed. I must admit, though, that I was never drawn to Superman all that much -- too noble, too good, no shades of grey. This title, though, by guru Jeph Loeb, is wonderful. It is also, I discovered, a really good place to start in terms of learning a bit more about the Man of Steel's background and personality. With spare dialogue that never jars or feels too full of convenient, folksy platitudes, Jeph Loeb has created a subtle and complex portrait of Clark Kent, Superman, Lois Lane, and Lex Luthor. For each season, we get a different narrator in Clark's life, and thus a different point of view on the man. The artwork by Tim Sale veers away from the flashy primary colors so associated with superheroes and instead evokes the story through graded watercolors and flowing lines. All together, this title is not a careening action tale, but instead a kind of meditation on the man, the myth, and the definition of a hero.

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Sentinel: Salvage

Sean McKeever, et al
Marvel, 2004
ISBN: 0-7851-1380-0

Nothing in life has come easy for Juston Seyfert, and in fact if you asked him he might tell you that nothing much has ever come his way, period. Life is hard on the world's junior-high geeks and dorks, budding engineers and clever introverts, and for Juston the addition of a posse of bullies with a special interest in his welfare feels like the last straw. Just getting through the day in one piece can be a challenge for our anti-hero, pursued by high school goons during the day and hazarding life and limb at night on a variety of mechanical salvage projects supplied by his dad's scrap business. Years of obscurity and practice with discarded technology pay off in a heartbeat the night Juston discovers a giant robot clumsily reassembling itself in the family junkyard's empty barn. Nothing much changes on the surface after Juston makes his most incredible find, except that every interaction and decision is now tinged with a starry glow of "Wow, have I found the coolest new friend EVER." Juston isn't as invisible as he thinks he is, however, and after a few days his friends and family are starting to wonder what's made him so jumpy and distracted. Struggling to hide his discovery from over-curious friends, Juston soon finds himself up to the neck in difficult questions: is strength the only thing that separates a nice guy from a bully? Does great power come with great responsibility? How does a giant robot help you get over your first big crush? And perhaps most importantly, what the heck is a fully-loaded battle robot doing crashing around in the rural woods of Juston's hometown, and who is going to come looking for him? McKeever's shadowy color palette and hip young-superhero drawing style will appeal to fans of Sidekicks (for the hair and clothes) and Brad Bird's *The Iron Giant* (for everything else) – even if you're not a big fan of robot-fiction, *Sentinel* is a great read for its sweetly accurate portrayal of the hazards of high school and mechanical expertise.

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Daredevil: A Man without Fear

ISBN: 0785100466

By Frank Miller

Marvel 1994

Matt Murdock grew up an outcast, bullied constantly, while tending his alcoholic father, a retired prizefighter caught in too deep with the mob. After his father's murder, Matt was left to his own devices, surviving by instinct. When he hits thirteen, however, he is accidentally blinded. Just when it seems he's beaten, Matt is taken under the wing of a frightening but charismatic teacher who will lead him toward his destiny -- to become the defender of those who cannot defend themselves.

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Across the Universe: the DC Universe of Alan Moore

ISBN: 1401200877

By Alan Moore

DC Comics 2003

Are you an Alan Moore fan? Have you watched his career closely through [Watchmen](#), [V for Vendetta](#), [Tom Strong](#), and [From Hell](#)? Or are you simply curious to know what's so special about the writer who (according to The Onion) has "reached previously unscaled heights" of story telling innovation? For Moore devotees and dilettantes alike, **Across the Universe** is an enjoyable sampler of the work of a comic book genius. The 13 stories in this collection all feature the DC heroes, with a special focus on the Green Lantern Corps, Superman, and Batman. My personal favorites include an encounter between Superman and the Swamp Thing, the background on The Phantom's secret origin, and some hilarious Green Lantern lore imparted from the Great Hall of Service on the Planet Oa. Like so many of Moore's longer works, these stories all end with a dramatic twist that's either heart-wrenching or silly, keeping us guessing until the punchline in the last panels. This is an opportunity to see how a virtuoso writer incorporates his own peculiar perspective into pre-existing characters and worlds with their own history, rules, and mythology.

