

Superman 1 is about Superman becoming confident enough in himself to use his immense powers for good. It is about reaching for ideals, overcoming the mind's depressing "reality". Batman 1 is about Batman realizing that one has to be realistic in order to survive; in this case, too much power corrupts even saints, and that one cannot live in idealism forever.

Batman v Superman is about a balance of the two beliefs: idealism and realism must co-exist.

SUPERMAN 1:

The main theme in the movie is about hope overcoming despair. Clark first encounters despair when he has to choose between his father's life or a stranger's, and chooses the stranger's, much to his regret.

Superman's biggest challenge is the belief that he chases after a false ideal, and there is an underlying fear that the ideal will never come true. All of Earth is facing this harrowing experience. They are facing an incurable plague, and wars are fought over limited resources that can stave off the plague and reduce its suffering. Humans are killing one another, and Superman cannot change people's minds. This mirrors the situation that destroyed all of Krypton, in which technology was mishandled and used for war instead of societal advancement.

The ideal that Superman chases after is the belief that he can stop wars, and that resurrection is possible. This is deemed insulting by humans, as it has never happened in reality. But Superman later learns, through the teachings of Jor-el, that these things ARE possible because the absurdly impossible has already happened, yet humans just don't see it. The existence of the desire for peace, of humans bettering themselves, of the advancement of technology- these are proof that humans have achieved what was deemed previously impossible, with patience, hard work, and belief. Metropolis, a futuristic city, is evidence of this.

Krypton scenes are seen, and Jor-el is a pure scientist, not a fighter. Zod decimates him.

Clark Kent grows up in a time when humanity is in complete despair. In Kansas, Clark is sheltered from the destruction of the outside world, and is hopeful and optimistic, believing life will always be perfect the way it is. A few of his friends and family are aware of his powers, but they keep it a secret, and Clark acts normal around others whenever the secret is leaked, so no one believes the leakers. Clark uses his powers to do good for his community, becoming a living legend. However, when Clark is in his 20s, the destruction of the outside world begins to creep in, and Pa Kent is killed. Clark, who has been raised by his adoptive parents to believe that he can overcome any mortal obstacle using his powers, vows to stop humanity's destruction using his powers. Donning an alter ego (not named Superman yet), Clark saves people from disasters, and in the news, he promises that he will stop humanity's extinction. A young reporter named Lois Lane airs this interview, and she becomes attached to this new potential beacon of hope. Though people are in awe, Clark eventually fails to uphold many of his promises, and people become even more despondent when they see even this superhuman cannot solve their problems. Believing him to be a scientific experiment gone astray, they tell him that he's living in a fantasy world, and Clark believes them. Clark begins having nightmares where his consciousness is transported into a world of complete and utter despair, and he can never escape. He encounters a terrifying being who calls himself Zod, and is tortured by him. When he wakes up, he's terrified about the possibility that this is what reality truly is.

Faced with impossible obstacles such as the inability to reverse death, Clark descends into depression. He retreats into isolation, and is in complete and utter fear as the world falls around him. Days and months pass, and humanity is nearly gone. One day, fed up with it all, Clark decides to revisit Kansas to relive his childhood memories where there was hope. Through this, he realizes that as a child, he made up stories with his friends about where he came from, and made up dreams about how he could save the world. Clark talks with Ma Kent about how those fake realities were what made him the happiest, and Ma Kent tells him that if they made him happy, there's no reason to get rid of them, no matter what the outside world tells him. These words re-invigorate Clark, and he decides to follow the clues left from his space pod to find his true origins, which he believes has the keys to saving humanity.

With the help of Lois, Clark eventually finds a Kryptonian computer containing the last of Jor-El's messages. Here, he discovers Kryptonian philosophies and technologies that are nearly impossible to decrypt. However, Clark realizes that these tools can save humanity from the destruction it has wrought over its natural resources and economies. Before he can decide how to introduce these technologies to Earth, the US government reveals that it has been following Clark, and captures him using Kryptonite.

In captivity, the US scientists reveal that they have been secretly monitoring Kryptonian technology, and various governments around the world are competing to destroy one another by harnessing its weapons. Clark says that the tech must be used for good, not evil- he says that Krypton was destroyed because of the misuse of technology. Again, the scientists tell Clark that he is not living in reality, and has to accept that certain things cannot be changed.

