[Template:About](/wiki/Template:About" \o "Template:About) [Template:Pp-semi-protected](/wiki/Template:Pp-semi-protected) [Template:Infobox comics character](/wiki/Template:Infobox_comics_character) **Superman** is a fictional [superhero](/wiki/Superhero) appearing in [American comic books](/wiki/American_comic_book) published by [DC Comics](/wiki/DC_Comics). The character was created by writer [Jerry Siegel](/wiki/Jerry_Siegel) and artist [Joe Shuster](/wiki/Joe_Shuster), high school students living in [Cleveland](/wiki/Cleveland), Ohio, in 1933. They sold Superman to Detective Comics, the future [DC Comics](/wiki/DC_Comics), in 1938. Superman debuted in [*Action Comics*](/wiki/Action_Comics) [#1](/wiki/Action_Comics_1) ([cover-dated](/wiki/Cover-date) June 1938) and subsequently appeared in various radio serials, [newspaper strips](/wiki/Comic_strip), television programs, films, and video games. With this success, Superman helped to create the superhero archetype and establish its primacy within the [American comic book](/wiki/American_comic_book).<ref name=TCS11/>

The [origin story of Superman](/wiki/Origin_of_Superman) relates that he was born **Kal-El** on the alien planet [Krypton](/wiki/Krypton_(planet)), before being rocketed to [Earth](/wiki/Earth) as an infant by his scientist father [Jor-El](/wiki/Jor-El), moments before Krypton's destruction. Discovered and adopted by [a Kansas farmer and his wife](/wiki/Ma_and_Pa_Kent), the child is raised as **Clark Kent** and imbued with a strong moral compass. Very early on he started to display various [superhuman](/wiki/Superhuman) [abilities](/wiki/Powers_and_abilities_of_Superman), which, upon reaching maturity, he resolved to use for the benefit of humanity through a secret "Superman" identity.

Superman resides and operates in the fictional American city of [Metropolis](/wiki/Metropolis_(comics)). As [Clark Kent](/wiki/Clark_Kent), he is a journalist for the [*Daily Planet*](/wiki/Daily_Planet), a Metropolis newspaper. Superman's love interest is generally [Lois Lane](/wiki/Lois_Lane), and his archenemy is [supervillain](/wiki/Supervillain) [Lex Luthor](/wiki/Lex_Luthor). He is typically a member of the [Justice League](/wiki/Justice_League) and close ally of [Batman](/wiki/Batman) and [Wonder Woman](/wiki/Wonder_Woman). Like other characters in the DC Universe, several [alternate versions](/wiki/Alternative_versions_of_Superman) of Superman have been depicted over the years.

Superman's appearance is distinctive and iconic; he usually wears a blue costume with a red-and-yellow [emblem](/wiki/Superman_logo) on the chest, consisting of the letter *S* in a shield shape, and a red [cape](/wiki/Cape).<ref name=TCS18/>[[1]](#cite_note-1)[[2]](#cite_note-2) This shield is used in many media to symbolize the character.[[3]](#cite_note-3) Superman is widely considered an [American](/wiki/United_States) [cultural icon](/wiki/Cultural_icon).<ref name=TCS11/>[[4]](#cite_note-4)[[5]](#cite_note-5)[[6]](#cite_note-6) He has fascinated scholars, with [cultural theorists](/wiki/Cultural_studies), commentators, and critics alike exploring the character's impact and role in the [United States](/wiki/United_States) and worldwide. The character's ownership has often been the subject of dispute, with Siegel and Shuster twice suing for the return of rights. The character has been [adapted extensively](/wiki/Superman_(franchise)) and portrayed in other forms of media as well, including films, television series, and video games. Several actors have portrayed Superman in major motion pictures and TV series. [Template:TOC limit](/wiki/Template:TOC_limit)

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## Publication history[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]

### Creation and conception[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]

[thumb|"](/wiki/File:Reign_of_the_Superman.jpg)[The Reign of the Superman](/wiki/The_Reign_of_the_Superman)" from Siegel's [fanzine](/wiki/Fanzine) (January 1933)|alt=Two-page spread titled "The Reign of the Superman". On the left page is a bald men, and along both pages is a futuristic town. In early 1933, [Cleveland](/wiki/Cleveland) high school student[[7]](#cite_note-7) Jerry Siegel wrote a short story, illustrated by his friend and classmate Joe Shuster, titled "[The Reign of the Superman](/wiki/The_Reign_of_the_Superman)", which Siegel self-published in his [fanzine](/wiki/Fanzine), *Science Fiction #3*. The titular character is a vagrant who gains vast psychic powers from an experimental drug and uses them maliciously for profit and amusement, only to lose them and become a vagrant again, ashamed that he will be remembered only as a villain.[[8]](#cite_note-8) In June 1933,<ref name=riccap92>[Template:Harvp](/wiki/Template:Harvp). "It was the night of Sunday, June 18, 1933."  
  
Many other sources, including court records, list the year as 1934. The cover to their first Superman comic - the one they submitted to Humor Publishing - is dated 1933.</ref> Siegel developed a new character, also named Superman, but now a heroic character, which Siegel felt would be more marketable.[[9]](#cite_note-9) This was a journalist named Clark Kent who pretended to be meek and mild-mannered but was secretly the mighty Superman. He was enamored with [Lois Lane](/wiki/Lois_Lane), but she scorned Clark Kent and was attracted to Superman, not knowing that Kent and Superman were the same person.[[10]](#cite_note-10) This early prototype of Superman was merely a strong human who had no superpowers, nor his familiar costume.[[11]](#cite_note-11)[[12]](#cite_note-12) Siegel shared his idea with Shuster and they hastily put together a comic story titled "The Superman" and submitted it to Humor Publishing in Chicago, which released three proto-comic books in 1933.[[13]](#cite_note-13)[[14]](#cite_note-14) Although the duo received an encouraging letter, Humor published no further comics.[[15]](#cite_note-15)[thumb|right|A rejected 1933 proposal by Siegel and Shuster.](/wiki/File:Siegel_Shuster_Superman_1933_concept.png)

Siegel believed publishers kept rejecting them because he and Shuster were young and unknown, so he looked for an established artist to replace Shuster.<ref name=riccap99>[Template:Harvp](/wiki/Template:Harvp): "Jerry was convinced, just as he was in those early pulp days, that you had to align yourself with someone famous to be famous yourself."</ref> When Siegel told Shuster what he was doing, Shuster reacted by burning their rejected Superman comic, sparing only the cover.[[16]](#cite_note-16) Siegel solicited multiple artists[[17]](#cite_note-17)<ref name=jonesp112-113>[Template:Harvp](/wiki/Template:Harvp)</ref> and in 1934 Russell Keaton,[[18]](#cite_note-18) who worked on the [*Buck Rogers*](/wiki/Buck_Rogers_(comic_strip)) comic strip, responded. In nine sample strips Keaton produced based on Siegel's treatment, the Superman character further evolves: In the distant future, when Earth is on the verge of exploding due to "giant cataclysms", the last surviving man sends his child back in time to the year 1935, where he is adopted by Sam and Molly Kent. The boy exhibits superhuman strength and bulletproof skin, and the Kents teach him to use his powers for good.[[19]](#cite_note-19)[[20]](#cite_note-20) However, the [newspaper syndicates](/wiki/Print_syndication) rejected their work and Keaton abandoned the project.<ref name=riccap102>[Template:Harvp](/wiki/Template:Harvp): "Jerry tried to sell this version to the syndicates, but no one was interested, so Keaton gave up."</ref>

Siegel and Shuster reconciled and continued developing Superman.[[21]](#cite_note-21) The character became an alien from the planet Krypton with the now-familiar costume: tight-fitting clothes with an "S" on the chest, over-shorts, and a cape.[[22]](#cite_note-22) Siegel and Shuster entered the comics field professionally in 1935, producing detective and adventure stories for the New York-based comic-book publisher [National Allied Publications](/wiki/National_Allied_Publications). Although National expressed interest in Superman,<ref name=riccap146>Letter quoted in [Template:Harvp](/wiki/Template:Harvp)</ref> Siegel and Shuster wanted to sell Superman as a [syndicated comic strip](/wiki/Print_syndication), believing syndication would give them more lucrative and stable work,<ref name=riccap46-47>[Template:Harvp](/wiki/Template:Harvp)</ref> but the newspaper syndicates all turned them down.<ref name=riccap134>[Template:Harvp](/wiki/Template:Harvp) "They submitted and resubmitted for several years."</ref> [Max Gaines](/wiki/Max_Gaines), who worked at [McClure Newspaper Syndicate](/wiki/McClure_Newspaper_Syndicate), suggested they show their work to Detective Comics (which had recently bought out National Allied).[[23]](#cite_note-23) Siegel recalled, [Template:Quote](/wiki/Template:Quote)

