

Aimee Norris

LIS 804 Media Literacy and Youth

Prof. Sujin Huggins

Final Project

12/08/2014

(for teens)

TITLE: What Makes a Good Superhero?

THEME: Media & the Medium – Comic Books

SUBJECT(S): Art. Graphic Art. Digital Art. Comics. Gender, Race, and Sexuality Studies. Advertising.

OBJECTIVES: Students will be able to:

- Analyze and respond to a range of text and media such as film and visual paraphernalia like movie posters and comic book covers
- Learn how comic book artists, editors, and movie advertisers portray superheroes of different gender, race, and/or sexuality and observe stereotypes that come into play
- Demonstrate critical thinking when analyzing text and media
- Visually or verbally articulate their ideas and arguments
- Support their main points with well-chosen examples and evidence

ACTIVITY: Students will digitally create their own superhero and draw a cover for their comic/movie poster.

MATERIALS:

- Physical and digital examples of superhero posters and comic book covers that portray superheroes of different gender, race, and/or sexuality
- Laptops/tablets for students with Adobe Photoshop, Paint.net, MangaStudio or other drawing software installed (or Pixlr if nothing else) and access to the internet
- Art supplies and blank paper for those who wish to work by hand (this would include blue pencils, felt-tip and brush-tip pens, and colored markers)
- Handout for tips on creating a superhero.
- Notebook paper for notes

PREP: Collect media samples. Bring materials and make sure there are enough laptops for the students to use and that the software and internet is working as intended. Make sure their computers have the body template files for the superheroes so they can manipulate them.

PROCEDURE:

1. Start out by asking the students, “What makes a good superhero?” and “Who is your favorite superhero ? Why?” Ask them to write down the best qualities of a superhero. Now ask them, what does a superhero look like? Think about the movies and the comics and cartoons they’ve seen. Do all the men and women look the same? What is different about them, if anything? Are there any fat superheroes? Any ugly ones? Can you name them?
2. Tell them to focus now on female superheroes. What are some heroines they know? What kind of outfits do they wear? Are they all thin? Do they all have small waists, big boobs, and long legs? Show them examples of female superheroes. What do they think about these women? What stands out? What is your eye drawn to? How would you describe this woman? Is she realistic?
3. Move onto the men. Show the examples of Captain America. How are men shown in superhero comics? To be a superhero, do you need to be buff and huge and muscle-bound? Why or why not? (There are no wrong answers, just conversation-starters.)
4. Talk about race as well. Show examples of Black Panther and Luke Cage. What racial stereotypes can you see or imagine with superheroes from different races? (Talk about characters like War Machine and Falcon in the recent Marvel movies and the race-swapping of characters like Heimdall, Johnny Storm, and Deadshot.)
5. Ask the students to look up a superhero we haven’t talked about and search through the Google images. Choose a comic book cover/fan art/movie power that stands out to them. (Warn them not to choose anything too inappropriate, if the library has no settings to prevent nudity.) Once they choose their example, have them get into groups, share their photo, and answer the following questions:
 - Who is the target audience? Is it children, adults, teens, women or men, black, white or another race?
 - What is the “scenario”? What is happening in this image?
 - In your opinion, what does this image say about women/men/race/sexuality? Is it offensive? Is it empowering? (Don’t just say, “It’s cool!” *Why* is it cool?)
6. Now, ask the students to open their drawing program (Photoshop, Paint.net, etc.) and show them how to open the superhero/superwoman body template.