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Supreme: the Return

ISBN: 0971024960

by Alan Moore

Art by Chris Sprouse, Rick Veitch, Alex Ross

Checker Book Publishing Group 2003

Who is Supreme? Caped and powered up, he fights unusual crimes in the streets of his city as any superhero might. Between 9:00 and 5:00 Supreme works as a writer and editor for... a company that publishes comic books. Supreme's alter-ego Ethan Tate can pass on plenty of great superhero "material" to his writer colleagues, recounting his own exploits to provide a basis for the company's "Omniman" series. This is a stable arrangement without much glory or romance for our undercover

"Omniman" series. This is a stable arrangement without much glory or romance for our undercover hero until a galley copy of a comic book appears that not only tells the story of Supreme's past, but also predicts his future. Thus the story begins with a broad hint that not everything in Supreme's universe is as straightforward as it seems.

Readers may catch on to Alan Moore's little game faster than his protagonist as Supreme stumbles into alternate realities reminiscent of World War One superhero cartoons and adventure stories from even earlier in the history of comics. By the time he reaches "The Supremacy," a world inhabited by every prototype and "cancelled" incarnation of Supreme from a Mickey Mouse lookalike to a blue bug-headed monster, our hero has begun to realize that he is neither unique nor in control of his own destiny. Now it is up to Supreme and his assorted sidekicks and colleagues to keep the city of Omegapolis free of supervillains, even as the very fabric of their universe is manipulated by an unseen hand. Just a little knowledge of the history of the comic book genre will add a lot of depth to Moore's story line, with is otherwise a sly examination of how our self-image can change when we first see ourselves through the eyes of others.

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Tom Strong Book 1

ISBN: 1-56389-664-8

by Alan Moore, Chris Sprouse, Alan Gordon, et al
America's Best Comics, 2000

Sometime in the early years of the 20th century inventor Sinclair Strong and his wife Susan land on the island of Attabar Teru. The Strongs have come to the island to bring up their son Tomas as the perfect human in accordance with Sinclair's peculiar scientific vision. Raised in a high-gravity chamber on a special diet of Attabar Teru roots and herbs, Tom grows up muscular, intelligent, and resilient. A tragedy early in the story propels young Tom away from his island home and friends into the outside world, accompanied by his robotic butler Pneuman and his sidekick King Solomon - a talking ape of extraordinary intelligence. Tom quickly makes a name for himself as a superhero in the big cities of 1920s America where new technology gleams, and skyscrapers stretch ever higher. Our hero returns to Attabar Teru as a man grown to marry his childhood friend Dhalua and to raise their daughter Tesla. Now the Strongs fight crime and supervillains as a family, dividing their time between Millennium City and the beaches of Attabar Teru. Unfortunately For Tom, old enemies are no farther away than the click of a time-machine's button or the quick fingers of a computer hacker... and a superhero's work is never done.

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Tom Strong Book 2

ISBN: 1-56389-880-2

by Alan Moore, Chris Sprouse, Alan Gordon, et al
America's Best Comics, 2002

America's Best Comics, 2002

The second **Tom Strong** book doesn't follow Book 1 chronologically but instead explores various plot threads that are only hinted at in the previous volume. In one episode a young Dhalua waits on Attabar Teru dreaming of Tom until she is visited by a very different kind of vision. A few decades later Tesla is fighting battles on her own and putting her parents' equipment and teaching to good use first to save her own life and later to re-arrange a city that has been tilted 90 degrees to the right by the daughter of one of Tom's old nemeses. Tom and Tesla spend one issue romping through time and across a variety of parallel universes in pursuit of the evil Dr. Saveen, and Tom's middle-school fanclub (Strongmen of America) get a hilarious extended cameo in a story of schoolteachers gone wrong.