Soon, the arms race leads humanity to open portals into the Phantom Zone to retrieve weapons and knowledge that were sealed by Kryptonians. Zod and the other prisoners take this chance to escape, and by manipulating the already fragile society, they seek to wipe out Earth and steal its resources as a way to recover their weakened army. Earth is merely a pit stop for fuel on their way to conquer the rest of the galaxy, just like wasps bursting out of a caterpillar they use as food. Zod's forces make quick work of Clark, injuring him and leaving him for dead. Zod exacerbates the conflict by manipulating the people into fighting one another more over access to an escape ship that can only house a few. Ma Kent is killed by the plague, which Zod purposefully injects into her.

People stop fighting back, and give up, screaming and crying. But Clark knows what he has to do. With his last remaining strength, he journeys into the Phantom Zone to retrieve forbidden tech that his father made that was sealed up so it could not fall into the wrong hands. In the Phantom Zone, Clark encounters his greatest nightmares, and is seemingly stuck there for eternity, not aging. It is a literal Hell. However, reaching into what he has learned in life, Clark is able to use patience to slowly crawl his way towards the tech. With this tech, Clark is able to do what all humans deemed impossible: to speak with the deceased, but only one, as the technology is weak and at its final limits. Clark must choose to speak to Pa Kent or his biological parents, and chooses Pa Kent.

In a higher dimensional realm, Clark finds the spirit of Pa Kent. Pa Kent tells him that he cannot be brought back to life, and there are things on Earth he misses. But he says that his spirit becomes happier for all the happiness he sees on Earth. The more happiness there is in the physical world, the happier the spirits are. Clark does not know if this conversation is an illusion or not, but then Pa Kent tells him what Ma Kent said: if it makes him happy, and doesn't harm anything, then why not believe it? With the second reiteration of this belief, Clark now fully embraces idealism and hope. Pa Kent tells him there is someone else he met, and that this someone (heavily hinted to be Jor-El) showed him how to activate

and retrieve tech that will save the dying Earth. Pa Kent tells Clark that his biological parents are very proud of him, as they are always watching, too. This suggests more that this encounter is not an illusion, but this is still inconclusive- it may be a hologram with knowledge of the Phantom Zone that is assuming the form of Pa Kent speaking to Clark. Nonetheless, Clark believes he is talking to the real Pa Kent, and discovers tech that CAN revive a human, but only if they were very recently deceased. This tech can only be reconstructed using tech that Zod keeps, and that it is so limited it can only be used once. Clark realizes that he must race to revive his mother, as soon too much time will have passed for her to be revived.

With the new tech and power-ups retrieved, Clark is able to escape from the Phantom Zone with a new identity: Superman. He tells Earth's people how to defeat Zod's forces and the plague that's forcing people to kill each other. The people still don't believe him, as he failed them before. But Superman does not back down this time: no matter how many obstacles he faces, he patiently fights them all off using his belief that he can defeat them. In an exhausting struggle with many near defeats, Superman wins over Zod's forces one by one, and all of this is captured live. The world begins to believe in Superman, and Superman's most loyal supporters rally up their local neighborhoods to stop fighting and put Superman's plan about using the tech into action. By trusting one another and in Superman, the people begin to see the first signs of stopping the previous unstoppable plague.

Unable to use the plague to manipulate the people anymore, Zod turns to using pure military might to intimidate the people, which he did not use before as his forces were already severely weakened in resources and he needed these military resources to conquer the rest of the galaxy. Despite overwhelming odds, Superman is able to fight against all of this. Backed into a corner, Zod tries to force Superman to kill him in order to make him break his promise of his 'no kill policy'. But Superman tells him that through planning, he already had a way of getting around this, and traps Zod and his forces back into the Phantom Zone, destroying all portals going into it. This is a call-back to Pa Kent; now, Superman proves that even the impossible (in some situations) can be overcome. Superman then revives his mother, and humans are in awe over these miracles. Though the plague is eradicated, there are still many things they must work together to overcome, and now they have hope that resurrection is possible. The technology used to revive Ma Kent, and its blueprints, are destroyed by Zod, and cannot be reverse engineered, so humans are left on their own to move towards it. The public does not know who exactly was revived, but just knows from the news that 'someone' was revived.