In March 1938, Siegel and Shuster sold all rights to the character to Detective Comics, Inc.<ref name=gcd-action1>[*Action Comics* #1 (June 1938)](http://www.comics.org/issue/293/) at the [Grand Comics Database](/wiki/Grand_Comics_Database).</ref> for $130 (the equivalent of $[Template:Inflation](/wiki/Template:Inflation) when adjusted for inflation).[[24]](#cite_note-24)[[25]](#cite_note-25)

### Publication[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Action_Comics_1.jpg)[*Action Comics*](/wiki/Action_Comics) #1 (June 1938), the debut of Superman; cover art by Joe Shuster Superman debuted as the cover feature of the anthology [*Action Comics* #1](/wiki/Action_Comics_1) ([cover-dated](/wiki/Cover-date) June 1938, published April 18, 1938).[[26]](#cite_note-26) The series was an immediate success,[[27]](#cite_note-27) and reader feedback showed that Superman was responsible.[[28]](#cite_note-28) In June 1939, Detective Comics began a sister series, [*Superman*](/wiki/Superman_(comic_book)), dedicated exclusively to the character.[[29]](#cite_note-29) *Action Comics* eventually became dedicated to Superman stories, and both it and *Superman* have been published without interruption since 1938 (ignoring changes to the titles and numbering).<ref name=gcd-action1938>[*Action Comics*](http://www.comics.org/series/97/) at the Grand Comics Database.</ref><ref name=superman1939>[*Superman*](http://www.comics.org/series/116/) (1939-1986 series)] and [*Adventures of Superman*](http://www.comics.org/series/3345/) (1987 continuation of series) at the Grand Comics Database.</ref> A large number of other series and miniseries have been published as well.[[30]](#cite_note-30) Sales of *Action Comics* and *Superman* declined steadily from the 1950s onward,[[31]](#cite_note-31)[[32]](#cite_note-32) but rose again starting in 1987, peaking[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) in 1992 with the storyline "[The Death of Superman](/wiki/The_Death_of_Superman)". Superman has also appeared as a regular or semi-regular character in a number of superhero team series, such as [*Justice League of America*](/wiki/Justice_League_of_America) and [*World's Finest Comics*](/wiki/World's_Finest_Comics), and in spin-off series such as [*Supergirl*](/wiki/Supergirl_(comic_book)).

Beginning in January 1939, a *Superman* daily comic strip appeared in newspapers, syndicated through the [McClure Syndicate](/wiki/McClure_Syndicate). A color Sunday version was added that November. The Sunday strips had a narrative continuity separate from the daily strips, possibly because Siegel had to delegate the Sunday strips to [ghostwriters](/wiki/Ghostwriter).[[33]](#cite_note-33) Shuster drew the early strips, then passed the job to [Wayne Boring](/wiki/Wayne_Boring).[[34]](#cite_note-34) From 1949 to 1956, the newspaper strips were drawn by [Win Mortimer](/wiki/Win_Mortimer).[[35]](#cite_note-35) The strip ended in May 1966, but was revived from 1977 to 1983 to coincide with a series of movies released by Warner Bros.[[36]](#cite_note-36) Siegel wrote most of the comic-book and daily newspaper stories until he was conscripted in 1943.[[37]](#cite_note-37) Shuster drew most of the art at first, but as his eyesight deteriorated, he outsourced the work to [ghost-artists](/wiki/Ghostwriter).[[38]](#cite_note-38) While Siegel was serving in Hawaii, Detective Comics introduced a child version of Superman called "[Superboy](/wiki/Superboy)", based on a concept Siegel had submitted several years before. Siegel was furious because Detective did this without having bought the character.[[39]](#cite_note-39) After Siegel's discharge from the Army, he and Shuster sued Detective (by then known as National Comics Publications)[[40]](#cite_note-40) for the rights to Superman and Superboy. After settling out-of-court for the rights to both characters, National fired the two creators.[[41]](#cite_note-41) Siegel was re-hired in 1957 but dismissed again in 1969 after he and Shuster filed a second lawsuit.<ref name=Ricca2014>[Template:Harvp](/wiki/Template:Harvp)</ref> In 1975, following a public outcry against poor treatment of comic creators, [Warner Communications](/wiki/Warner_Communications), which had bought National, agreed to insert the byline "Superman created by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster" into every Superman publication and production.[[42]](#cite_note-42) In 2001, National, now known as DC Comics, agreed to add the line "By Special Arrangement with the Jerry Siegel Family" as part of a deal with the late Siegel's heirs to retain the rights to Superman.[[43]](#cite_note-43)

### Influences[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]

[thumb|Like Superman,](/wiki/File:Princess_of_Mars.jpg) [John Carter of Mars](/wiki/John_Carter_of_Mars) is a stranger from another world who is stronger than the natives of his adopted home. Siegel and Shuster were avid readers of [pulp science-fiction and adventure magazines](/wiki/Pulp_magazine), and many stories featured characters with extraordinary powers such as telepathy, clairvoyance, and superhuman strength. A major influence was [Edgar Rice Burroughs'](/wiki/Edgar_Rice_Burroughs) [John Carter of Mars](/wiki/John_Carter_of_Mars), a human who was displaced to Mars, where he is stronger and more agile than the native Martians due to Mars' lower gravity.[[44]](#cite_note-44) While it is widely assumed that the 1930 [Philip Wylie](/wiki/Philip_Wylie) novel [*Gladiator*](/wiki/Gladiator_(novel)), featuring a protagonist, [Hugo Danner](/wiki/Hugo_Danner), with similar powers, was an inspiration for Superman,[[45]](#cite_note-45)[[46]](#cite_note-46) Siegel denied this.[[47]](#cite_note-47) Siegel and Shuster were also avid moviegoers.<ref name=Andrae1983>[Template:Harvp](/wiki/Template:Harvp)</ref> Shuster based Superman's stance on that of [Douglas Fairbanks](/wiki/Douglas_Fairbanks), who starred in adventure films such as [*The Mark of Zorro*](/wiki/The_Mark_of_Zorro_(1920_film)) and [*Robin Hood*](/wiki/Robin_Hood_(1922_film)).[[48]](#cite_note-48) The name of Superman's home city, Metropolis, was taken from the [1927 film of the same name](/wiki/Metropolis_(1927_film)).<ref name=Andrae1983/> [Popeye](/wiki/Popeye) cartoons were also an influence.<ref name=dannyboy>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>

The pair collected comic strips in their youth, with a favorite being [Winsor McCay's](/wiki/Winsor_McCay) fantastical [*Little Nemo*](/wiki/Little_Nemo).<ref name=Andrae1983/> Shuster remarked on the artists which played an important part in the development of his own style: "[Alex Raymond](/wiki/Alex_Raymond) and [Burne Hogarth](/wiki/Burne_Hogarth) were my idols – also [Milt Caniff](/wiki/Milt_Caniff), [Hal Foster](/wiki/Hal_Foster), and [Roy Crane](/wiki/Roy_Crane)."<ref name=Andrae1983/> Shuster taught himself to draw by tracing over the art in the strips and magazines they collected.<ref name=Ricca2014/>

As a boy, Shuster was obsessed with fitness culture[[49]](#cite_note-49) and a fan of [strongmen](/wiki/Strongman_(strength_athlete)) such as [Siegmund Breitbart](/wiki/Siegmund_Breitbart) and [Joseph Greenstein](/wiki/Joseph_Greenstein). He collected fitness magazines and manuals and used their photographs as visual references for his art.<ref name=Ricca2014/>

The visual design of Superman came from multiple influences. The tight-fitting suit and shorts were inspired by the costumes of wrestlers, boxers, and [strongmen](/wiki/Strongman_(strength_athlete)). Shuster first gave Superman laced sandals like those of strongmen and classical heroes.[[50]](#cite_note-50) The emblem on his chest may have been inspired by the uniforms of athletic teams. Many pulp action heroes such as swashbucklers wore capes. Superman's face was based on [Johnny Weissmuller's](/wiki/Johnny_Weissmuller).<ref name=Ricca2014/>

The word "superman" was commonly used in the 1920s and 1930s to describe men of great ability, most often athletes and politicians.<ref name=Ricca2014/> It is unclear whether Siegel and Shuster were influenced by [Nietzsche's](/wiki/Friedrich_Nietzsche) concept of the [Übermensch](/wiki/Übermensch);[[51]](#cite_note-51) they never acknowledged as much.[[52]](#cite_note-52)

### Copyright and ownership issues[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) In 1947, Siegel and Shuster sued Detective Comics for the rights to Superman and [Superboy](/wiki/Superboy). The judge ruled that the March 1938 sale of Superman was binding, but that Superboy was a separate entity that rightfully belonged to Siegel because Detective published Siegel's Superboy script without having made a deal. Siegel and Shuster settled out-of-court with Detective, which paid the pair $94,000 ($[Template:Inflation](/wiki/Template:Inflation) when adjusted for inflation) in exchange for the full rights to both Superman and Superboy.<ref name=Sergi2015>[Template:Harvp](/wiki/Template:Harvp)</ref>

In 1969, Siegel and Shuster attempted to regain rights to Superman using the renewal option in the [Copyright Act of 1909](/wiki/Copyright_Act_of_1909), but the court ruled Siegel and Shuster had transferred the renewal rights to Detective Comics in 1938. Siegel and Shuster appealed, but the appeals court upheld this decision.

