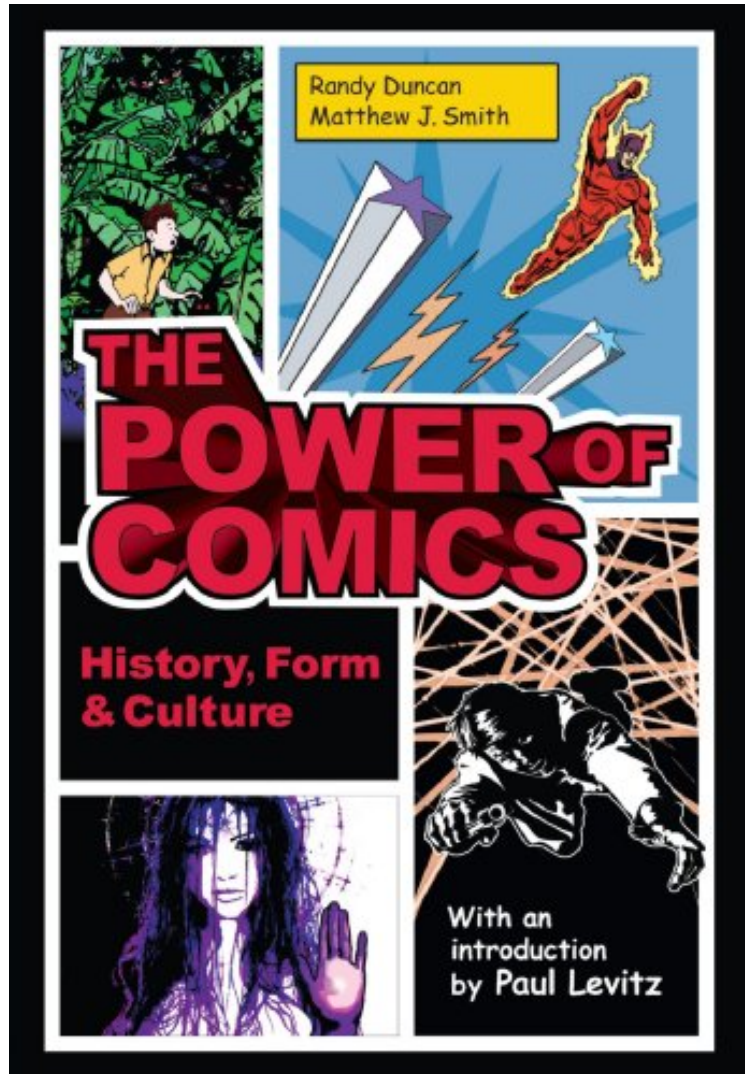


The Power of Comics: History, Form and Culture

Randy Duncan, Matthew J. Smith

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Randy Duncan, Matthew J. Smith : The Power of Comics: History, Form and Culture before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Power of Comics: History, Form and Culture:

11 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Much-needed academic overview for comics studiesBy Bottle ImpRandy Duncan and Matthew J. Smith have produced a solid introductory textbook for courses in comics studies. The work is comprehensive and well-organized in its coverage of the history of comic books, the structure of the comics industry, the creation of comic books, the growth of comics fandom, the major comic-book genres, the ideological aspects of comics, and the modes of critical analysis of comic books. One of the authors' most interesting

innovations is their abandonment of the standard Golden Age-Silver Age system of defining the evolution of the medium. Instead, they offer a broader, more challenging perspective divided into eras of Invention, Proliferation, Diversification, Retrenchment, Connection, Independence, Ambition, and Reiteration. Throughout the book, the tone is even-handed, and Duncan and Smith acknowledge the historical and cultural significance of publications that often receive less than their due from other writers. As one who has spent the past decade endeavoring in a small way to contribute, in my own writing, to the ongoing effort to further the serious study of comic books and sequential art, I gratefully welcome the appearance of *THE POWER OF COMICS* and highly recommend it. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. College book By Claud My comics as literature course required this book and it was delivered on time and in excellent shape. So happy with the purchase. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. the basics By Juliana Costriuba de Mourathe book is a very interesting approach to the study of comics. there are a lot of names without pictures though, but putting that aside, the text is rich and well written.

