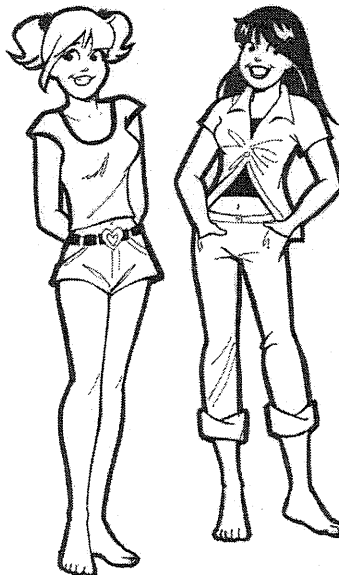


POPULAR FEMALE CHARACTERS IN COMICS

By: Diane Zerr

Comic books made their debut in the 1930s. In the next two decades, 1940s and 1950s, girls represented half the readership of comics and could read about Catwoman, Wonder Woman or Betty and Veronica (Crawford, 2007). In the 1960s more boys than girls were reading comics but there were still female characters to follow including some new characters such as Sabrina, The Teenage Witch and Sue Storm of the Fantastic Four. Graphic novels were the next innovation of comic books and with these came more complex story lines. A popular graphic novel series today where a female protagonist is featured is Buffy, The Vampire Slayer. Below are the biographies of female comic books characters and superheroes that might be residing in your library.



Betty Cooper & Veronica Lodge

In 1941 the Archie Comics series began as the first comic for teens featuring characters Archie, Jughead, Betty and Veronica (Lavin, 1999). This series was unlike other comic book series because the teens featured in Archie Comics were average teenagers living in the average town of Riverdale (Lavin, 1999). Sixty percent of the teens reading the Archie Comics were female (Lavin, 1999). This was probably partially due to Betty, who it was easy

to relate to since she was the girl next door, and also due to the relationship between Betty and Veronica who are friends despite their very different character traits (Lavin, 1999).

Betty Cooper is the sweet girl next door. She is an excellent student and athlete. She is very optimistic. And, Betty has a crush on Archie which lends itself to a lot of conflict and drama within the series because Archie has a crush on Veronica (Lavin, 1999).

Veronica Lodge is the privileged daughter of local millionaire. She can be described as spoiled, sophisticated and fickle. She is continually pursued by Archie (Lavin, 1999).

Spin offs from the Archie comic book series feature two female protagonists. Both Josie and the Pussycats and Sabrina, The Teenage Witch were created in the early 1960s.

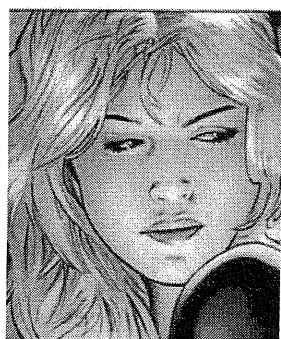
Sabrina the Teenage Witch

In 1962, Sabrina, The Teenage Witch was created featuring Sabrina Spellman. Sabrina is a normal girl until her sixteenth birthday when she develops magical powers (Lavin, 1999). Her mother is a mortal and her father is a warlock (Lavin, 1999). Both of Sabrina's parents travel frequently so

she is sent to live with her aunts, Hilda and Zelda (Lavin, 1999). Hilda and Zelda teach her how to develop her magical powers.

Sue Storm

Sue Storm is one of the Fantastic Four. She is the sister of Johnny, the human torch, and she is the girlfriend of Reed Richards, Mister Fantastic. The Fantastic Four series began in 1961. The characters all developed superpowers after they are exposed to radio activity in space (Krensky, 2008).



Sue Storm is called the Invisible Girl, later to become the Invisible Woman. Sue can become invisible and she can also create an invisible force field to protect herself and others from the villains featured in the series (Krensky, 2008).

Wonder Woman

Wonder Woman was created by feminist, psychologist Moulton Marston in the early 1940s. Wonder Woman is an Amazon princess who comes to help people in America (Crawford, 2007). Her alter ego is Diana Prince who disguises herself as a nurse in some of the early issues of Wonder Woman. Diana Prince begins to take over during the late 1960s where Wonder Woman loses her superpowers and becomes an average woman (Crawford, 2007). She appeared on the cover of the first Ms. Magazine, edited by Gloria Steneim and shortly thereafter,

Wonder Woman returns to her classic superhero status in a new comic series. Wonder Woman has had her own series for more than six decades (Crawford, 2007).



Wonder Woman dresses like a true patriot of the United States. She wears tall red boots and a bright red top. Her shorts are star-spangled. Her superpowers are contained in her golden lasso and bullet proof bracelets. When the golden lasso is around another character in the comic series, that character can only tell the truth (Crawford, 2007). The theme throughout most of the Wonder Woman comics features Wonder Woman as a bound captive who, through her superpowers, breaks free of patriarchy (Crawford, 2007).

Buffy, The Vampire Slayer

Buffy is a recent addition to the world of female superheroes. Buffy Summers is a high school student who is destined to become a vampire slayer (Musgrove, 2008). She seldom has help from others and she is very aware of her mortality when trying to slay vampires (Musgrove, 2008). Buffy has two close friends, Xander Harris and Willow



Rosenburg. Throughout the series, Buffy has had to save both of her friends from vampires (Musgrove, 2008).

Buffy, The Vampire Slayer has taken a different route from other female superheroes who have been comic book characters that are later featured in TV series and movies. Buffy was first featured in a movie in 1992. Later, a television series was created in 1997 which was loosely based on the movie (Musgrove, 2008). After the television series was cancelled, the writer began a graphic novel series which carries on the story of Buffy. In the graphic novels, Buffy's powers have grown to where she now commands an army of vampire slayers (Musgrove, 2008).

Catwoman

Catwoman first appeared in the Batman series around 1940 (Lecker, 2007). She also had her own comic book series from 1991-2001 and she has appeared in many of the Batman movies. She is in a love/hate relationship with Batman where she is featured as an ally some of the time and as an enemy the rest of the time (Lecker, 2007). In this way she is different from most other female superheroes because she straddles the line between good and evil (Lecker, 2007).



Catwoman's alias is Selina Kyle. Her costume has changed many times throughout the series. It has remained consistent in the type of material used, black leather, and is accompanied by boots and a cat mask (Lecker, 2007).

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