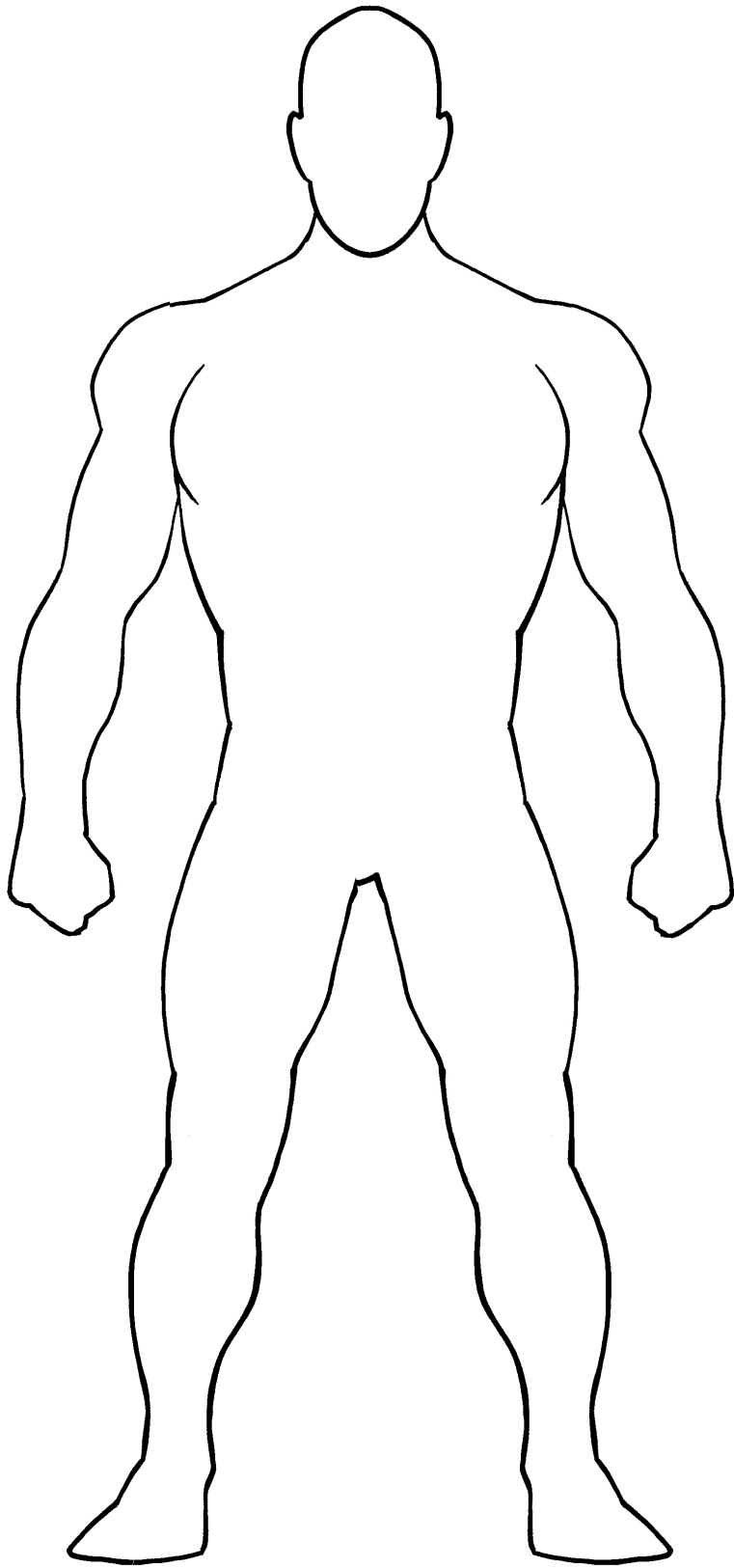
7. Using their laptops (or freehand drawing if that is their choice or if the library is limited on laptops/tablets), ask the students to create their own superhero, thinking now about gender, racial, and sexual orientation stereotypes. Tell them not to be afraid to create a superhero that is different from themselves, but keep in mind what may or may not be offensive. Think of a superhero that many people can look up to.
8. Once they are finished, ask for volunteers to share their superhero and have that student discuss what decisions they made to create that superhero (Why this outfit? Why these colors?)

