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**The Construction of the Superhero Captain America and his Influence on American Culture and Politics**

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**Abstract:** xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx （about 100 words） **Key words:** xxxx; xxxx; xxxx; xxxx (3-5 words)

If there is a debate on American Superheroes usually there is one, which always crosses someone´s mind first: Captain America. Obviously, it seems like his costume is giving him his special American attitude, but more than that it’s his way of acting and thinking. This essay will examine the cultural and political values embodied in the figure of Captain America.

正文用Times New Roman字体，小4号字，1.5倍行距。

1. Historical Context of Captain America´s First Adventure

There was a rising popularity in comic-books in the end of the 1930´s, which could be seen as the start of a cultural phenomenon. The first steps of this medium were done in America, concerning the production and consequently and also its readership. Besides others the genre of super-hero adventures became one of the most important by creating Superman in 1938. He is still one of the most influential fictional characters which has ever been invented. Afterwards there were lots of attempts to copy that success, but only a few under thousands managed that. There is a countless number of different super-heroes, which could be seen as a result of the Great Depression. A period which ended up with huge needs for such hero-sagas, heroic symbols of battle and change for a better future and world. Many of these hero-figures are based on old legends and their characters, like greek mythology for example. R. Reitberger stated, that in today´s idiom these figures express the ancient longing of mankind for a mighty protector, a helper, a guide, or guardian angel who offers miraculous deliverance to mortals, and calls them “modern myths” (Reitberger, 1972, p.27).

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Besides superman there was another superhero which arise from these days: Captain America. The man who is called the “democracies´ strongest foe of fascism”. (Duncan &Smith, 2013, p.103).

The beginning of Captain America as an all-American wartime hero in the fight against Hitler and Nazi-Germany can be found in 1941. Although he is not the first patriotic superhero, he is definitely the most enduring one. His latest movie was in the cinemas in the last months. The original wartime Captain America Comics proved to be so popular that they were a competition for Superman. The character´s success most certainly inspired other patriotic comics and characters like U.S.A. Comics or the Seven Soldiers of Victory. Once joined the Allied, patriotic comics became an important part of the American comic book publishing. By letting Captain America and other heroes battle a real enemy, comics initiated a morally justification for (expanding) military personnel. Especially in relation to that it is interesting, that Captain America is the moral guide of the Marvel Universe principles: almost every figure ever created by Marvel, from Spiderman to Ironman or the Captain´s biggest Enemy Red Skull respects Captain America. Cap´s legacy, his iconic status is visible in the acting of many other heroes as well.

2. The Symbol of Captain America

The moral concepts of the founding fathers of the United States are represented in the conception of Captain America, visually and also in his behaviour and world view. His figure is a symbol for what America wants to be, but not always is. The character of Captain America has all the attributes of a symbol from the beginning. An idealistic orphan became the biggest soldier in the history of the United States of America, who was from that moment on and still is some kind of a role model for contemporary warriors. He has all the necessary attributes. First of all, the physical ones – with a functional suit acting as armor and a shield, both are painted in the colours of the American flag. The shield is a defensive weapon, which he never separates and frequently serves as a projectile. Then psychological, because he is motivated by the ideals of freedom, tolerance and justice in the service of his country.

But his basic construction is not just a symbol of accomplishment and patriotism. In the 1940s Captain America served as an U.S. vehicle for propaganda. His mission to fight Nazi-Germany can be interpreted as justification for war and all of it´s consequences for the American nation. This political message was part of the Captain America storyline´s for a very long time. Captain America was a soldier, a warrior in every meaning of the term, experienced in all forms of combat. He was sent to the front to confront spies, Nazi technicians and their secret weapons, as well as Japanese kamikazes. The attacks on 9/11 and the start of the American battle against terrorism globally there also was a change in the position of Captain America in his adventures.

The basics of this character are still the same. He still is a creation with a totally unbiased nature and with the gift of an impressive intuition for justice, which explains why he is one of the most distinguished superheroes of all time. His friends among the other heroes respectfully call him „boy scout“ because of his virtuousness. But meanwhile it seems like Captain America has changed some of his priorities. His moral and the principles of his acting are not limited to American citizens anymore. Today, he usually fights to save humanity.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, Captain Americas has been adapted to various periods of America´s history. He fought Nazis in the 1940s, communists in the 1950s, government corruption in the 1970s, drug use in the 1990s and terrorists in the 2000s. During the decades one iconic aspect has remained constant: Captain America has always represented Truth, Justice, and the America Ideal (as opposed to the American Way). But his own position is changing during his development. Compared to his beginning as a propagandistic instrument, today he isn’t a government stooge anymore but still stands for American liberty and freedom. He became the personification of a charismatic authority and leadership. Since the millennium his role as American flagship has changed. Now, he seems to feel responsible for humanity instead just for America and its values. In a sense, Captain America became a real ‘New Deal’ character, which often is depicted as a radical opponent to the establishment and the status quo. His basic principles may be ground on virtues and duties and let them seem like plain “black and white”-logic but the way he makes his decisions is multilayered and very situated. With his actions he highlights the significance of an appropriate moral judgement. For that reason Captain America continually stands for ethical equality for everybody, no matter of which gender, nationality, race, or religion.

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