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Watchmen

ISBN: 0930289234

By Alan Moore

Art by Dave Gibbons

Warner Books 1995

If you're like me, reading superhero tales, there is also that nagging, logical question in the back of your mind -- just why *are* these particular men and women driven to put on costumes and become, for all intents and purposes, vigilantes? There's a reason people didn't trust Batman when he first roamed the streets of Gotham -- who was he to judge who was right and who was wrong? Superman may have a noble and undeniable calling, but many of these figures, Batman perhaps the most darkly conflicted, have other, more human reasons for what they do. **Watchmen**, full of superheroes of the same breed as Superman, Spiderman, and Wonder Woman, explores all the complicated answers provoked by these questions. In its pages, not only do we find a little superhero in ourselves, but also find the humanity, flawed or noble, in the heroes elevated above us.

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Batgirl

By Scott Peterson, Kelley Puckett

Art by Damion Scott

DC Comics 2001-2004

Batgirl reminding Oracle of Batman is probably not a ringing endorsement for the state of Batgirl's mental health. On the other hand, Batman is in awe of her fighting skills and she looks really good in a batsuit. Cassandra Cain, daughter of renowned/infamous assassin David Cain first appeared in the "**No Man's Land**" series. Cain raised her to be a killer. Deprived of speech, she relies solely on body language to communicate. It makes her a frighteningly efficient warrior, but she has turned her back on her father's training and with Oracle's blessing she has become the new Batgirl. Scott has managed to capture Cassandra's reliance on the unspoken. He uses her body language to convey

managed to capture Cassandra's reliance on the unspoken. He uses her body language to convey what she is feeling, and even behind the mask her facial expressions are evocative. In this story Batgirl is coming to terms with who she was raised to be, and who she wants to become. The question, however, is whether Batman can allow her remain with his team as he reluctantly discovers more about her past. [read more...](#)

If you like, you can skip to individual volumes in the series:

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[Batgirl: Fists of Fury](#)

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GoGirl!

ISBN: 1569717982

By Trina Robbins

Art by Anne Timmons

Dark Horse Comics, 2002

It's a great time to be a girl comics fan. Between shouju manga (Japanese comics written for girls) and the current generation of kick-ass heroines, girls have more comics choices than ever before. That said, **GoGirl!** is still unique. Trina Robbins and Anne Timmons have given us the girl superhero that never was. Written and drawn in the style of the classic American comics, **GoGirl!** is a nostalgic yet timeless story. Lindsay Goldman's mom used to be Go-Go Girl, a superheroine of the 1970's, and Lindsay has inherited her abilities. Lindsay and her best friend Haseena like to look at mom's old scrapbooks, but Lindsay never considers trying out Go-Go girl's old costume until a crazed villainess kidnaps Haseena. After she rushes headlong into danger and survives, Lindsay's mom realizes she'll have to train her daughter to take up Go-Go Girl's mantle. Lindsay puts her own spin on the family tradition, shortening the name to GoGirl!

GoGirl! is a fun mix of retro and modern, with some of the original Buffy the Vampire Slayer movie's campy charm. It's fun to see mother and daughter superheroines fighting side by side.

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Starman: Sins of the Father

ISBN: 1563892480

By James Robinson

Art by Tony Harris, Bob Kahan, and Wade von Grawbadger

DC Comics 1996

Jack Knight is having a bad day. His older brother has been murdered, his father attacked, and he's expected to take up the family tradition of being Owl City's guardian, Starman. Never mind that he's

Jack Knight is having a bad day. His older brother has been murdered, his father attacked, and he's expected take up the family tradition -- being Opal City's guardian, Starman. Never mind that he's never had any interest in being a superhero. Never mind that he's being attacked left and right by old enemies without any idea of why. Will he rise to the occasion or will he prove his inner demons right -- and fail?