In 1975, Siegel and a number of other comic book writers and artists launched a public campaign for better compensation and treatment of comic creators. Warner Brothers agreed to give Siegel and Shuster a yearly stipend, full medical benefits, and credit their names in all future Superman stories in exchange for never contesting ownership of Superman. Siegel and Shuster upheld this bargain.<ref name=Ricca2014/>

Shuster died in 1992. DC Comics offered Shuster's heirs a stipend in exchange for never challenging ownership of Superman, which they accepted for some years.<ref name=Sergi2015/>

Siegel died in 1996. His heirs attempted to take the rights to Superman using the termination provision of the [Copyright Act of 1976](/wiki/Copyright_Act_of_1976). DC Comics negotiated an agreement wherein it would pay the Siegel heirs several million dollars and a yearly stipend of $500,000 in exchange for permanently granting DC the rights to Superman. The Siegels accepted DC's offer in an October 2001 letter.<ref name=Sergi2015/>

Copyright lawyer and movie producer [Marc Toberoff](/wiki/Marc_Toberoff) then struck a deal with the heirs of both Siegel and Shuster to help them get the rights to Superman in exchange for signing the rights over to his production company, Pacific Pictures. Both groups accepted. The Siegel heirs called off their deal with DC Comics and in 2004 sued DC for the rights to Superman and Superboy. In 2008, the judge ruled in favor of the Siegels. DC Comics appealed the decision, and the appeals court ruled in favored of DC, arguing that the October 2001 letter was binding. In 2003, the Shuster heirs served a termination notice for Shuster's grant of his half of the copyright to Superman. DC Comics sued the Shuster heirs in 2010, and the court ruled in DC's favor on the grounds that the 1992 agreement with the Shuster heirs barred them from terminating the grant.<ref name=Sergi2015/>

Superman is due to enter the public domain in 2033.<ref name=Sergi2015/> However, this would only apply to the character as originally copyrighted in 1938, and [trademarks](/wiki/Trademark) on various aspects of the character can continue to be, in theory, renewed indefinitely.[[53]](#cite_note-53)

#### Copyright infringement lawsuits[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]

Shortly after Superman became a profitable item, imitations began to appear in competing comic strips and unauthorized character merchandise. Among the many Superman litigations have been [Superman v. Wonderman](/wiki/Superman_v._Wonderman), [Superman v. Captain Marvel](/wiki/Superman_v._Captain_Marvel), and [Superman v. The Greatest American Hero](/wiki/Superman_v._The_Greatest_American_Hero).

## Fictional character biography[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=7)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also)

Given the serial nature of comic-book publishing and the length of Superman's existence, the details of the character's origin, relationships, and abilities have changed significantly through the years.[[54]](#cite_note-54) DC Comics editors have explained many of these differences by establishing that there are different versions of Superman existing in [parallel universes](/wiki/Parallel_universe_(fiction)).[[55]](#cite_note-55) The [first Superman](/wiki/Superman_(Earth-Two)) of the 1930s-1940s [Golden Age of Comic Books](/wiki/Golden_Age_of_Comic_Books) is not the same entity as the [second Superman](/wiki/Superman_(Earth-One)) publishing later; these incarnations exist on alternate versions of Earth, called [Earth-Two](/wiki/Earth-Two) and [Earth-One](/wiki/Earth-One), respectively.[[55]](#cite_note-55) The Superman of late-2000s [continuity](/wiki/Continuity_(fiction)) exists in the [main DC Universe](/wiki/DC_Universe), referred to as "New-Earth" in the comics.[[55]](#cite_note-55) Many biographical details remain similar. In *Action Comics* #1 (June 1938), Superman is born on an alien world to a technologically advanced species that resembles humans. When his world is on the verge of destruction, his father, a scientist, places the infant alone in a spaceship that takes him to Earth. The earliest newspaper strips name the planet "Krypton", with baby Superman "Kal-L", and his biological parents "Jor-L" and "Lora";[[56]](#cite_note-56) Their names become "Jor-el", and "Lara" in a 1942 spinoff novel by George Lowther.[[57]](#cite_note-57) The ship lands in the American countryside, where the baby is adopted by the [Kents](/wiki/Ma_and_Pa_Kent). In the original stories, they adopt him from an orphanage,[[58]](#cite_note-58) whereas in later stories they lift him straight from his spaceship. The Kents name the boy Clark and raise him in a farming community. A 1947 episode of the radio serial places the then-unnamed community in Iowa,[[59]](#cite_note-59) and it is named [Smallville](/wiki/Smallville_(comics)) in *Superboy* #2 (June 1949). While *New Adventures of Superboy* #22 (Oct. 1981) places it in Maryland, most fictional sources, including both the [1978 Superman movie](/wiki/Superman_(1978_film)) and 2013's [*Man of Steel*](/wiki/Man_of_Steel_(2013_film)) place it in Kansas.[[60]](#cite_note-60) The Kents teach Clark he must conceal his otherworldly origins and use his fantastic powers to do good. Clark creates the costumed identity of Superman so as to protect his personal privacy and the safety of his loved ones. As Clark Kent, he wears eyeglasses to disguise his face and wears his Superman costume underneath his clothes so that he can change at a moment's notice. To complete this disguise, Clark avoids violent confrontation, preferring to slip away and change into Superman when danger arises, and in early stories suffered occasional ridicule for his apparent cowardice.

Writers developed Superman's powers gradually. Since the beginning, he has had superhuman strength and nigh-invulnerability. In the earliest comics, Superman travels by running and leaping; his power of flight was introduced in the 1940s animated serial produced by [Fleischer Studios](/wiki/Fleischer_Studios), after test footage of Superman leaping looked "silly".<ref name=Fleischer1>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> X-ray vision is introduced in *Action Comics* #11 (April 1939) and heat vision in *Superman* #59 (Aug. 1949).

