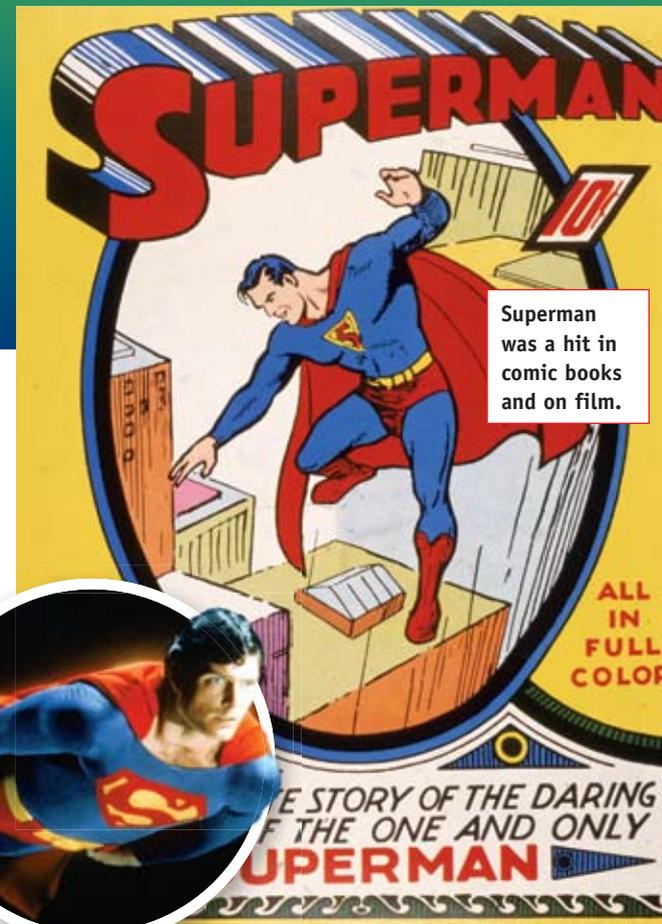


& HERCULES & SUPERMAN

THEN
& NOW

These brave and brawny boys have a lot in common



Superman was a hit in comic books and on film.



HERCULES

Half-human, half-god, he was the superhero of Greek myths

worshipped these divinities and told amazing stories about them called myths. These myths were passed down from one generation to the next.

In one myth, Zeus, the king of all gods, fell in love with a mortal woman named Alcmene. But Zeus already had a wife—a powerful goddess named Hera. When Hera found out that Zeus and Alcmene had a baby boy (Hercules), she didn't send a teddy bear. She sent two deadly snakes. She wanted to kill that baby on the spot.

But even in his cradle, Hercules had some serious moves. He killed the snakes, one with each hand. Unimpressed, Hera continued to launch evil plots against Hercules throughout his life. He managed to hang in there, though, thanks to his extraordinary strength and bravery.

During his life, Hercules went on some incredible missions. Need someone to steal golden apples? Rescue a golden-horned deer? Bring a dog back from the underworld? Hercules was your man. His specialty was conquering beasts. Huge bulls, gigantic lions, man-eating horses—he subdued them all. No wonder he became known for making the world safe for humankind.

The ancient Greeks, who suffered through many wars, loved stories about brave warriors. They told tales of Hercules' adventures more often than any other ones. Thousands of years later, these stories are still being told, and Hercules' image is as powerful as ever. When we say a job is "herculean," we mean that it requires amazing strength. There have been comic books, movies, and TV shows about Hercules. After all this time, Hera still can't finish him off. ●

As a baby, he strangled two deadly snakes. As a teen, he grew to be eight feet tall. As an adult, he fought bloodthirsty monsters, rescued beautiful ladies, and dressed in a lion's skin. He was Hercules, the world's first superhero.

The story of Hercules is more than 3,000 years old. It comes from ancient Greece, once one of the world's richest civilizations. The ancient Greeks believed that gods and goddesses controlled the world. They



Hercules in a painting and on TV

SUPERMAN

America's favorite superhero was born in a comic book

He moves faster than a speeding bullet. He bends steel with his bare hands. He conquers evil villains. He is Superman, America's first superhero.

Superman first appeared in 1938. Comics were very popular at that time. Kids would save their pennies for the latest comics, which featured dozens of different characters, from cowboys and sweet little girls to mischievous boys and crafty magicians.

But then two high-school buddies—Joe Shuster and Jerry Siegel—had an idea that would change comics forever. Their "Man of Steel" lived like an ordinary human. He had an ordinary name: Clark Kent. He held an ordinary job at a newspaper. But there was nothing ordinary about him. Superman came from the planet Krypton and had amazing strength. He could fly. He could withstand the strongest bullets and had X-ray vision. And he was dedicated to helping humankind.

Superman was an immediate hit. Some say he was a symbol for how Americans wanted to see themselves—as fighting for justice in a dangerous world. And the world was dangerous in 1938. World War II was brewing in Europe and Asia. Soon the U.S. would join the fight. Newspapers were filled with frightening stories of bloody battles and diabolical leaders, like Germany's Adolf Hitler. What a relief it was to read about Superman! He fought against evil—and always won.

Over the years, Shuster and Siegel created an entire world around their hero. There was his archenemy, Lex Luthor. There was the "caped crusader" Batman, who starred in many Superman comics. Other superheroes followed, including Spider-Man, Aquaman, and Iron Man.

By the 1970s, comic books were losing their popularity. But TV shows and movies have passed the story of Superman down through the generations. Earlier this year, a copy of the first Action Comic featuring Superman sold for a whopping \$1.5 million.

Superman might be more than 70 years old, but he is still going strong. ●

COMPARE & CONTRAST

Can you find four things that Superman and Hercules have in common? Now take this activity further.

Go to *Scope* online and use our guide to write a (painless!) compare-and-contrast essay.

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ACTIVITY
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