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Gotham Central: In the Line of Duty

ISBN: 1401201997

By Greg Rucka, Ed Brubaker

Art by Michael Lark

DC Comics 2004

Gotham has always been Batman's city; his to protect and his to serve. But, where does that leave Gotham's police department? Gotham Central is a look at what it means to be a police officer in a city where you only have until nightfall to solve a crime because after the sun goes down it's Batman's city and Batman's collar. **Gotham Central** puts you inside the GCPD with a **Law & Order/Homicide: Life on the Streets** feel to it. This title works as both a police procedural, full of partners' camaraderie and jockeying for rank, and as a glimpse into a world dominated by a power no cop can come close to -- and archvillains that no regular guy can really survive. Petra wasn't thrilled with this title through no fault of its own -- she's just not a fan of cop dramas. Robin, on the other hand, is known to watch **Law and Order** for hours and counts **Homicide** as one of her favorites shows, and she loved **Gotham Central**. Both agree Michael Lark's artwork evokes a noirish feel to Gotham City that compliments the storyline.

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Wonder Woman: The Hiketeia

Volume 1

ISBN: 1563898985

By Greg Rucka

Art by J.G. Jones

DC Comics 2002

I suppose that it is possible that someday Greg Rucka will write something that I don't like, but it hasn't happened yet. **Hiketeia** is a beautifully written and beautifully illustrated book which is both a gripping story and a thoughtful meditation on the changing conceptions of justice, obligation, and the price of keeping promises. The rite of hiketeia is one of supplication and obligation. The supplicants debase themselves to a protector who in turn is sworn to shield them from all harm. In Ancient Greece this rite was understood and ensured by the vengeance of the Furies for those who broke hiketeia. However, when Danielle Wellys recites the ancient pledge to Diana, Princess of Themyscira, events begin to unfold which trap Wonder Woman between her sworn word and Batman's dedication to justice. Batman cannot compromise his ethics to allow Danielle to escape the

Batman's dedication to justice. Batman cannot compromise his ethics to allow Danielle to escape the penalty for the murders which she has committed, no matter how compelling her reasons. Equally, Wonder Woman cannot afford to break her oath to Danielle to protect and defend her. The artwork here is gorgeous. Muted color tones echo the meditative nature of the story, but the panels are alive with detail and depth.

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Green Arrow

The Complete Series

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Sidekicks: The Transfer Student

ISBN: 1929998406

by J. Torres

Art by Takeshi Miyazawa

Oni Press 2002

Did you want to run away to Professor Xavier's school when you saw X-Men? Yeah, I did too. Reading **Sidekicks** might help to tide you over 'til you develop your own superpowers. Terry Highland's dad was once a superhero sidekick, and Terry has powers of her own. So how do kids with super-powers learn to use them? By enrolling in Shuster Academy, a state-of-the-art high school that trains future heroes. Life at Shuster isn't all costumes and kicking butt, though; use your powers between classes and you'll have to deal with the strict Ms. Sternin. As Terry adjusts to her new environment, she has to deal with exams, demerits, and cliques like any other high school student. Her greatest challenge, however, will be overcoming her own fears; although Terry's power is super-strength, she can't face returning to the virtual reality fight-training room where an accident threatened her life. J. Torres, who also writes [Alison Dare](#), knows exactly what high school is like, and Takeshi Miyazawa draws teens who really look like teens! The only problem with **Sidekicks** is that it left me wanting to know what happens next, so here's hoping there's another installment soon.

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Ex Machina: the First 100 Days (Volume 1)