A comprehensive introduction to the comic arts From the introduction by Paul Levitz "If ever there was a medium characterized by its unexamined self-expression, it's comics. For decades after the medium's birth, it was free of organized critical analysis, its creators generally disinclined to self-analysis or formal documentation. The average reader didn't know who created the comics, how or why . . . and except for a uniquely destructive period during America's witch-hunting of the 1950s, didn't seem to care. As the medium has matured, however, and the creativity of comics began to touch the mainstream of popular culture in many ways, curiosity followed, leading to journalism and eventually, scholarship, and so here we are." *The Power of Comics* is the first introductory textbook for comic art studies courses. Lending a broader understanding of the medium and its communication potential, it provides students with a coherent and comprehensive explanation of comic books and graphic novels, including coverage of their history and their communication techniques, research into their meanings and effects and an overview of industry practices and fan culture. Co-authors Randy Duncan and Matthew J. Smith draw on their own years of experience teaching comics studies courses and the scholarly literature across several disciplines to create a text with the following features: Discussion questions for each chapter Activities to engage readers Recommended reading suggestions Over 150 illustrations Bibliography Glossary *The Power of Comics* deals exclusively with comic books and graphic novels. One reason for this focus is that no one text can hope to do justice to both strips and books; there is simply too much to cover. Preference is given to comic books because in their longer form, the graphic novel, they have the greatest potential for depth and complexity of expression. As comic strips shrink in size and become more inane in content, comic books are becoming a serious art form.

"[*The Power of Comics*] includes a broad range of topics, from the history of comic books to comprehension of the medium, to creators and fandom. 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, *The Visual Linguist* "Randy Duncan and Matthew Smith's *The Power of Comics* is an impressive, accessible, and multifaceted tome on comics. From the creation process to the reading process to fandom to scholarship to comic history and more, Duncan and Smith pound away topic after topic in enjoyable prose with numerous examples, pictures, charts, and other supplemental material to reinforce their discussions. I have used *The Power of Comics* as a text for a comic book course and found that though students lament that it's not a comic book (a la Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics*), they most certainly take extensive value from it. McCloud's text is useful and a great compliment but even McCloud notes that his book is just the opening volley on discussions about comics, whereas Duncan and Smith further develop that discussion some fifteen years after the publication of *Understanding 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 online publication for the Northeast Popular/American Culture Association "Comics are a powerful learning and teaching tool. That's obvious to many teachers, a lot of whom have had great success reaching their students through graphic books. And while grade schools and middle schools have been on the forefront of using comics in the classroom, they're also a fantastic resource at institutions of higher learning. Randy Duncan and Matthew J. Smith have written the book on how to teach the history, impact, importance, and cultural significance of comics at the university and college level. Their book, *The Power of Comics*, delves deeply into the teaching of comics at the higher level and offers other professors a structure for setting up their own intensive comics courses, whether they be an *Intro to Comics* or something more specific." - *The Graphic Novel Reporter* "When invited by various departments at my university to give a lecture on comics, I refer to a standard set of references that includes Will Eisner's *Comics and Sequential Art* and

Graphic Storytelling, Scott McCloud's, Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art, Robert C. Harvey's The Art of the Comic Book, Roger Sabin's Adult Comics: An Introduction, David Kunzle's The History of the Comic Strip (both volumes), and more recently Charles Hatfield's Alternative Comics: An Emerging Literature, Paul Gravett's Graphic Novels: Everything You Need to Know, Ann Miller's Reading Bande Dessinee, and Thierry Groensteen's System of Comics. During these lectures, I am often asked about an introductory textbook on comics that pulls together many of the ideas from these valuable resources. Up to this point in time I did not have a single recommendation, but now I can direct them to this new volume by Duncan and Smith, who are right-up-front about the objective of their book in the first line of their Preface "This is a textbook about comics." The layout of this book is well-matched to today's visually astute student. 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About the Author
Dr. Randy Duncan is a co-founder of the Comic Arts Conference, the nation's first annual academic conference devoted solely to the study of comics. He also wrote the entries on Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, Will Eisner and other comics-related topics for the St. James Encyclopedia of Popular Culture.
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 has written for many of DC's major comic book series, including Superman and Justice Society. His story Legion: The Great Darkness Saga was voted one of the top 20 best comic stories of the last century by readers of The Buyers' Guide.