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Harley Quinn and Redemptive Violence

The myth of redemptive violence is a common theme in comic books and other media today, especially in America. Superheroes are the ones who usually use redemptive violence in their stories to develop their characters and solve their problems. It is not surprising that even villains are made to follow this trope to develop their characters. Harley Quinn is a villain who first appeared in "Batman: The Animated Series." She became quite popular and it is no surprise that fans want to see her character development. While she is becoming her own person in comic books, she must often use violence to bring order to her chaotic life.

Before I can explain how Harley Quinn uses redemptive violence to calm her chaotic life, I need to explain what it is. The myth of redemptive is victory over chaos by being violent. As Westerners, this is driven into our heads and is a dominant theme in comic books among other media. Harley Quinn was once a doctor at Arkham Asylum who fell in love with the Joker. Falling in love can be confusing and chaotic on its own, however, when it comes to falling in love with the Joker, these are magnified.

In Batman: Harley Quinn #1, Harley tries to end the confusion and chaos that the Joker brings into her life by killing him. Harley meets the Joker and falls in love with him, while she is



in pure bliss at first, this is only the beginning of her journey of trying to stop the chaos in her life. After the Joker cast her aside to avoid Batman, Harley begins to see the disorder in her life brought on by the Joker. In the image to the left, from the comic, Harley comes to realize that her life is chaotic and that the only way to solve her problems and bring peace to her life is to confront those who have wronged her. She goes on to confront the Joker and plans to end his life, and hopefully bringing peace and order to her own life. In the

end, her violence gets her nowhere and she goes back to the Joker.

In Detective Comics #831, “Kind of Like Family,” Harley is trying to separate herself from her past and the Joker. She goes in front of the board of directors at Arkham Asylum and admits to all everything she has done wrong, but hopes to *go straight* and start a new life. Her life is peaceful now, as she is *free* of the Joker, however, it is again turned chaotic when Scarface breaks her out of Arkham Asylum to assist him in his next heist. Harley knows that the only way out of this life is by using violence again. She must betray Scarface by acting against him and even calling for help from Batman. In the end, her struggle was not in vane and lead her to a peaceful life outside of Arkham Asylum. While she had to use violence to end the confusion brought into her life, it helped her find peace once again.

In *Batman: Black and White* #3, “Role Models,” while once again pursuing a life of crime, Harley uses violence again to redeem herself. A young girl is kidnapped by a man, the girl is able to escape her captor and searches for someone to help her. While the girl looks for a hero, she runs across Harley Quinn and Poison Ivy and begs for their help. While trying to rob a bank, the two women realize that they must put a stop to this man’s crimes. In the panels to the right, we can see that Harley and Ivy have a resolve to help the young girl. While there may have been another option besides violence, that is the road they take. In order to stop a kidnapper, they use violence to stop him. The man is stopped, and the young girl sees the two as heroes; Batman even sees that they did nothing wrong and thinks that there is nothing bad about the two, even if it is just for the night.



While Harley Quinn started as a villain who was in love with the Joker, she tried to bring an end to the chaos that he brought into her life. When she tried to distance herself from a life of crime, it was thrust upon her again, and to find her way out she had to use violence to bring peace to her life again. As Westerners, we have been conditioned to believe in the myth of redemptive violence. This holds true to develop heroes and villains, as we can see with Harley Quinn. While there may be other ways to end chaos brought into their lives, comic book characters often fall into this trope that they can only solve violence with violence.

Works Cited

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