Comics may not be as popular as they once were, but to those who still enjoy this form of entertainment, it can prove to be more than just another fictional story. With each comic book character, a rich background filled with excitement, experience, and lessons for the reader are portrayed. When reading comics, most people turn to the superhero as their focus for the reading, but I believe that the villain is as, if not more important. My personal favorite villain goes by the name of Magneto. His story is filled with historical events and the character evolves so greatly over time that he transforms from super villain to a member of the X-Men for a short about of time before returning. These events have a significant meaning behind them that can alter the reader’s perception of how society functions as a whole if they read the X-Men series as more than just a novelty entertainment novel.

The origins of Magneto were explained in the X-Men: Magneto Testament in 2008 and truly define him and his purpose as a villain. Before becoming Magneto, Max Eisenhardt grew up as a Jewish boy around the time of World War II. His family was killed by the Nazis and he was taken to a concentration camp where he beat the odds and escaped (Pak). This event, as it did with the concentration camp survivors, left permanent, emotional scars. By creating a character that was a victim of one of the worst acts of inhumanity in history, it captivated the people, possibly connecting the reader to the soon-to-be villain in a way similar to how a reader could get captivated by a superhero’s story. His mutant powers also make him attractive to readers. Unlike telekinesis where objects can be moved by brain waves, he uses the force of magnetism – a very well understood concept in physics. This power almost brings him down to a more relatable human level, giving people the ability to imagine themselves with a power that can be experienced on a small scale with a refrigerator and magnet. With his combined super power that is based off of an invisible real world force and a background that is tied directly to a well known catastrophe caused by human hatred, the user can relate on many fronts.

Although many people encounter adversities, there is always a socially acceptable and unacceptable way of handling the situation. This is what sets the villains and superheroes apart in many comics. Magneto and Charles Xavier are both fighting for mutant rights to make sure that they are not discriminated against. Magneto has a skewed view of the situation given his interactions with the Nazis in the past and is trying to prevent discrimination in a manner similar, only he has chosen the route of solving the problem by destroying those who act adversely. The Magneto’s actions and intentions create an image that relates him to many human and civil rights activists of the time. A particular example is given in the book “Bad is Good” where the author relates Malcolm X and Magneto, discussing how the super villain, though not acting in a wholesome manner, is acting as an influential civil rights activist, fighting for the rights of the mutants (Craig 38). At the same time, the author also discusses how Professor Xavier is the superhero persona of Dr. Martin Luther King Junior. Chris Claremont, writer on Uncanny X-Men, also gives a firsthand account of the meaning behind the conflict between humans and the mutants saying “The X-Men are hated, feared and despised collectively by humanity for no other reason than that they are mutants. So what we have here, intended or not, is a book that is about racism, bigotry and prejudice.” (Screened) For the reader, this similarity between Magneto and Professor Xavier can cause lines to become blurred and create a unification of the two characters where tensions exist. When discussing tensions between the primary superhero and the primary super villain, it is necessary to explore the differences that create the initial conflict. I couldn’t have explained the situation in a more accurate manner than Screened did in their article discussing the topic. They state that “Perhaps the most fascinating part of Xavier and Magneto’s differing ideals is that they both have a very similar end in mind; a world where mutants can live without fear. They’re just at the opposite end of the spectrum when it comes to getting to that place. The same can be argued for both Dr. King and Malcolm X. But while Xavier was modeled after MLK, Jr., Magneto took after the more militant Malcolm X. He believed in taking on human aggressors head-on with shows of force. “ (Screened) Although the approaches may not coincide, the underlying issues they are fighting for are the same.

In a later issue, the lines blur between good and bad as Magneto decides to start working for a global purpose and joins the X-Men in their fight for mutant rights. This is a pivotal time as it begins to show the reader that good will always conquer evil even when differences in opinion are great. This change in heart does not necessarily show weakness in the character, but it shows how he evolves and matures while finding identity. These characters, in my opinion, aren’t necessarily fighting a global issue, but also personal ones. Magneto is not one extreme or the other in terms of his actions, but the grey area between good and bad is what allows him to change his stance on how the solution will get reached to the mutants vs. humans problem. This wavering in his methods of finding the solution tells me that he is not exactly sure of whom he really wants to me in the big picture. After joining the X-Men, he helps them create a secluded base where they can live in peace but is easily persuaded to join the side of evil later on. During this time I believe he finds the identity that he is comfortable with and decides to stick with it from this point on after getting a feel of what both side has to offer. I believe many of the readers can relate to this if the stereotypical teenager is a major subscriber to this entertainment as the teenage years are generally considered the time when most people figure out who they really are.

Overall I believe the superheroes of comic books get too much attention. They may be fighting for a purpose that is in line with society’s beliefs and morals, but the villain of the story is necessary and in fact can supplement the cause that the hero is trying to fight for, especially in the situation of Professor Xavier and Magneto. I believe that not only does Magneto fight for civil rights in a manner similar to Malcolm X, but he is also in search of his own personal identity. In addition, I believe that Magneto is a highly popular figure as his mutations function in a way that is somewhat consistent with physics, and it opens imaginations allowing people to imagine the ability to move objects without directly contacting them and fly without a machine to assist. Personally I love this character because he is relatable, yet so different from what society would consider ethical.

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