By Brian K. Vaughan

Art by Tony Harris

ISBN: 1401206123

DC Comics, 2005

At first, being able to talk to machines may not seem like the most impressive superpower. I mean, so you can tell your washing machine to start. Big whoop. Then think about the fact that you can tell a gun not to fire, or all of the power plants around you to shut down. Not too shabby. As is the tradition for uncounted superheroes before him, Mitchell Hundred started as just an ordinary civil engineer who, while working on dredging the city's river is splashed with a mysterious glowing green goo that alters him so that he can hear and communicate with machines. Having grown up with superhero comics, he immediately sees the gift for what it is, and becomes The Great Machine, New York's latest costumed vigilante fighting the good fight. All too soon, though, he decides that while he's making a dent here and there, he's not doing enough for the city he loves by battling mad supervillains and accomplishing daring rescues. He wants to do more, less dynamically and more consistently, and maybe even instigate a sustained change toward the better. So what does he do? He runs for mayor. The trouble starts when he wins. Facing a bomber who's decided to take out the city snow plows and anyone who gets in the way and an artist who's stirred up a political sh*tstorm with a provocative and offensive painting on display with city funding, he's not starting off with political aplomb and public success. The loyal companions to The Great Machine, the lovable thug of a cop Rick Bradbury and the wiley socialist nicknamed Kremlin, lose their rock solid status as Hundred becomes more suspicious of Kremlin's increasing insistence he return to the costume. His Police Commissioner thinks he'll retreat to his vigilante ways. Resident PR staffer Journal is the only person who seems to be on his side, displaying previously untapped political savvy and smarts and turning out to be a greater asset than anyone suspected. The artwork, by the man behind Starman's long signature look, has the same crisp, heavily lined photo-inspired look and shifts to suit the mood of the story at every turn without losing its cohesion. The writing is top notch, with a keen sense of humor as well as an excellent sense of pacing, political chicanery, and when to pass the story on to the images. There's a reason this series won an Eisner. The combination of superheroes and politics is not new, but this new spin on it feels fresh and suitably complicated – the continuing story promises to be fascinating.

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Runaways: Pride and Joy (Volume 1)

ISBN: 0785113797

By Brian K. Vaughn

Art by Adrian Alphona

Marvel Comics 2003

Every teenager knows that their parents are evil. After all, it's your parents who prevent you from joining that socialist collective and facing your enemies with their friends behind you and just do not

Every teenager knows that their parents are evil. After all, it's your parents who prevent you from joining that socialist collective, and force you to play with their friends' kids, and just do not understand the importance of black nail polish. But, what if your parents really were evil, in a secret society, uber-villain, sacrificing young girls kind of way? Alex, Carolina, Nico, Chase, Gertrude and Molly have nothing in common except that their parents meet once a year to discuss very boring tax and charitable donation stuff. Except, it turns out their parents all belong to a secret society called the Pride, and apparently, the Pride isn't exactly on the side of the angels. Now they're on the run from the police and their parents and finding out that none of them is quite as ordinary as they thought. Brian Vaughn has a deft touch with his characterizations and his dialogue is full of pop culture references. In a few years this might date the story, but in the moment it makes the characters feel real and vivid. The cast of characters is multicultural, which is highly unusual and really nice to see. Adrian Alphona adds to the feel of the story by making his characters look and react like real teenagers. His kids are not perfect, they are confused and ordinary with extraordinary abilities.

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Runaways: Lost and Found (Volume 2)

ISBN: 0785114157

By Brian K. Vaughn

Art by Adrian Alphona

Marvel Comics 2004

If you suddenly found out your parents were super-villains and that they had framed you for a murder they committed, what would you do? Alex sees it as their group's duty to try and balance the evil that their parents have committed. Carolina is having fun with her psychedelic alien powers. Gertrude is rejecting her past and calling herself Arsenic (she named the dinosaur her parents left her Old Lace). Chase is being laconic. Nico is hooking up with stray vampires. Molly is mostly confused about what's going on, but loving the no-parents part of all of it. However, one of them isn't what they seem, because one of them is a mole and is in contact with their parents. Also, what exactly is the Pride and whose side are they on? Nothing is quite what it seems, and life without adult supervision isn't quite as easy as a teenager wants to think it is. This is an excellently written series. It is thoughtful, clever, and accessible. Adrian Alphona's artwork in this series highlights the moments of surreality in the changing lives the Runaways in an interesting way. The colors in the world of "Runaways" are by and large subdued, except for Carolina's alien powers and Nico's magic. The brightness of those colors stands out in sharp contrast to the rest of the image, making those unreal powers hyper-real.