Siegel understood that Superman's invulnerability diminished his excitement as an action hero, and so wrote a story introducing "K-metal", whose radiation harms Superman. This draft was never published, but the writers of the radio serial took inspiration and introduced the green mineral [kryptonite](/wiki/Kryptonite) in a 1943 episode.[[61]](#cite_note-61) Additionally, DC editor [Dorothy Woolfolk](/wiki/Dorothy_Woolfolk) recalled that in the 1940s she had found Superman's invulnerability dull, and that the character might be more interesting with an [Achilles' heel](/wiki/Achilles'_heel) such as adverse reactions to a fragment of his home planet.[[62]](#cite_note-62) It first appeared in comics in the story "Superman Returns To Krypton!", credited to writer [Bill Finger](/wiki/Bill_Finger), in *Superman* #61 (Dec. 1949).[[63]](#cite_note-63) Clark works as a newspaper journalist. In the earliest stories, he is employed by *The Daily Star*, but in *Action Comics* #23 (April 1940), this is changed to the [*Daily Planet*](/wiki/Daily_Planet).[[64]](#cite_note-64) *Action Comics* #1 introduced Clark's colleague [Lois Lane](/wiki/Lois_Lane). Clark is romantically attracted to her, but she rejects the mild-mannered Clark and is infatuated with the bold and mighty Superman. This love triangle has existed since the character's inception in 1933 and is present in most Superman stories. Jerry Siegel objected to any proposal that Lois discover that Clark is Superman because he felt that, as implausible as Clark's disguise is, the love triangle was too important to the book's appeal.[[65]](#cite_note-65) For decades in comic stories, Lois suspects Clark is Superman and tries to prove it, but Superman always outwits her; the first such story was *Superman* #17 (August 1942).[[66]](#cite_note-66)[[67]](#cite_note-67) The 1980s saw revisions to Superman's biography when DC Comics, [in a bid to simplify its line](/wiki/Crisis_on_Infinite_Earths), rewrote many of its characters' [backstories](/wiki/Back_story). In the six-issue miniseries *The Man of Steel* (Oct.-Dec. 1986), writer-artist [John Byrne](/wiki/John_Byrne_(comics)) removed many established conventions and characters from the Superman canon, including Supergirl as well as Krypto the super dog. He also reestablished Superman's adoptive parents, the Kents,[[68]](#cite_note-68) who in the previous continuity had died early in Clark's life, at about the time he graduated [high school](/wiki/High_school). This new version [Template:Quote](/wiki/Template:Quote) Superman, Byrne explained in 1995, "had become trapped by the ridiculously high level of his own power. It was hard to imagine ever being truly impressed by anything Superman did, since he could push planets around. (What twigged me to this, by the way, was the scene in the [1978] movie in which he rips off the car door to get to Lois; after seeing him push over mountains, the audience cheered at *that*, because it was *comprehensible*.)"[[69]](#cite_note-69) In *Action Comics* #662 (Feb. 1991), in a story by writer [Roger Stern](/wiki/Roger_Stern) and artist [Bob McLeod](/wiki/Bob_McLeod_(comics)), Lois definitively learns of Clark's dual identity,[[70]](#cite_note-70) a status quo that would exist for two decades and was reflected in a 1995 episode of the TV series [*Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman*](/wiki/Lois_&_Clark:_The_New_Adventures_of_Superman).<ref name=HollywoodReporterLoisLane>[Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref> Both in that series and in a 1996 comic-book story, Clark and Lois marry.[[71]](#cite_note-71) While writers through the years had visited the concept of Superman dying, the most far-reaching such story arc was the 1990s "[The Death of Superman](/wiki/The_Death_of_Superman)" company-wide crossover, in which Superman was presumably killed by the villain [Doomsday](/wiki/Doomsday_(comics)) in *Superman* #75 (Jan. 1993).<ref name=danielsp218>[Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)</ref>[[72]](#cite_note-72) Although the character was resurrected in *Superman* #82 (Oct. 1993)[[73]](#cite_note-73) — following stories in several DC publications focusing on the funeral and mourning, and the arrival of four Superman substitutes[[74]](#cite_note-74)[[75]](#cite_note-75) — the death became national news,[[76]](#cite_note-76)[[77]](#cite_note-77)[[78]](#cite_note-78) and the comic itself, including reprint editions, sold what historian [Les Daniels](/wiki/Les_Daniels) calls "an astonishing six million copies."</s>[[79]](#cite_note-79) As Superman's editor at the time, [Mike Carlin](/wiki/Mike_Carlin), recalled, "We were stunned. I can't believe people went for it as hard as they did. It must have been the way [Orson Welles](/wiki/Orson_Welles) felt when his [*War of the Worlds*](/wiki/War_of_the_Worlds_(radio)) actually went over. ... There is no way anybody could have planned what happened. All we could do was try to keep up with it."[[80]](#cite_note-80) In 2011, DC Comics relaunched its entire line of comic books under the rubric [The New 52](/wiki/The_New_52). In the new continuity, Clark is not married to Lois and his parents are dead at the hands of a drunk driver.[[81]](#cite_note-81) In *Superman* vol. 2, #43 (Oct. 2015), Superman's identity is exposed to the whole world.[[82]](#cite_note-82)[[83]](#cite_note-83)[[84]](#cite_note-84) In May 2015, an alternate, earlier version of Superman was introduced in the series *Superman: Lois and Clark*[[85]](#cite_note-85) and for a time Earth had two superheroes each called Superman. The alternate-universe version remained on Earth after the other one died in *Superman* vol. 2, #52 (May 25, 2016).

### Age and birthday[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=8)]

Superman's age has varied through his history in comics. His age was originally left undefined, with real-time references to specific years sometimes given to past events in Golden Age and early Silver Age comics. In comics published between the early 1970s and early 1990s, his age was usually cited as 29 years old.[[86]](#cite_note-86) However, during "[The Death of Superman](/wiki/The_Death_of_Superman)" storyline, Clark's age was given as 34 years old (in a fictional promotional newspaper published), while 1994's "[Zero Hour](/wiki/Zero_Hour_(comics))" timeline established his age as 35.

*Action Comics* #149 (Oct. 1950) gives October as Superman's birthdate. Comics of the 1960s through 1980s describe Superman's birthday as February 29.[[87]](#cite_note-87) Clark Kent, meanwhile, would celebrate his birthday on June 18, the date the Kents first found Clark; June 18 is also the birthdate of Superman voice actor [Bud Collyer](/wiki/Bud_Collyer).[[88]](#cite_note-88) Following the 1980s editorial-revamp DC called [*Crisis on Infinite Earths*](/wiki/Crisis_on_Infinite_Earths), Kent's birthday is given as February 29.[[89]](#cite_note-89) [*Superman: Secret Origin*](/wiki/Superman:_Secret_Origin) #1 (Nov. 2009) depicts Kent celebrating his birthday on December 1.

### Personality[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=9)]

In the original Siegel and Shuster stories, Superman's personality is rough and aggressive. The character often attacks and terrorizes [wife beaters](/wiki/Domestic_violence), profiteers, [lynch mobs](/wiki/Lynch_mob), and gangsters in a rough manner and with a looser moral code than audiences today might be used to.[[90]](#cite_note-90) Although not as ruthless as the early [Batman](/wiki/Batman), Superman in the comics of the 1930s is unconcerned about the harm his strength may cause. He tosses villainous characters in such a manner that fatalities would presumably occur, although these are seldom shown explicitly on the page. This came to an end in late 1940 when new editor [Whitney Ellsworth](/wiki/Whitney_Ellsworth) instituted a code of conduct for his characters to follow, banning Superman from ever killing.[[91]](#cite_note-91) The character was softened and given a sense of [humanitarianism](/wiki/Humanitarianism). Ellsworth's code, however, is not to be confused with "[the Comics Code](/wiki/Comics_Code_Authority)", which was created in 1954 by the [Comics Code Authority](/wiki/Comics_Code_Authority) and ultimately abandoned by every major comic book publisher by the early 21st century.[[92]](#cite_note-92) In his first appearances, Superman was considered a vigilante by the authorities, being fired upon by the National Guard as he razed a slum so that the government would create better housing conditions for the poor. By 1942, however, Superman was working side-by-side with the police.[[93]](#cite_note-93)[[94]](#cite_note-94) Today, Superman is commonly seen as a brave and kind-hearted hero with a strong sense of justice, morality, and righteousness. He adheres to an unwavering moral code instilled in him by his adoptive parents.[[95]](#cite_note-95) His commitment to operating within the law has been an example to many citizens and other heroes but has stirred resentment and criticism among others, who refer to him as the "big blue boy scout." Superman can be rather rigid in this trait, causing tensions in the superhero community.[[96]](#cite_note-96) This was most notable with [Wonder Woman](/wiki/Wonder_Woman), one of his closest friends, after she killed [Maxwell Lord](/wiki/Maxwell_Lord).[[96]](#cite_note-96) [Booster Gold](/wiki/Booster_Gold) had an initial icy relationship with the Man of Steel but grew to respect him.[[97]](#cite_note-97) Having lost his home world of Krypton, Superman is very protective of Earth, and especially of Clark Kent's family and friends. This same loss, combined with the pressure of using his powers responsibly, has caused Superman to feel [lonely](/wiki/Loneliness) on Earth, despite having his friends and parents. Previous encounters with people he thought to be fellow Kryptonians, [Power Girl](/wiki/Power_Girl)[[98]](#cite_note-98) (who is, in fact from the Krypton of the [Earth-Two](/wiki/Earth-Two) universe) and [Mon-El](/wiki/Mon-El),[[99]](#cite_note-99) have led to disappointment. The arrival of [Supergirl](/wiki/Supergirl_(Kara_Zor-El)), who has been confirmed to be not only from Krypton but also his cousin, has relieved this loneliness somewhat.[[100]](#cite_note-100) Superman's [Fortress of Solitude](/wiki/Fortress_of_Solitude) acts as a place of [solace](/wiki/Solace) for him in times of loneliness and despair.[[55]](#cite_note-55) In *Superman/Batman* #3 (Dec. 2003), [Batman](/wiki/Batman), under writer [Jeph Loeb](/wiki/Jeph_Loeb), observes, "It is a remarkable dichotomy. In many ways, Clark is the most human of us all. Then ... he shoots fire from the skies, and it is difficult not to think of him as a god. And how fortunate we all are that it does not occur to 'him'." In writer [Geoff Johns'](/wiki/Geoff_Johns) [*Infinite Crisis*](/wiki/Infinite_Crisis) #1 (Dec. 2005), part of the 2005–2006 "Infinite Crisis" crossover storyline, Batman admonishes him for identifying with humanity too much and failing to provide the strong leadership that superhumans need.

