



The History of Superheroes

A superhero is a fictional character that can be found in books, films or comics. They often have superhuman powers and fight for good or to protect people. They usually have an interesting name and a special suit that might hide who they really are.



Who Was the First Superhero?

The first popular superhero was Superman. He was first shown in Action Comics in June 1938 but some fans think there are some even earlier characters.

Superman is also often called the Man of Steel because of his powers. Superman's alter ego is a man called Clark Kent, who works as a reporter for a newspaper called The Daily Planet.

Q1: When was Superman first shown in Action Comics?

Q2: Which of these statements are true? Tick **two**.

- Superman's alter ego is Clark Kent.
- He is often called Man of Metal.
- All superheroes can fly.
- Superman was first shown in Action Comics.
- Clark Kent is a writer at The News Planet.



Q3: Why do you think that superheroes often wear disguises?



When Did Superheroes Become Popular?

Superheroes first became popular in comics. As well as Superman, the characters Batman and Robin, Wonder Woman, Flash, Green Lantern and Plastic Man were all first seen in comics.

Plastic Man was created by a writer and artist called Jack Cole. He first appeared in Police Comics in 1941. He was able to stretch his body into all sorts of shapes, including a ball and a car. He later appeared in his own cartoon shown on TV from 1979 to 1981.



Superhero comic books became popular during the 1940s, especially during the Second World War. Captain Marvel was one of the most popular superhero comics during this time. Once the war was over, these comics lost some of their popularity and were replaced by animal-themed comics.

Q4: Who created the character Plastic Man?



Q5: What does the word **popularity** mean?

Q6: Why do you think that Jack Cole named his superhero Plastic Man?



Who Was the First Female Superhero?

Fantomah, also known as Mystery Woman of the Jungle, was the first female comic book superhero and was created by the artist Fletcher Hanks in 1940. She was a hero who loved the jungle and protected the animals and people who lived there. She had magical powers which allowed her to fly and to transform objects. When she used her powers, her face turned into a blue skull but her curly, blonde hair stayed the same.



Who Is the Fastest Superhero?

Lots of fans argue about who is the fastest superhero. Some people think it is Superman but many think that Flash is the fastest because he gained the power of super speed after being hit by lightning. Flash decided to use his powers for good and he wears a bright, red suit. He can move so fast that he can travel through time.

Q7: Why do you think that Fantomah was known as Mystery Woman of the Jungle?



Q8: Use up to 20 words to sum up what you have learnt from this text.



Q9: Number the facts below from 1-5 to show the order that they appear in the text.

The first one has been done for you.

- Lots of fans think that Flash is the fastest superhero.
- 1 Superman was first shown in June 1938.
- Plastic Man had his own cartoon show from 1979 to 1981.
- Superman's alter ego is a man called Clark Kent.
- Superheroes first became popular in comics in the 1940s.



The History of Superheroes - Answers

Q1: When was Superman first shown in Action Comics?

Superman was first shown in Action Comics in June 1938.

Q2: Which of these statements are true? Tick **two**.

- Superman's alter ego is Clark Kent.**
- He is often called Man of Metal.
- All superheroes can fly.
- Superman was first shown in Action Comics.**
- Clark Kent is a writer at The News Planet.

Q3: Why do you think that superheroes often wear disguises?

Accept answers which discuss the fact that the superheroes wear disguises to hide their identity, such as: I think that superheroes often wear disguises so that they can hide who they really are from their enemies.

Q4: Who created the character Plastic Man?

The character Plastic Man was created by Joe Cole.

Q5: What does the word **popularity** mean?

Accept answers which discuss that the word popularity describes how liked or popular something is, such as: I think that popularity means how well-known something is.

Q6: Why do you think that Jack Cole named his superhero Plastic Man?

Accept any answer which discusses the fact that Plastic Man is able to mould himself into other shapes just like plastic can, such as: Joe Cole might have named his superhero Plastic Man because he is able to turn into different shapes just like plastic can.

Q7: Why do you think that Fantomah was known as Mystery Woman of the Jungle?

Accept answers which discuss the fact Fantomah loved the jungle and also had mysterious powers, such as: I think that Fantomah was called Mystery Woman of the Jungle because she had magical powers and loved to use them to protect the jungle.

Q8: Use up to 20 words to sum up what you have learnt from this text.

Accept any reasonable summary of a point from the text, provided that it is given using 20 words or less, such as:

- **superheroes were first introduced in 1938 and were popular during the Second World War;**
- **Superman was one of the first superheroes to be introduced in Action Comics in June 1938;**
- **many superhero fans think that Flash is the fastest superhero. He gained his super speed after being struck by lightning.**

Q9: Number the facts below from 1-5 to show the order that they appear in the text.

The first one has been done for you.

- ⑤ Lots of fans think that Flash is the fastest superhero.
- ① Superman was first shown in June 1938.
- ③ Plastic Man had his own cartoon show from 1979 to 1981.
- ② Superman's alter ego is a man called Clark Kent.
- ④ Superheroes first became popular in comics in the 1940s.