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Runaways: Missing (Volume 3)

ISBN: 0785116842

By Brian K. Vaughn

Art by Adrian Alphona, Craig Yeung

Marvel Comics 2005

Marvel Comics 2005

Playing off the continuing theme that every teenager thinks that their parents are evil, is the realization in this volume that sometimes the evil things your parents do are done for a reason. In this volume things come to a head between the Pride and their runaway children. Time is running out for the Pride, and their children are catching up to them. The question is will they be in time to save the world, and who exactly is the mole and why? I didn't see the reveal on who the mole was coming, and Brian Vaughn does a very good job making you care about all of the characters and constructing relationships between them so that when one of them is revealed as a traitor, you care. What I liked most, though, was the realization at the end that this wasn't simply a grand adventure, but the back story for a new group of engaging, intelligent teen heroes.

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Captain Gravity

ISBN: 0967368308

by Stephen Vratos

Art by Keith Martin, Rober Quijano

Penny-Farthing Press 1999

If you know something about the history of American comics, you'll recognize the scene on the cover of Captain Gravity: a superhero delivering a knock-out punch to an evil Nazi henchman. Captain Gravity is a fun superhero adventure, but it's first and foremost a tribute to Golden Age comics and the Golden Age of Hollywood. The comic has a lot going for it: sympathetic characters, a good old-fashioned swashbuckling story, and lively, colorful art that's a nice mix of classic and contemporary. Our hero, Joshua Jones, is a young black man struggling to find a place for himself in a prejudiced Hollywood. Working as an assistant to a kind-hearted director, Joshua dreams of his boyhood hero Captain Marvelous. Little does he know that his life is about to collide with the movies; on location in Mexico, shooting a movie about fictitious hero Captain Gravity, Josh stumbles onto a Nazi plot. Soon he must assume the mantle of the movie hero to keep an extraterrestrial power out of enemy hands. It's a good premise, and it comes with great supporting characters like plucky and egalitarian starlet Chase DuBois. The problem is the dialogue. Cheesy soliloquies and exclamations are all part of the adventure-movie experience, and Captain Gravity obviously means to poke fun at its own cliches. The characters deliver their clunky lines with a wink and a nudge, but that doesn't make them any less painful. Every character has to play "exposition ball"; they pretend to have conversations while clumsily filling the reader in on the plot. Just when the story gets going, Joshua will launch into a speech about his unresolved feelings for his dad that's totally implausible in the scene. Josh's father was lynched, a fact we learn in a flashback that's unexpectedly detailed and (obviously) disturbing.

Captain Gravity would be perfectly appropriate for middle school and high school readers; it contains no sex or gore. Adults may be more likely to appreciate the references (and the significance of the Nazi villains) but anyone familiar with Indiana Jones movies will recognize the classic adventure elements. The language is fairly sophisticated, but the story is easy enough to understand. I just wish it was a little better.

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Mage

By Matt Wagner
Images Comics 2001

A magic baseball bat? Reincarnation? Hercules!? Yes, you will find all of these things, and much more, in Matt Wagner's epic **Mage** series. Kevin Matchstick, as it turns out, is the reincarnation of Arthur Pendragon (i.e. King Arthur), and his baseball bat is the fabled Excalibur. Joined by Hercules and Hermes, each reborn, he seeks his destiny.

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Gen13: Superhuman like You

ISBN: 1563898772
by Adam Warren
Art by Ed Benes, Kaare Andrews, and Vince Russell
DC Comics 2002

Last update, I was introduced to [The Authority](#), hardened, fierce peacekeepers. Gen13 is like a superhero team made up of the Authority's bratty younger siblings. The members of Gen13 are young, hot, powerful, and in the prime of their teenage lives. This collection starts off with a deliberate homage to VH1's Behind the Music specials, but this time, it's Behind the Powers. Hilariously tracking each Gen13 member's rise to fame and fall from grace, this tale also serves to introduce the cast: the lecherous Grunge, the brainy beauty Caitlin, her insecure younger sister Freefall, the impulsive Burnout, and the imperious Rainmaker. Assisted by their android housekeeper Anna, they manage to save home city San Francisco a few times over while braving the wilds of superhero parties, fast-food joints, and each others' spiky personalities. Note: don't read this in a place where you'll be embarrassed to laugh out loud. Often.