### Other versions[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=10)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) Both the multiverse established by the publishers in the 1960s and the [Elseworlds](/wiki/Elseworlds) line of comics established in 1989 have allowed writers to introduce variations on Superman. These have included differences in the nationality, race and morality of the character. Alongside such reimaginings, a number of characters have assumed the title of Superman, especially in the wake of "[The Death of Superman](/wiki/The_Death_of_Superman)" storyline, wherein four newly introduced characters are seen to claim the mantle.[[101]](#cite_note-101) In addition to these, the [Bizarro](/wiki/Bizarro) character created in 1958 is a weird, imperfect duplicate of Superman.[[102]](#cite_note-102) Other members of Superman's family of characters have borne the *Super-* prefix, including [Supergirl](/wiki/Supergirl), [Krypto the Superdog](/wiki/Krypto), and [Superwoman](/wiki/Superwoman). Outside comics published by DC, the notoriety of the Superman or "[Übermensch](/wiki/Übermensch)" [archetype](/wiki/Archetype) makes the character a popular figure to be represented through an analogue in entirely unrelated continuities. For example, [Roy Thomas](/wiki/Roy_Thomas) based rival publisher [Marvel Comics'](/wiki/Marvel_Comics) [Hyperion](/wiki/Hyperion_(comics)) character on Superman.[[103]](#cite_note-103)[[104]](#cite_note-104)[[105]](#cite_note-105)[[106]](#cite_note-106)

## Powers and abilities[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=11)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) As an influential archetype of the superhero genre, Superman possesses extraordinary powers, with the character traditionally described as "Faster than a speeding bullet. More powerful than a locomotive. Able to leap tall buildings in a single bound ... It's Superman!",[[107]](#cite_note-107) a phrase coined by Jay Morton and first used in the *Superman* radio serials and [Max Fleischer](/wiki/Max_Fleischer) animated shorts of the 1940s[[108]](#cite_note-108) as well as the TV series of the 1950s. For most of his existence, Superman's famous arsenal of powers has included [flight](/wiki/Flight), [super-strength](/wiki/Superhuman_strength), [invulnerability](/wiki/Invulnerability) to non-magical attacks, [super-speed](/wiki/List_of_comic_book_superpowers#Superhuman_speed), vision powers (including [x-ray](/wiki/X-ray_vision), [heat](/wiki/Energy_blast)-emitting, telescopic, infra-red, and microscopic vision), super-hearing, super-intelligence, and super-breath, which enables him to blow out air at freezing temperatures, as well as exert the propulsive force of high-speed winds.[[109]](#cite_note-109) As originally conceived and presented in his early stories, Superman's powers were relatively limited, consisting of superhuman strength that allowed him to lift a car over his head, run at amazing speeds and leap one-eighth of a mile, as well as an incredibly dense body structure that could be pierced by nothing less than an exploding artillery shell.[[109]](#cite_note-109) Siegel and Shuster compared his strength and leaping abilities to an ant and a grasshopper.[[110]](#cite_note-110) When making the [Superman cartoons](/wiki/Superman_(1940s_cartoons)) in the early 1940s, the [Fleischer Brothers](/wiki/Fleischer_Brothers) found it difficult to keep animating him leaping and requested to DC to change his ability to flying; this was an especially convenient concept for short films, which would have otherwise had to waste precious running time moving earthbound Clark Kent from place to place.[[111]](#cite_note-111) Writers gradually increased his powers to larger extents during the [Silver Age](/wiki/Silver_Age_of_Comic_Books), in which Superman could fly to other worlds and galaxies and even across universes with relative ease.[[109]](#cite_note-109) He would often fly across the solar system to stop meteors from hitting the Earth or sometimes just to clear his head. Writers found it increasingly difficult to write Superman stories in which the character was believably challenged,[[112]](#cite_note-112) so DC made a series of attempts to rein the character in. The most significant attempt, [John Byrne's](/wiki/John_Byrne_(comics)) 1986 rewrite, established several hard limits on his abilities: He barely survives a nuclear blast, and his space flights are limited by how long he can hold his breath.[[113]](#cite_note-113) Superman's power levels have again increased since then, with Superman eventually possessing enough strength to hurl mountains, withstand nuclear blasts with ease, fly into the sun unharmed, and survive in the vacuum of outer space without oxygen.

The source of Superman's powers has changed subtly over the course of his history. It was originally stated that Superman's abilities derived from his Kryptonian heritage, which made him eons more evolved than humans.[[91]](#cite_note-91) This was soon amended, with the source for the powers now based upon the establishment of Krypton's gravity as having been stronger than that of the Earth. This situation mirrors that of [Edgar Rice Burroughs'](/wiki/Edgar_Rice_Burroughs) [John Carter](/wiki/John_Carter_of_Mars). As Superman's powers increased, the implication that all Kryptonians had possessed the same abilities became problematic for writers, making it doubtful that a race of such beings could have been wiped out by something as trifling as an exploding planet. In part to counter this, the Superman writers established that Kryptonians, whose native star [Rao](/wiki/Rao_(comics)) had been red, possessed superpowers only under the light of a yellow sun.<ref name=nationalgeographic>[Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref>

Superman is most vulnerable to green [Kryptonite](/wiki/Kryptonite), mineral debris from [Krypton](/wiki/Krypton_(planet)) transformed into radioactive material by the forces that destroyed the planet. Exposure to green Kryptonite radiation nullifies Superman's powers and immobilizes him with pain and nausea; prolonged exposure will eventually kill him. The only substance on Earth that can protect him from Kryptonite is lead, which blocks the radiation. Lead is also the only known substance that Superman cannot see through with his x-ray vision. Kryptonite was introduced in 1943 as a [plot device](/wiki/Plot_device) to allow the radio-serial voice actor, [Bud Collyer](/wiki/Bud_Collyer), to take some time off.[[54]](#cite_note-54) Although green Kryptonite is the most commonly seen form, writers have introduced other forms over the years: such as red, gold, blue, white, and black, each with its own effect.[[114]](#cite_note-114)

## Supporting characters[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=12)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [Clark Kent](/wiki/Clark_Kent), Superman's [secret identity](/wiki/Secret_identity), was based partly on [Harold Lloyd](/wiki/Harold_Lloyd) and named after [Clark Gable](/wiki/Clark_Gable) and [Kent Taylor](/wiki/Kent_Taylor).<ref name=BookTimes>[Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref><ref name=autogenerated1>[Roger Stern](/wiki/Roger_Stern). *Superman: Sunday Classics: 1939–1943* DC Comics/[Kitchen Sink Press, Inc.](/wiki/Kitchen_Sink_Press,_Inc.)/[Sterling Publishing](/wiki/Sterling_Publishing); 2006; Page xii</ref> Creators have discussed the idea of whether Superman pretends to be Clark Kent or vice versa, and at differing times in the publication either approach has been adopted.[[115]](#cite_note-115)[[116]](#cite_note-116) Although typically a newspaper reporter, during the 1970s the character left the [*Daily Planet*](/wiki/Daily_Planet) for a time to work for television,[[116]](#cite_note-116) whilst the 1980s revamp by John Byrne saw the character become somewhat more aggressive.[[113]](#cite_note-113) This aggressiveness has since faded with subsequent creators restoring the mild mannerisms traditional to the character.

### Allies[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=13)]

Superman's large cast of supporting characters includes [Lois Lane](/wiki/Lois_Lane), perhaps the character most commonly associated with Superman, being portrayed at different times as his colleague, competitor, love interest and wife. Other main supporting characters include [*Daily Planet*](/wiki/Daily_Planet) coworkers such as photographer [Jimmy Olsen](/wiki/Jimmy_Olsen) and editor [Perry White](/wiki/Perry_White), Clark Kent's adoptive parents [Jonathan and Martha Kent](/wiki/Ma_and_Pa_Kent), childhood sweetheart [Lana Lang](/wiki/Lana_Lang) and best friend [Pete Ross](/wiki/Pete_Ross), associates like [Professor Hamilton](/wiki/Professor_Hamilton) and [John Henry Irons](/wiki/Steel_(John_Henry_Irons)) who often provide scientific advice and tech support, and former college love interest [Lori Lemaris](/wiki/Lori_Lemaris) (a [mermaid](/wiki/Mermaid)). Stories making reference to the possibility of Superman siring children have been featured both in and out of mainstream continuity.

Incarnations of [Supergirl](/wiki/Supergirl), [Krypto the Superdog](/wiki/Krypto), and Superboy have also been major characters in the mythos, as well as the [Justice League of America](/wiki/Justice_League) (of which Superman is usually a member and often its leader). A feature shared by several supporting characters is [alliterative](/wiki/Alliteration) names, especially with the initials "LL", including [Lex Luthor](/wiki/Lex_Luthor), Lois Lane, [Linda Lee](/wiki/Supergirl_(Kara_Zor-El)), Lana Lang, Lori Lemaris, and [Lucy Lane](/wiki/Lucy_Lane),[[117]](#cite_note-117) alliteration being common in early comics.

[thumb|200px|Various enemies of Superman, as they appear on the cover of *Superman Villains: Secret Files and Origins* #1 (June 1998, art by](/wiki/File:Superman's_Rogues.jpg) [Dan Jurgens](/wiki/Dan_Jurgens)). Team-ups with fellow comics icon [Batman](/wiki/Batman) are common, inspiring many stories over the years. When paired, they are often referred to as the "World's Finest" in a nod to the name of the comic book series that features many team-up stories. In 2003, DC began to publish a new series featuring the two characters titled [*Superman/Batman or Batman/Superman*](/wiki/Superman/Batman). In continuity following the DC Comic's [The New 52](/wiki/The_New_52) line-wide relaunch, Superman has also established a romantic relationship as well as a working partnership with Wonder Woman. An ongoing comic book series titled [*Superman/Wonder Woman*](/wiki/Superman/Wonder_Woman) debuted in 2013, which explores their relationship and shared adventures.

