

Superpatriots
Antisemitism, Comic Books &
World War II
Junior Individual
Exhibit

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Number of Student-Composed Words in Exhibit: 498

Number of Process Words in Process Paper: 496

“- *Pictures Tell Any Story More Effectively Than Words.*”¹

I enjoy reading comic books. My favorite superhero is Captain America because he is an advocate for justice. I read that, after the first issue of Captain America was published on March 1, 1941, with a cover showing Captain America punching Hitler in the face, his two creators (Jack Kirby and Joe Simon) received death threats from Americans who supported Hitler’s war on Europe. I was surprised about this and thought that the writers and the story behind these threats would make an interesting National History Day topic.

I used the internet to locate books, magazines, newspaper articles, photos of the writers and comic book covers. Some books and articles had many citations to other source materials that I used. Joe Simon’s autobiography, *The Comic Book Makers*, was a great primary source. My teachers also suggested useful websites. The magazine *Reform Judaism Online* has an article about Jewish Americans and the comic book industry in the 1930’s and 1940’s. My parents and I visited the National Jewish American Museum in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This museum has exhibits on antisemitism and World War II. One of the curators gave me a guided tour when I told her about my topic.

I entered the exhibit category because I thought that the comic books that I would display on my exhibit would stand out and generate public interest. I designed my exhibit to look like a big comic book with sharp angles and bright colors and laid out my topic like a comic book.

My topic, “Superpatriots: Antisemitism, Comic Books and World War II,” involves a conflict and compromise that few people know about. Jewish Americans started the comic book industry in the 1930’s. When World War II began in 1939, antisemitism was at an all-time high

¹ Essay by William Moulton Marston (Creator of Wonder Woman), “Why 100,000,000 Americans Read Comics,” *The American Scholar* (Winter 1943-44 Issue). [://theamericanscholar.org/wonder-woman/](http://theamericanscholar.org/wonder-woman/). Accessed 6 May 2018.

in the United States. America was an isolationist country. The comic book industry faced a conflict - how to change the minds of many Americans who did not care about the war (or the plight of Jews in Europe) to realize that they needed to care and stand up to Hitler and Nazi Germany. The comic book writers needed to do this in a way that would not create a conflict for themselves (alienate their readers and risk their livelihood). To deal with this conflict, they compromised their comic art to use it as political propaganda, portraying Germany as the enemy of the United States. Their compromise was not without consequence, as they received death threats from those Americans who were antisemitic and supported Nazi Germany. Even so, the writers had the courage to continue to deliver their messages through their comic books to millions of Americans and, once the United States entered the war, they and their comic books became a critical part of the U.S. war effort. In more recent times, the superpatriots that they created have been used by others as symbols for change (political and otherwise). I believe that the writers were the real superpatriots and their story should be told.