BATMAN 1:

As Clark grows up in Kansas, Bruce grows up in Gotham. Gotham is run down, and the plague is only making it worse. But Gotham's citizens cling onto hope as its politicians tell them that everything will be alright as long as they believe in ideals. Batman, too, believes in ideals that he transform Gotham. Then, one day Zod's forces arrive, and Gotham's citizens are in awe as Superman does the impossible. Inspired by these miracles, Gotham's citizens form fan clubs for Superman, and begin to strive for miracles. Batman, who has been hardened to reality, begins to consider having hope for impossible ideals. He thinks back to his dead parents, and wonders if they can be revived, too.

But these ideals quickly turn into dangerous delusions. Gotham's mentally unstable citizens (who are much, much worse off than the rest of humanity) delude themselves into thinking they can do anything,

and this leads to people committing crimes and committing suicide because they were misled by cult leaders and politicians who claimed these actions would lead them to a better life.

One of these people is Dr Victor Fries, whose wife died from the plague just a few weeks before Superman found the cure. After seeing Ma Kent resurrected from the dead, Dr Fries is led astray by delusions into thinking that he can reconstruct this technology. Dr. Fries joins with mob bosses and corrupt politicians- constantly switching sides- to gain access to resources that will steal what knowledge is left for this resurrection tech. He discovers that similar compounds used in the tech are actually found on Earth, in places called Lazarus Pits. Even better, they can resurrect anyone, even those gone from thousands of years ago. During the movie, this is not overtly shown, but hinted at through clues that Batman finds. Batman finds journals that Victor writes, but Victor himself is not shown on screen until near the end. Instead, only the aftermath of Victor's crimes- which results in deluded people being manipulated to commit crimes that help Victor- are shown, and Batman must deal with them as he tries to outsmart this stealthy villain.

Batman is alerted of a string of murders, and the police suspect that it is committed by someone who is after control over the city. But using his detective skills, Batman slowly learns the true menace behind the crimes. He becomes convinced that people's delusions- exacerbated by outlandish promises from politicians and corporations who manipulate people for personal gain- are the cause behind these crimes. But the police, who are now entrenched in these ideals, do not believe him. Batman learns that resurrection tech may actually be built, and is tempted at the thought of using it to revive his parents. There are also hints that mind control technology is at play.

However, it is later revealed later that the mind control was purposely put there to mislead detectives. Batman deduces that Victor Fries, now known as Mr Freeze, is behind these chilling murders, and discovers that he has teamed up with Ra's Al Ghul to use the Lazarus Pits's chemicals to construct technology that can revive his dead wife Nora. Mr Freeze dresses in a hat, overcoat and red glasses, but his gloves are chilly, and hints of ice mist out of these gloves. His skin is hidden under these detective-like gloves, but it's faintly shown he has blue skin. When the gloves are off, this mist gets everywhere, and Mr Freeze is able to shoot a specialized handgun to freeze people with his powers. He looks like a mob member (like Arthur Slugworth from Willy Wonka) instead of a spaceman with a helmet. This appearance is shown in the background before Batman deduces that Victor is the true culprit.

At the climatic fight near the Lazarus pits, Mr Freeze dons his spaceman-like suit to fight Batman, but the villain is stopped. However, after the battle, the detective learns that Nora has already been revived for a few days, and that Mr Freeze has been happy ever since. Batman realizes that Victor has stopped committing crimes because Nora is alive again. Ra's (who trained Batman in the League of Shadows and thus knows his true identity) tells Batman how happy Victor is, and that Batman, too, can be released from his pain too by reviving his parents.

Batman is tempted by Ra's to use it, but after reflecting on the delusions that led Gotham astray, he backs down, choosing to use logic instead of emotion, as he deduces that the risks of the tech are too great. Instead, Batman chooses to unfurl the showman's curtain, chases Ra away, and discovers that although Nora is revived, she is a deformed, pathetic monster, and that Victor has deluded himself into thinking that everything is okay. Horrified, Batman apprehends Mr Freeze, turning him over to Gordon, who followed Batman to assist him. Alone, Batman gives a merciful death to 'Nora'.