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Love Fights (Volume 1)

By Andi Watson
ISBN: 1929998864
Oni Press, 2004

There have been quite a few series lately that focus on what mere mortals' lives might be like in a world of superheroes, from Bendis' and Rucka's cop-centric Powers and Gotham Central to Kurt Busiek's classic Marvels. As with all things Andi Watson, he takes a familiar idea and gives it his own light-romantic touch. Each comic's penultimate working to retell a real-life superhero's acts of

Busiek's classic Marvels. As with all things Andi Watson, he takes a familiar idea and gives it his own light, romantic touch. Jack, a comics penciller working to retell a real-life superhero's acts of bravery and heroism, is in a bad mood. Not only is his superhero, the Flamer, lacking for dramatic stories lately, but he's also being hit with a paternity suit that has his public image hitting rock bottom. On top of that, Jack is less than suave with the ladies and is particularly paranoid about how he might compare to superheroes prime physiques – in a world of paragons, why would anyone want an ordinary guy? Then he meets Nora, a smart young woman who, wonder of wonders, likes him back. Of course, once love is looking possible, life starts hitting Jack with everything that could go wrong. Nora is not just a great girl next door, but also a reporter for the scandal mag that broke the story about the Flamer's unclaimed son. She also seems a little too cozy with the Flamer himself, setting off all of Jack's insecurities. On top of that, Jack's cat Guthrie not only starts talking but gains superpowers, dons a costume, and joins the ranks of caped crusaders. Anyone who's ever lived with a cat can just imagine the weirdness, never mind the snide commentary, that might well be voiced if your cat could talk *<i>and</i>* kick your butt. Watson is known for his romantic comedies, and this tale has the same bittersweet and everyday rhythm feel that makes all his work unique and endearing. His artwork remains intentionally rough around the edges and full of broad strokes, and it works its minimalistic magic in eloquent expressions and implied movement. A fine addition to any teen or adult collection.

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Astonishing X-Men: Gifted (Volume 1)
ISBN: 0785115315
By Joss Whedon
Art by John Cassaday
Marvel Comics 2004

Step right up folks, get your nice fresh crack right here, hot off the presses – Joss Whedon is writing X-Men! Let me repeat that, Joss Whedon is writing X-Men. Okay, for the non-Joss Whedon-is-a-god market, **Astonishing X-Men** is a Kitty Pryde centric storyline. It is crack in written form I tell you. Ahem.

Professor Xavier and Jean Gray are gone. The Xavier Institute is being reopened under the new management of Emma Frost and Scott Summers. Kitty Pryde is back as a teacher, and more than a little dubious about the whole enterprise. As if relations at the Institute weren't tense enough, a government researcher has just announced a 'cure' for mutantism. This volume has all of Joss Whedon's trademark skill. In six issues he has created characters you care about, who feel real, and are never one dimensional without sacrificing a suspenseful plot. I'm looking forward to the next volume already.

The art consciously harkens back to an earlier era of X-Men canon. The uniforms have gone through a reverse transformation back to a more yellow spandex look. It works. I don't know that I'd want to see it in real life, but in a comic book the look works. The look of the characters is iconic, but Cassaday doesn't allow the characters themselves to be flat or false.

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Robin Unmasked

ISBN: 1401202357

By Bill Willingham

Art by Francisco Rodriguez de la Fuente, Rick Mays

DC Comics 2004

Tim Drake is the third boy to wear the Robin suit, but he's the first one who's had to break curfew to do it. The question is, what happens when his parents find out? How would you react if you found out your 16 year old son was running around Gotham in the middle of the night in brightly colored spandex fighting criminals with a much older man who named himself after a flying rodent? Yeah. That's about how Tim's father reacted too.

There has been a lot of discussion and dissention about what Bill Willingham did and is doing with the Robin storyline. I liked this volume, I thought it asked some introspective questions about why Tim wanted to be Robin and where he sees himself in the future. I wanted more of the book to be about the aftermath of Tim's parents finding out, rather than most of the book being the lead up to that. But, all in all I think this was an interesting direction to take the Robin story arc. I wasn't thrilled with the artwork in this book. People's faces often seem oddly misformed, and half the time Batman and Robin look almost Asian.

