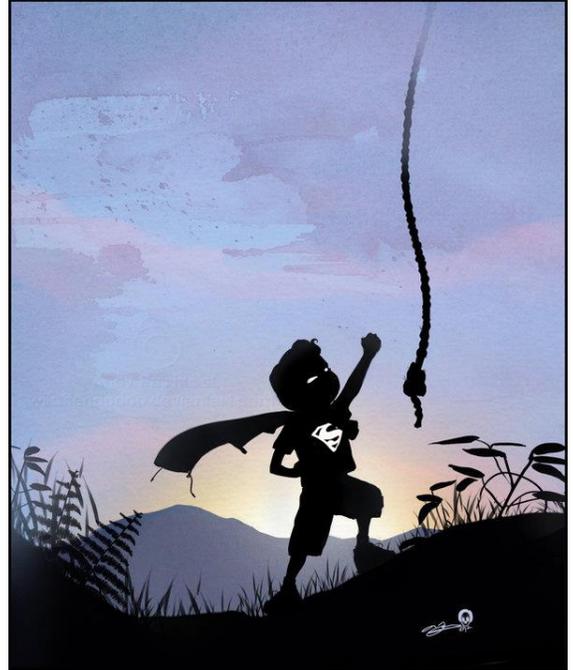


The Relation between History and Fiction: A Hero Analysis

More Specific Questions

Literature functions as a reflection of society – its people, its issues, its fears, and its desires. While mainstream culture often agrees that historical texts clearly educate audiences about social norms and issues, it fails to recognize fiction’s correlation to society, especially when discussing hero stories.

When we started reading *Action Comics*, we discussed how Jerry Siegel and Simon Shuster used personal experiences and cultural influences to create characters and craft stories. And, as writers, artists, and society changed, Superman characters and stories evolved. To help us understand the relation between history and fiction, specifically in a hero context, we will research established hero stories, so that we can chart the hero’s changes against the various historical contexts. Our findings will allow us to analyze society’s impact on the hero stories and vice versa.



You will work with a partner to research a specific hero – the hero’s creation, the story’s context, and the plot’s variations. After researching the history of the hero and his or her story, you will analyze the relationship between history and fiction in reflecting and shaping society. In short, you will determine the purpose of hero stories and evaluate the effectiveness of intertwining history and fiction in a hero’s story.

To help guide you through this research process, I have provided a list of specific questions for your research project. The questions often build off of each other, so it might help to answer them in order.

Creation – Social Issues

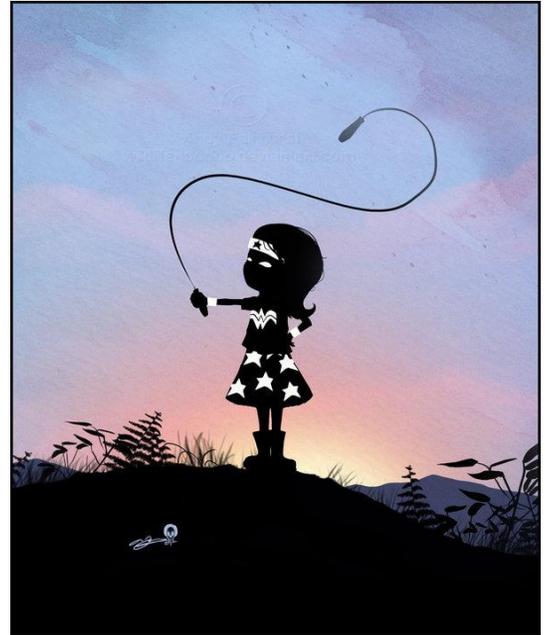
1. When was the superhero created?
2. Which historical figure(s) does the superhero represent? Hint: think about historical figures that were present during the time of the character’s creation.
3. What historical event or movement was occurring when this character was created?
4. What was the purpose of creating this hero?

Powers – Social Fears

5. What caused the superhero to gain his or her powers?
6. What does this power tell us about society’s desires?

Powers – Social Fears (Continued)

7. Is his or her power acquisition related to any events or fears that society experienced at the time of his or her creation?
8. What is the superhero's weakness?
9. What does this weakness tell us about the hero? What does the weakness tell us about the type of hero they envision?
10. What does the weakness tell us about society's fears?



Various Back Stories – Social Changes

11. How has the character's back story changed?
12. How have the character's powers changed?
13. How have the character's villains changed?
14. How do the character's changes reflect those of society – changes in people, issues, fears, desires, etc?
15. How do these changes reflect the changes in society's needs?



Analyzing the Relationship between History and Fiction

16. What does the popularity of hero stories tell us about society?
17. How does fiction impact our understanding of history and its heroes?
18. What value does society ascribe to historical hero stories? Fictional hero stories?
19. What impact do hero stories have on society? Historical hero stories? Fictional hero stories?
20. Which depiction of a hero, historical or fictional, more profoundly impacts society? Explain your reasoning.