Bruce Wayne visits his parents' graves once again, despondent that he cannot speak to them one last time. He uncovers Superman's identity as Clark Kent, and finds out that the person who was revived was his mother Martha Kent. Batman grows bitter that Superman was able to rescue his mother Martha, but he was not. He has now seen the disastrous effects of Superman's 'ideals'. He now fully believes that Superman is a danger to humanity- though he stopped Zod, giving such god-like powers to humans is dangerous, and Superman, who was raised by human culture, is no different than any other human who is able to be corrupted by power.

BATMAN V SUPERMAN:

Humanity is recovering from plague and war, and now fully believe in Superman. Superman has sided with LexCorp's CEO, Lex Luthor, to help usher in a new age of technology using reverse engineered Kryptonian tech. Lex Luthor becomes a public hero as he's instrumental to helping the world recover from the near apocalypse, while Superman is still revered but feared as a foreign entity. Thus, Superman must side with Luthor to help his reachability with the public. But in the isolated, forgotten city of Gotham, Batman has seen the horrifying consequences of their idealism. He knows that Superman and Luthor must be stopped.

Batman's predictions seem to come true when Lex Luthor's son dies in an accident caused by people who were deluded by Superman's ideals, just as Victor Fries was. But someone frames the public into believing that his son was killed by Batman. Batman is now on the run from the public, and the US government has ordered Superman to take down the dark knight.

When Batman is cornered by the military now empowered by new Kryptonian tech, a mysterious ally saves him. Batman deduces that this ally is Lex Luthor, and meets with him in secret. Luthor tells Batman that he believes that Batman did not kill his son, and that he knows the true perpetrators of the act: people who were being guided by Superman in a project that could never work. These people were driven by emotions, not logic. Luthor says he cannot speak up in public against Superman as all of society has allied with him, and he is so invincible now that he is immune to criticism. Luthor tells Batman that the truth must be revealed, and the detective is the only one who is able to gather enough evidence to convict the true perpetrators, link them to Superman, and reveal the truth in the court of law. Then, Superman can be imprisoned, and once all the fault is placed on him, these harmful delusions will subside.

Batman rejects Luthor's help at first, saying he can do it alone, but Luthor reveals that he has evidence that only he can obtain, and Batman cannot win this case without him. With no other choice, Batman allies with Luthor to discover the truth. Batman runs from Superman, mirroring the movie 'Predator'. The movie also shows Superman's perspective- it shows that he must deal with the public who is tormented by both beliefs of idealism and realism. Though he has near infinite power, Superman still does not know how to save humanity's minds from themselves; he did it once, but now, he cannot replicate these results. Still, after undergoing the Phantom Zone that tested his resolve at its peak, he does not let his beliefs shatter.

Superman showed the public Hope in the previous movie, and now, he learns he represents another ideal: Truth. Throughout the movie, people become more and more deluded, mixing up hope and lies.

Superman realizes that the two must be differentiated, and tells people that Truth must be strived for. When confronted by doubts that realistically, the full truth may never be known, Superman tells the public that in his eternal idealism, the full truth will always eventually be revealed, no matter how long it takes. This is an extension of Superman's philosophy that belief can lead one to achieve the impossible.

Superman is able to corner Batman and the two fight. But soon, it's revealed that Batman had lured him into a trap, and he is weakened by Kryptonite provided to him by Luthor. Superman nearly defeats Batman, but his promise to never kill stops him from killing the dark knight. Now Batman stands over the man of steel, and Superman asks him if he is willing to compromise his no-kill rule to stop Superman. Batman says that though he believed firmly in this rule before, he now questions it as an 'ideal', which has led many astray. Batman tells Superman that though many in humanity benefit from idealism, those who have been tossed aside and forgotten- such as Gotham- are doomed to never achieve their dreams. Instead, it is better for them to carve out a realistic path in their life, rather than to cling onto delusions that will lead to self-harm.

