THE INNOCENT, SEDUCED

from the golden age to silver age
1948


- Wertham presided over a medical symposium entitled “The Psychopathy of Comic Books.”

- Comic books were "abnormally sexually aggressive" and led to crime

- Children — overseen by priests, teachers, and parents — publicly burned several hundred comic books in both Spencer, West Virginia, and Binghamton, New York.
ASSOCIATION OF COMICS MAGAZINE PUBLISHERS

- Formed on July 1, 1948 to regulate the content of comic books in the face of increasing public criticism

- Most famous for their “Publisher’s Code”

- Comics that complied with the code were offered a "Seal of Approval."

- ACMP & Publisher’s Code was largely ignored by publishers (both big and small)
1. Sexy, wanton comics should not be published. No drawing should show a female indecently or unduly exposed, and in no event more nude than in a bathing suit commonly worn in the United States of America.

2. Crime should not be presented in such a way as to throw sympathy against the law and justice or to inspire others with the desire for imitation. No comics shall show the details and methods of a crime committed by a youth. Policemen, judges, Government officials, and respected institutions should not be portrayed as stupid, ineffective, or represented in such a way to weaken respect for established authority.

3. No scenes of sadistic torture should be shown.

4. Vulgar and obscene language should never be used. Slang should be kept to a minimum and used only when essential to the story.

5. Divorce should not be treated humorously or represented as glamorous or alluring.

6. Ridicule or attack on any religious or racial group is never permissible.
Seduction of the Innocent: The Influence of Comic Books on Today’s Youth (1954)

- Cited overt or covert depictions of violence, sex, drug use, and other inappropriate content within "crime comics"

- The book asserted, largely based on undocumented anecdotes, that reading this material encouraged similar behavior in children.

- Public opinion was stirred up by way of excerpts published in Ladies’ Home Journal
Analysis of the advertisements that appeared in comic books - Wertham objected to not only the violence in the stories but also the fact that air rifles and knives were advertised alongside them.

Claims that retailers were forced by publishers to sell comic books with which they were uncomfortable - news vendors were told by distributors that if they did not sell the objectionable comic books, they would not be allowed to sell any of the other publications being distributed.
1954 - **Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency**

- Wertham called as star witness

- Industry professionals called to testify as well - most admitted there were excesses and declared comics needed to be made more suitable for children

- William Gaines - publisher and co-editor of EC Comics - unapologetic

- The Subcommittee concluded that American kids were being “fed a concentrated diet of crime, horror, and violence” which had to be eliminated
Oct 25, 1954 - **Comics Magazine Association of America (Comics Code Authority)**

- Based largely on the 1948 Association of Comics Magazine Publishers code.

- The CCA had no legal authority over other publishers, but magazine distributors often refused to carry comics without the CCA’s seal of approval.

- Most established publishers shifted their focus (away from crime & horror) - only a few publishers went out of business.
A PLEDGE TO PARENTS

The Dell Trademark is, and always has been, a positive guarantee that the comic magazine bearing it contains only clean and wholesome entertainment. The Dell code eliminates entirely, rather than regulates, objectionable material. That’s why when your child buys a Dell Comic you can be sure it contains only good fun. “DELL COMICS ARE GOOD COMICS” is our credo and constant goal.
- Crimes shall never be presented in such a way as to create sympathy for the criminal, to promote distrust of the forces of law and justice, or to inspire others with a desire to imitate criminals.

- Policemen, judges, Government officials and respected institutions shall never be presented in such a way as to create disrespect for established authority.

- No comic magazine shall use the word horror or terror in its title.

- All scenes of horror, excessive bloodshed, gory or gruesome crimes, depravity, lust, sadism, masochism shall not be permitted.

- Divorce shall not be treated humorously nor represented as desirable.

- Illicit sex relations are neither to be hinted at nor portrayed. Violent love scenes as well as sexual abnormalities are unacceptable.
Dr. Fredric Wertham?
THE DECLINE OF THE COMIC BOOK INDUSTRY

In 1954, there were 625 titles published annually; by 1957 there were less than 475 - why?

1. Implementation of the Comics Code - crime & horror were among the most common and lucrative comics

2. The rise of television - fewer people were reading as their primary form of entertainment

3. Over saturation of the market - more publishers than the market could actually handle
THE SILVER AGE

the rebirth of the superhero
Julius Schwartz  Gardner Fox  Carmine Infantino
*Flash Comics #1*

Jan, 1940

Gardner Fox (writer)

Harry Lampert (artist)
Showcase #4

Oct, 1956

Gardner Fox (writer)

Carmine Infantino (artist)
WINTER ISSUE

NO. 3

ALLSTAR
COMICS

Featuring

THE FLASH — THE GREEN LANTERN
THE SPECTRE — THE HAWKMAN — DR. FATE
THE HOUR-MAN — THE SANDMAN — THE ATOM,
AND JOHNNY THUNDER in brand new
episodes as personally related at the first
meeting of the Justice Society of America

Introducing THE WORLD’S SMALLEST SUPER-HERO!

SHOWCASE

present

THE ATOM

Featuring "BATTLE of the Tiny Titans!"
Martin Goodman began using the globe logo of *Atlas*, the newsstand-distribution company he owned, on comics cover-dated November 1951.

- United 59 shell companies under one corporate umbrella.

Stanley Martin Lieber - Stan Lee

- Lieber was hired by Goodman (his cousin’s husband) to be Timely’s errand boy.

- First published work - text filler "Captain America Foils the Traitor’s Revenge" in Captain America Comics #3 (May 1941).

- Used the pseudonym Stan Lee (which would later take as his legal name).

- In 1941 (when Joe Simon and Jack Kirby left Timely, Goodman made Lieber (who was 19 years old) the editor-in-chief of the comics division.)
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Jacob Kurtzberg - Jack Kirby

- Began writing and drawing for Eisner & Iger, an on demand comic book packager.

- 1941 - created Captain America with writing partner Joe Simon

- Cut a deal with Goodman that made him Timely’s Art Director

- Left Timely to work for National Comics (DC) - returned to Atlas in 1958
In the wake of DC’s success, publisher Martin Goodman assigned Lee to create a new superhero team.

Together with artist Jack Kirby, Stan Lee created The Fantastic Four #1 (1961).

Instead of the teen focused perfect superhero archetypes, Stan Lee gave the characters flaws - they regularly showed their humanity.
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