### Enemies[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=14)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) The villains Superman faced in the earliest stories were ordinary humans, such as gangsters, corrupt politicians, and violent husbands, but they soon grew more outlandish. The mad scientist [Ultra-Humanite](/wiki/Ultra-Humanite), introduced in *Action Comics* #13 (June 1939), was Superman's first recurring villain. The hero's best-known nemesis, [Lex Luthor](/wiki/Lex_Luthor), was introduced in *Action Comics* #23 (April 1940) and has been envisioned over the years as both a recluse with advanced weaponry to a power-mad billionaire.[[118]](#cite_note-118) In 1944, the magical imp [Mister Mxyzptlk](/wiki/Mister_Mxyzptlk), Superman's first recurring super-powered adversary, was introduced.[[119]](#cite_note-119) Superman's first alien villain, [Brainiac](/wiki/Brainiac_(comics)), debuted in *Action Comics* #242 (July 1958). The monstrous [Doomsday](/wiki/Doomsday_(comics)), introduced in [*Superman: The Man of Steel*](/wiki/Superman:_The_Man_of_Steel) #17-18 (Nov.-Dec. 1992), was the first villain to evidently kill Superman in physical combat. Other adversaries include the odd Superman-doppelgänger [Bizarro](/wiki/Bizarro), and the Kryptonian criminal [General Zod](/wiki/General_Zod).[[120]](#cite_note-120)

## Cultural impact[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=15)]

Superman has come to be seen as both an American cultural icon[[121]](#cite_note-121)[[122]](#cite_note-122) and the first comic book superhero. His adventures and popularity have established the character as an inspiring force within the public eye, with the character serving as inspiration for musicians, comedians and writers alike. Kryptonite, Brainiac and Bizarro have become synonymous in popular vernacular with [Achilles' heel](/wiki/Achilles'_heel), extreme intelligence[[123]](#cite_note-123) and reversed logic[[124]](#cite_note-124) respectively. Similarly, the phrase "I'm not Superman" or "you're not Superman" is an [idiom](/wiki/Idiom) used to suggest a lack of omnipotence.[[125]](#cite_note-125)[[126]](#cite_note-126)[[127]](#cite_note-127)

### Inspiring a market[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=16)]

The character's initial success led to similar characters being created.[[128]](#cite_note-128)[[129]](#cite_note-129) Batman was the first to follow, Bob Kane commenting to Vin Sullivan that given the "kind of money [Siegel and Shuster were earning with their superhero] you'll have one on Monday".[[130]](#cite_note-130) Victor Fox, an accountant for DC, also noticed the revenue such comics generated and commissioned [Will Eisner](/wiki/Will_Eisner) to create a [deliberately similar character](/wiki/Wonder_Man_(Fox_Publications)) to Superman. *Wonder Man* was published in May 1939, and although DC successfully sued, claiming [plagiarism](/wiki/Plagiarism),[[131]](#cite_note-131) Fox had decided to cease publishing the character. Fox later had more success with the [Blue Beetle](/wiki/Blue_Beetle). [Fawcett Comics'](/wiki/Fawcett_Comics) [Captain Marvel](/wiki/Captain_Marvel_(DC_Comics)), launched in 1940, was Superman's main rival for popularity throughout the 1940s and was again the subject of a lawsuit, which Fawcett eventually settled in 1953 by cessation of the publication of Captain Marvel-related works.[[132]](#cite_note-132) Superhero comics are now established as the dominant genre in American comic book publishing,[[133]](#cite_note-133) with many thousands of characters in the tradition having been created in the years since Superman's creation.[[134]](#cite_note-134)

### Merchandising[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=17)]

[thumb|upright|left|The "S" symbol became iconic.](/wiki/File:Superman_S_symbol.svg) Superman became popular very quickly, with an additional title, *Superman Quarterly*, rapidly added. In 1940 the character was represented in the annual [Macy's parade](/wiki/Macy's_parade) for the first time.[[135]](#cite_note-135) In fact Superman had become popular to the extent that in 1942, with sales of the character's three titles standing at a combined total of over 1.5 million, *Time* was reporting that "the Navy Department (had) ruled that Superman comic books should be included among essential supplies destined for the Marine garrison at Midway Islands."[[136]](#cite_note-136) The character was soon licensed by companies keen to cash in on this success through merchandising. The earliest paraphernalia appeared in 1939, a button proclaiming membership in the Supermen of America club. By 1940 the amount of merchandise available increased dramatically, with jigsaw puzzles, paper dolls, bubble gum and trading cards available, as well as wooden or metal figures. The popularity of such merchandise increased when Superman was licensed to appear in other media, and Les Daniels has written that this represents "the start of the process that media moguls of later decades would describe as 'synergy.'"[[137]](#cite_note-137) By the release of [*Superman Returns*](/wiki/Superman_Returns), [Warner Bros.](/wiki/Warner_Bros.) had arranged a cross promotion with [Burger King](/wiki/Burger_King),[[138]](#cite_note-138) and licensed many other products for sale.

Superman's appeal to licensees rests upon the character's continuing popularity, cross market appeal and the status of the "S" shield, the stylized magenta and gold "S" emblem Superman wears on his chest, as a fashion symbol.[[139]](#cite_note-139)[[140]](#cite_note-140) The "S" shield by itself is often used in media to symbolize the Superman character.[[141]](#cite_note-141)

### In other media[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=18)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) The character of Superman has appeared in various media aside from comic books, including radio and television series, [several films](/wiki/Superman_film_series), and [video games](/wiki/Video_games). The first adaptation was [a daily newspaper comic strip](/wiki/Superman_(comic_strip)), launched on January 16, 1939, and running through May 1966; Siegel and Shuster used the first strips to establish Superman's background, adding details such as the planet Krypton and Superman's father, [Jor-El](/wiki/Jor-El), concepts not yet established in the comic books.[[91]](#cite_note-91) Following on from the success of this was the first radio series, [*The Adventures of Superman*](/wiki/The_Adventures_of_Superman_(radio)), which premiered February 12, 1940, and featured the voice of [Bud Collyer](/wiki/Bud_Collyer) as Superman. Collyer was also cast as the voice of Superman in a series of 17 [*Superman* animated cartoons](/wiki/Superman_(1940s_cartoons)) produced by [Fleischer Studios](/wiki/Fleischer_Studios) and [Famous Studios](/wiki/Famous_Studios) for theatrical release in 1941–1943. In 1948, the [movie serial](/wiki/Movie_serial) [*Superman*](/wiki/Superman_(serial)) made [Kirk Alyn](/wiki/Kirk_Alyn) the first actor to portray the hero onscreen.

In 1951 came the television series [*Adventures of Superman*](/wiki/Adventures_of_Superman_(TV_series)) starring [George Reeves](/wiki/George_Reeves). Television series featuring Superman and Superboy would also debut in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. In 1966 came the [Broadway musical](/wiki/Broadway_musical) [*It's a Bird...It's a Plane...It's Superman*](/wiki/It's_a_Bird...It's_a_Plane...It's_Superman), remade for television in 1975. Also in 1966, Superman starred in the first of several animated television series [*The New Adventures of Superman*](/wiki/The_New_Adventures_of_Superman_(TV_series)). Superman returned to movie theaters in 1978 with director [Richard Donner's](/wiki/Richard_Donner) [*Superman*](/wiki/Superman_(1978_film)), starring [Christopher Reeve](/wiki/Christopher_Reeve), which spawned three sequels. In 2006, [Bryan Singer](/wiki/Bryan_Singer) directed the feature [*Superman Returns*](/wiki/Superman_Returns), starring [Brandon Routh](/wiki/Brandon_Routh). In 2013, director [Zack Snyder](/wiki/Zack_Snyder) rebooted the film franchise with [*Man of Steel*](/wiki/Man_of_Steel_(film)), starring [Henry Cavill](/wiki/Henry_Cavill). Snyder also directed its 2016 follow up film [*Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice*](/wiki/Batman_v_Superman:_Dawn_of_Justice), which featured Superman alongside [Batman](/wiki/Batman) and [Wonder Woman](/wiki/Wonder_Woman) for the first time in a live-action movie. Cavill will be reprising his role as Superman in the upcoming film [*Justice League Part One*](/wiki/Justice_League_Part_One). [Tyler Hoechlin](/wiki/Tyler_Hoechlin) is set to play Superman in the second season of the [*Supergirl*](/wiki/Supergirl_(TV_series)) TV series.[[142]](#cite_note-142)