Superman, reflecting on what he has witnessed, tells Batman that there is truth to what he is saying. He finally acknowledges the faults in his ideals, but is unwilling to give them up. Batman asks him why, and Superman replies that without dreams and hope, there is no reason to live. Even when the people of Gotham walk through 'realistic' lives, they must still have hope in these small steps; they have to have hope they will succeed at their job, at helping others, at being happy. Because life is unpredictable, and all one can cling to is belief.

Batman begins to see Superman's side in things, and questions his own cynicism. Had he gone too far in extremism, rejecting all of idealism in favor of realism? Did Superman truly need to be destroyed in order to save people from themselves?

The two had attacked one another before in acts of emotion, due to distrust of one another propagated by outside sources. Now, Batman is able to reach out to the enemy through talking, and tells Superman that he was framed. He shows him the evidence, and the two realize that they were set up by Luthor, who situated the events so that the two would never have a chance to talk, but would need to destroy one another first. Luthor predicted that Batman, lusted by vengeance and willing to compromise his no-kill rule, would destroy Superman, as he thought Superman was a threat to his power. The two then team up to defeat Luthor and reveal the truth to the public.

However, as the two sneak their way to Luthor, the villain has quickly caught on to their plan, and confronts them. He traps them and does not allow the outside to know the truth. The two fight Luthor, and corner him. Lois is able to find a way to get the media to record what is happening. Batman is able to present evidence that his son is actually alive. However, before he can present evidence that Luthor was behind this framing, Luthor's bots take back control of the media, and destroy the rest of Batman's evidence. Luthor's bots use fake evidence to convince the people that Luthor saved his own son from being kidnapped by Batman. These bots also have the ability to mind control people.

These bots are controlled by nano-implants inside Luthor, and the heroes realize that the only way to stop these propaganda bots is by killing Luthor. The reason why Luthor had full control was because this Kryptonian tech was a prototype, and only one was available, so Luthor only entrusted it to himself, as he did not want others to mind control him. If they do not stop him soon, this mind control will

permanently spread into people's minds, and even if Luthor dies, the bots will still mind control people. Luthor turns the cameras on Superman and himself.

Superman is forced into a hard position: he has to kill Lex Luthor to stop his rampage, but then the public would think Superman killed their hero. Batman realizes that he has to show Superman as a sign of hope, and the public mind has just recently shifted into thinking that Superman was a hero. Only either Batman or Superman can stop the villain. Thus, on public TV, Batman kills Lex Luthor, reinforcing Luthor's lie that Batman is evil. Batman thinks this is worth the sacrifice: the dark knight will fall, and humanity's hope will take his place.

However, Luthor has a backup plan. Upon his death, his last will is to have his conglomerate into a super monster the size of a city that threatens to destroy the entire world. Luthor did not use this act as it would require draining his entire life, and would also put the entire world in danger, which Luthor wants to avoid as he truly wants to help humanity, but distrusts Superman. Luthor knows that only Superman can stop this machine. Yet there is a catch- this machine is outfitted with all the Kryptonite that Luthor has left, and the only way to stop it is to reach into core, which is pure Kryptonite. Superman will die.

Knowing he has no other choice, Superman immediately flies into the monster's core and sacrifices himself. The cameras catch this moment, and Lois cries out. The monster is defeated, and now all of the fake beliefs from mind control is reversed before they can do permanent damage. But hysteria still makes people believe that Batman was the one who created the monster. The public now hunts down the dark knight, as they believe he is the one who killed their hero. Still, Batman knows that Superman's ideals are upheld, and that since his image is not tarnished, his hope will survive. He knows that those who truly align with Superman will seek to do the impossible, and this will force them to fight against LexCorp and learn the truth.

Batman is torn between revenge and justice, which are functionally very similar yet are done with different intents, and thus, cause different consequences. He is tied to his past, and thus is determined to stop the unjust crimes against innocents. The people of Gotham still need a protector. Thus, Batman chooses to return to Gotham under a new alter ego, as Bruce Wayne still needs to run it. He promises the late Superman that he will uphold the persistent belief that truth will be found, even if it seems impossible.

End scene has the Flash, who was inspired by Superman, finding shreds of evidence that suggest LexCorp was behind this whole act, giving hope that the truth will be revealed.

The other movies (WW, Aquaman and Flash) are not that connected to these 3 movies until Justice League.