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Exiles

ISBN: 0785108335

by Judd Winick

Art by Mike McKone, Mark McKenna et. al.

Marvel Comics, 2002

Exiles: A World Apart

ISBN:0785110216

by Judd Winick

Art by Mike McKone, Mark McKenna, Jim Calafiore et. al.

Marvel Comics, 2002

Being a relative newbie in the comics world, with a limited knowledge of X-Men history, I wondered if I would have any idea of what was going on in Exiles. No fear! You don't have to be an X-Men expert to love **Exiles**. Written by the multi-talented Judd Winick (creator of Pedro and Me and Barry Ween: Boy Genius), **Exiles** is a unique spin on America's favorite mutants: a group of X-Men (and women), each from a different alternate universe, are brought together to travel through time and space Quantum Leap-style and make sure the course of history doesn't go astray. It's a tall order. Not only have the characters have been ripped out of their lives; they know that if they fail, they'll have no lives to go back to! As they move from world to world, the "Exiles" must challenge their preconceptions about the history they've known and the people they've loved. Some will form new friendships. Some will find love. At least one Exile will give his life to save a universe.

new friendships. Some will find love. At least one Exile will give his life to save a universe.

This story has everything. Beautiful art? Check. Gorgeous color? Check. Great characters? Check. Romance? Suspense? Drama? Snappy Banter? Check. Knowledgeable comics fans (or even newbies like me) will have fun spotting familiar Marvel characters as they pop up in alternate realities; one chapter finds the Exiles at the trial of Phoenix, where they face their most painful task yet. Any fan of science fiction or thoughtful superhero tales can appreciate Winick's intelligent, fast-paced storytelling. Have I convinced you yet? After you read Exiles, you'll want to go right on to **Exiles: A World Apart**. The second volume contains a slightly racy scene, but's also packed with good stories and a lightly delivered lesson in tolerance.

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Exiles: Down the Rabbit Hole (Volume 1)

ISBN: 0785108335

by Judd Winick

Art by Mike McKone

Marvel Comics, 2002

A blank canvas of desert. Suddenly, six figures appear out of nowhere, one by one. As each introduces him or her self, it is revealed that they are all X-Men, but each is from a different reality.

A mysterious figure known as a Time Broker shows up, and reveals why they have been brought together. Each one of them has become unhinged from their reality, and in order to put things right, they must fix what has gone wrong in other realities. Sometimes, the goal is as easy as freeing an old enemy from prison, but sometimes it's as difficult as killing an old friend. Every reality is different, and must be put right in the way that it belongs. Failure means being sent back to their flawed realities, where they may end up comatose, crippled, or even dead. Given minimal clues to their objective each time, the group struggles against their own definitions of right and wrong, good and evil, and friend and foe to do what must be done to move on, and hopefully, eventually, go home. [read more...](#)

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The Complete Series

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Young Justice: Graduation Day

ISBN: 1401201768

By Judd Winick

Art by Alé Garza

DC Comics 2003

DC Comics 2003

When a damaged cyborg from the future arrives in our world and our time she starts trying to find some like her so that she can repair herself. Unfortunately, she first finds and almost kills Cyborg and then, when he can't provide her with what she needs, she wakes up a deactivated Superman robot. These Superman robots were built by Superman to be used in his absence, they have almost all of his power but none of his humanity and ultimately they were deemed too unstable. Star Labs kept one, and that secret may cost lives. I read this after I read the first **Outsiders** and **Teen Titans: A Kid's Game** and they both abruptly made much more sense (particularly **Outsiders**). This is the story that both books reference to, and these are the events that changed the characters, making them wary of being a part of a superhero group. I don't think it's as well written as either one of the books that come after it. Given the nature of the story I felt that it lacked emotional impact, although that might also be because I never followed the story before that volume so I have no particular connection to the characters. I would recommend it for a collection, however, if only to make the stories that come after it make sense.

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