### Musical references, parodies, and homages[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=19)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) Superman has also featured as an inspiration for musicians, with songs by numerous artists from several generations celebrating the character. [Donovan's](/wiki/Donovan) [*Billboard* Hot 100](/wiki/Billboard_Hot_100) topping single "[Sunshine Superman](/wiki/Sunshine_Superman)" utilized the character in both the title and the lyric, declaring "Superman and [Green Lantern](/wiki/Green_Lantern) ain't got nothing on me."[[143]](#cite_note-143) Folk singer/songwriter [Jim Croce](/wiki/Jim_Croce) sung about the character in a list of warnings in the chorus of his song "[You Don't Mess Around with Jim](/wiki/You_Don't_Mess_Around_with_Jim_(song))", introducing the phrase "you don't tug on Superman's cape" into popular lexicon.[[144]](#cite_note-144) Other tracks to reference the character include [Genesis'](/wiki/Genesis_(band)) "[Land of Confusion](/wiki/Land_of_Confusion)",[[145]](#cite_note-145) the video to which featured a [Spitting Image](/wiki/Spitting_Image) [puppet](/wiki/Puppet) of [Ronald Reagan](/wiki/Ronald_Reagan) dressed as Superman,[[146]](#cite_note-146) "[(Wish I Could Fly Like) Superman](/wiki/(Wish_I_Could_Fly_Like)_Superman)" by [The Kinks](/wiki/The_Kinks) on their 1979 album [*Low Budget*](/wiki/Low_Budget_(album)) and "Superman" by [The Clique](/wiki/The_Clique_(Texas_band)), a track later covered by [R.E.M.](/wiki/R.E.M.) on its 1986 album [*Lifes Rich Pageant*](/wiki/Lifes_Rich_Pageant). This cover is referenced by [Grant Morrison](/wiki/Grant_Morrison) in *Animal Man*, in which Superman meets the character, and the track comes on [Animal Man's](/wiki/Animal_Man) [Walkman](/wiki/Walkman) immediately after.[[147]](#cite_note-147) [Crash Test Dummies'](/wiki/Crash_Test_Dummies) "[Superman's Song](/wiki/Superman's_Song)", from the 1991 album [*The Ghosts That Haunt Me*](/wiki/The_Ghosts_That_Haunt_Me) explores the isolation and commitment inherent in Superman's life.[[148]](#cite_note-148) [Five for Fighting](/wiki/Five_for_Fighting) released "[Superman (It's Not Easy)](/wiki/Superman_(It's_Not_Easy))" in 2000, which is from Superman's point of view, although Superman is never mentioned by name.[[149]](#cite_note-149) From 1988 to 1993, American composer [Michael Daugherty](/wiki/Michael_Daugherty) composed "[Metropolis Symphony](/wiki/Metropolis_Symphony)", a five-movement orchestral work inspired by Superman comics.<ref name=BroadwayWorld>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>[[150]](#cite_note-150) [left|thumb|Superman depicted as stricken by AIDS, in an awareness campaign|alt=A thin Superman with AIDS](/wiki/File:Superman_in_AIDES_campaign.jpg) Parodies of Superman did not take long to appear, with [*Mighty Mouse*](/wiki/Mighty_Mouse) introduced in "The Mouse of Tomorrow" animated short in 1942.[[151]](#cite_note-151) While the character swiftly took on a life of its own, moving beyond parody, other animated characters soon took their turn to parody the character. In 1943, [Bugs Bunny](/wiki/Bugs_Bunny) was featured in a short, [*Super-Rabbit*](/wiki/Super-Rabbit), which sees the character gaining powers through eating fortified carrots. This short ends with Bugs stepping into a phone booth to change into a real "Superman" and emerging as a [U.S. Marine](/wiki/U.S._Marine). In 1956 [Daffy Duck](/wiki/Daffy_Duck) assumes the mantle of "Cluck Trent" in the short "[Stupor Duck](/wiki/Stupor_Duck)", a role later reprised in various issues of the *Looney Tunes* comic book.[[152]](#cite_note-152) In the United Kingdom [Monty Python](/wiki/Monty_Python) created the character Bicycle Repairman, who fixes bicycles on a world full of Supermen, for a sketch in series of their BBC show.[[153]](#cite_note-153) Also on the BBC was the sitcom [*My Hero*](/wiki/My_Hero_(UK_TV_series)), which presented Thermoman as a slightly dense Superman pastiche, attempting to save the world and pursue romantic aspirations.[[154]](#cite_note-154) In the United States, [*Saturday Night Live*](/wiki/Saturday_Night_Live) has often parodied the figure, with [Margot Kidder](/wiki/Margot_Kidder) reprising her role as Lois Lane in a 1979 episode. The manga and anime series [*Dr. Slump*](/wiki/Dr._Slump) featured the character [*Suppaman*](/wiki/Suppaman); a short, fat, pompous man who changes into a thinly veiled Superman-like alter-ego by eating a sour-tasting [umeboshi](/wiki/Umeboshi). [Jerry Seinfeld](/wiki/Jerry_Seinfeld), a noted Superman fan, filled his series [*Seinfeld*](/wiki/Seinfeld) with references to the character and in 1997 asked for Superman to co-star with him in a commercial for [American Express](/wiki/American_Express). The commercial aired during the [1998 NFL Playoffs](/wiki/NFL_playoffs,_1997-98) and [Super Bowl](/wiki/Super_Bowl), Superman animated in the style of artist [Curt Swan](/wiki/Curt_Swan), again at the request of Seinfeld.[[155]](#cite_note-155) In January 2013, Superman was featured in [ScrewAttack's](/wiki/ScrewAttack) web series [*Death Battle*](/wiki/Death_Battle), where he fought a hypothetical battle with the character [Son Goku](/wiki/Goku) and won. A rematch was staged in July 2015, with Superman winning again. Superman was voiced during the battle simulations by the voice actor [ItsJustSomeRandomGuy](/wiki/ItsJustSomeRandomGuy).[[156]](#cite_note-156) Superman has also been used as reference point for writers, with [Steven T. Seagle's](/wiki/Steven_T._Seagle) graphic novel *Superman: It's a Bird* exploring Seagle's feelings on his own mortality as he struggles to develop a story for a Superman tale.[[157]](#cite_note-157) [Brad Fraser](/wiki/Brad_Fraser) used the character as a reference point for his play *Poor Super Man*, with [*The Independent*](/wiki/The_Independent) noting the central character, a gay man who has lost many friends to [AIDS](/wiki/AIDS) as someone who "identifies all the more keenly with Superman's alien-amid-deceptive-lookalikes status."[[158]](#cite_note-158) Superman's image was also used in an AIDS awareness campaign by French organization [AIDES](/wiki/AIDES). Superman was depicted as emaciated and breathing from an oxygen tank, demonstrating that no-one is beyond the reach of the disease, and it can destroy the lives of everyone.[[159]](#cite_note-159) Superman is also mentioned in several films, including [Joel Schumacher's](/wiki/Joel_Schumacher) [*Batman & Robin*](/wiki/Batman_&_Robin_(film)), in which [Batman](/wiki/Batman) states, "That's why Superman works alone ..." in reference to the many troubles caused by his partner [Robin](/wiki/Robin_(comics)), and also in [Sam Raimi's](/wiki/Sam_Raimi) [*Spider-Man*](/wiki/Spider-Man_(2002_film)), in which [Aunt May](/wiki/Aunt_May) gives her nephew [Peter Parker](/wiki/Peter_Parker) a word of advice not to strain himself too much because, "You're not Superman, you know", among many others.

### Literary analysis[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=20)]

Superman has been interpreted and discussed in many forms in the years since his debut. The character's status as the first costumed superhero has allowed him to be used in many studies discussing the genre, [Umberto Eco](/wiki/Umberto_Eco) noting that "he can be seen as the representative of all his similars".[[160]](#cite_note-160) Writing in [*Time*](/wiki/Time_(magazine)) in 1971, Gerald Clarke stated: "Superman's enormous popularity might be looked upon as signalling the beginning of the end for the [Horatio Alger myth](/wiki/Horatio_Alger_myth) of the self-made man." Clarke viewed the comics characters as having to continuously update in order to maintain relevance, and thus representing the mood of the nation. He regarded Superman's character in the early seventies as a comment on the modern world, which he saw as a place in which "only the man with superpowers can survive and prosper."[[161]](#cite_note-161) Andrew Arnold, writing in the early 21st century, has noted Superman's partial role in exploring assimilation, the character's alien status allowing the reader to explore attempts to fit in on a somewhat superficial level. [thumb|Clark Kent, argued by](/wiki/File:Clark-Kent.png) [Jules Feiffer](/wiki/Jules_Feiffer) to be the most innovative feature of Superman|alt=Clark Kent yelling "Good Grief!" A.C. Grayling, writing in [*The Spectator*](/wiki/The_Spectator), traces Superman's stances through the decades, from his 1930s campaign against crime being relevant to a nation under the influence of [Al Capone](/wiki/Al_Capone), through the 1940s and World War II, a period in which Superman helped sell [war bonds](/wiki/War_bonds),[[162]](#cite_note-162) and into the 1950s, where Superman explored the new technological threats. Grayling notes the period after the [Cold War](/wiki/Cold_War) as being one where "matters become merely personal: the task of pitting his brawn against the brains of Lex Luthor and Brainiac appeared to be independent of bigger questions", and discusses events post [9/11](/wiki/9/11), stating that as a nation "caught between the terrifying [George W. Bush](/wiki/George_W._Bush) and the terrorist [Osama bin Laden](/wiki/Osama_bin_Laden), America is in earnest need of a Saviour for everything from the minor inconveniences to the major horrors of world catastrophe. And here he is, the down-home clean-cut boy in the blue tights and red cape".[[163]](#cite_note-163) An influence on early Superman stories is the context of the [Great Depression](/wiki/Great_Depression). The left-leaning perspective of creators Shuster and Siegel is reflected in early storylines.[Template:Attribution needed](/wiki/Template:Attribution_needed) Superman took on the role of social activist, fighting crooked businessmen and politicians and demolishing run-down tenements.[[90]](#cite_note-90) Comics scholar [Roger Sabin](/wiki/Roger_Sabin) sees this as a reflection of "the liberal idealism of [Franklin Roosevelt's](/wiki/Franklin_Roosevelt) [New Deal](/wiki/New_Deal)", with Shuster and Siegel initially portraying Superman as champion to a variety of social causes.[[51]](#cite_note-51)[[164]](#cite_note-164) In later Superman radio programs the character continued to take on such issues, tackling a version of the [Ku Klux Klan](/wiki/Ku_Klux_Klan) in a [1946 broadcast](/wiki/The_Adventures_of_Superman_(radio)), as well as combating anti-semitism and veteran discrimination.[[165]](#cite_note-165)[[166]](#cite_note-166)[[167]](#cite_note-167) [Scott Bukatman](/wiki/Scott_Bukatman) has discussed Superman, and the superhero in general, noting the ways in which they humanize large urban areas through their use of the space, especially in Superman's ability to soar over the large skyscrapers of Metropolis. He writes that the character "represented, in 1938, a kind of [Corbusierian](/wiki/Le_Corbusier) ideal. Superman has X-ray vision: walls become permeable, transparent. Through his benign, controlled authority, Superman renders the city open, modernist and democratic; he furthers a sense that Le Corbusier described in 1925, namely, that 'Everything is known to us'."[[168]](#cite_note-168) [Jules Feiffer](/wiki/Jules_Feiffer) has argued that Superman's real innovation lay in the creation of the Clark Kent persona, noting that what "made Superman extraordinary was his point of origin: Clark Kent." Feiffer develops the theme to establish Superman's popularity in simple wish fulfillment,[[169]](#cite_note-169) a point Siegel and Shuster themselves supported, Siegel commenting that "If you're interested in what made Superman what it is, here's one of the keys to what made it universally acceptable. Joe and I had certain inhibitions ... which led to wish-fulfillment which we expressed through our interest in science fiction and our comic strip. That's where the dual-identity concept came from" and Shuster supporting that as being "why so many people could relate to it".[[170]](#cite_note-170) [Ian Gordon](/wiki/Ian_Gordon_(historian)) suggests that the many incarnations of Superman across media use nostalgia to link the character to an ideology of the American Way. He defines this ideology as a means of associating individualism, consumerism, and democracy and as something that took shape around WWII and underpinned the war effort. Superman he notes was very much part of that effort.[[171]](#cite_note-171) Superman's immigrant status is a key aspect of his appeal.[[172]](#cite_note-172)[[173]](#cite_note-173)[[174]](#cite_note-174) Aldo Regalado saw the character as pushing the boundaries of acceptance in America. The extraterrestrial origin was seen by Regalado as challenging the notion that [Anglo-Saxon](/wiki/Anglo-Saxon) ancestry was the source of all might.[[175]](#cite_note-175) Gary Engle saw the "myth of Superman [asserting] with total confidence and a childlike innocence the value of the immigrant in [American culture](/wiki/American_culture)." He argues that Superman allowed the superhero genre to take over from the [Western](/wiki/Western_(genre)) as the expression of immigrant sensibilities. Through the use of a dual identity, Superman allowed immigrants to identify with both their cultures. Clark Kent represents the assimilated individual, allowing Superman to express the immigrants cultural heritage for the greater good.[[173]](#cite_note-173) David Jenemann has offered a contrasting view. He argues that Superman's early stories portray a threat: "the possibility that the exile would overwhelm the country."[[176]](#cite_note-176) David Rooney, a [theater critic](/wiki/Critic) for *The New York Times*, in his evaluation of the play, *Year Zero*, considers Superman to be the "quintessential immigrant story ... (b)orn on an alien planet, he grows stronger on Earth but maintains a secret identity tied to a homeland that continues to exert a powerful hold on him even as his every contact with those origins does him harm."[[177]](#cite_note-177) Some see Judaic themes in Superman. [Simcha Weinstein](/wiki/Simcha_Weinstein) notes that Superman's story has some parallels to that of [Moses](/wiki/Moses). For example, Moses as a baby was sent away by his parents in a reed basket to escape death and adopted by a foreign culture. Weinstein also posits that Superman's Kryptonian name, "Kal-El", resembles the [Hebrew](/wiki/Hebrew_language) words קל-אל, which can be taken to mean "voice of God".[[178]](#cite_note-178) [Larry Tye](/wiki/Larry_Tye) suggests that this "Voice of God" is an allusion to Moses' role as a prophet.[[179]](#cite_note-179) The suffix "[el](/wiki/El_(god))", meaning "(of) God", is also found in the name of angels (e.g. [Gabriel](/wiki/Gabriel), [Ariel](/wiki/Ariel_(angel))), who are airborne humanoid agents of good with superhuman powers. The Nazis also thought Superman was a Jew and in 1940 [Joseph Goebbels](/wiki/Joseph_Goebbels) publicly denounced Superman and his creator Siegel.[[180]](#cite_note-180) Superman stories have occasionally exhibited Christian themes as well. Screenwriter [Tom Mankiewicz](/wiki/Tom_Mankiewicz) consciously made Superman an allegory for Christ in [the 1978 movie](/wiki/Superman_(1978_film)) starring [Christopher Reeve](/wiki/Christopher_Reeve):[[181]](#cite_note-181) baby Kal-El's ship resembles the [Star of Bethlehem](/wiki/Star_of_Bethlehem), and Jor-El's gives his son a messianic mission.

### Critical reception and popularity[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=21)]

The character Superman and his various comic series have received various awards over the years.

* Superman placed first on [IGN's](/wiki/IGN) Top 100 Comic Book Heroes.[[182]](#cite_note-182)\* [*Empire*](/wiki/Empire_(magazine)) magazine named him the greatest comic book character.[[183]](#cite_note-183)\* [*The Reign of the Supermen*](/wiki/Reign_of_the_Supermen) is one of many storylines or works to have received a [Comics Buyer's Guide Fan Award](/wiki/Comics_Buyer's_Guide_Fan_Award), winning the Favorite Comic Book Story category in 1993.[[184]](#cite_note-184)\* Superman came in at number 2 in *VH1's Top Pop Culture Icons 2004*.[[185]](#cite_note-185)\* Also in 2004, British moviegoers voted Superman the greatest superhero.[[186]](#cite_note-186)\* Works featuring the character have also garnered six [Eisner Awards](/wiki/Eisner_Awards),[[187]](#cite_note-187)[[188]](#cite_note-188) and three [Harvey Awards](/wiki/Harvey_Awards),[[189]](#cite_note-189) either for the works themselves or the creators of the works.
* The *Superman* films have received a number of nominations and awards, with [Christopher Reeve](/wiki/Christopher_Reeve) winning a [BAFTA](/wiki/BAFTA) for his performance in [*Superman*](/wiki/Superman_(1978_film)) (1978).
* The [*Smallville*](/wiki/Smallville) television series has garnered [Emmys](/wiki/Emmy) for crew members and various other awards.[[190]](#cite_note-190)[[191]](#cite_note-191)[[192]](#cite_note-192)

## See also[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=22)]

[Template:Wikipedia books](/wiki/Template:Wikipedia_books)

* [List of DC animated universe characters](/wiki/List_of_DC_animated_universe_characters)
* [List of DC Comics characters](/wiki/List_of_DC_Comics_characters)

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## Footnotes[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=23)]

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## Bibliography[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=24)]

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## Further reading[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=25)]

* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)
* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)

## External links[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=26)]

[Template:Sister project links](/wiki/Template:Sister_project_links)

* [Official Superman website](http://www.superman.com/)
* [Golden Age](http://www.comicbookdb.com/character.php?ID=190), [Silver Age](http://www.comicbookdb.com/character.php?ID=296) and [Modern Age](http://www.comicbookdb.com/character.php?ID=96) Superman at the Comic book database
* [Template:Dmoz](/wiki/Template:Dmoz)
* [Template:DCdatabase](/wiki/Template:DCdatabase)
* [Template:IMDb character](/wiki/Template:IMDb_character)

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