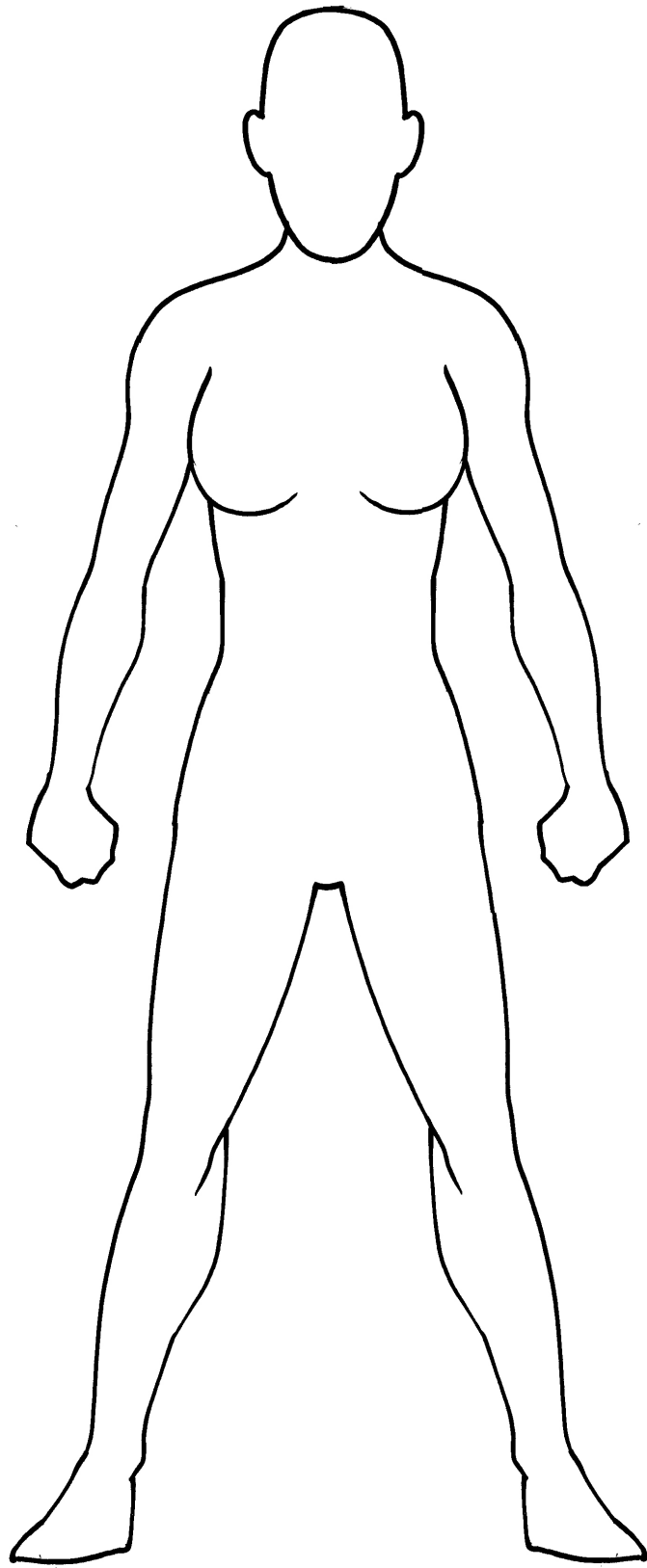
WRAP-UP: Have students continue to look at each other's work and make adjustments/revisions if they want. For those who are finished, you can help them print out their work or publish it online via a library Tumblr account or Instagram.

EXTENSION:

- Students can start out with a collaborative superhero where each of them are involved in its creation.
- In order to imitate how actual artists do the work, you can have one student come up with a superhero, another student draw that superhero based on the description, a third student ink over that drawing in black ink, (scan the image and open it on Photoshop) and have a fourth student color it. This will show the students how superhero comic creation is a collaborative art and sometimes this can seriously alter the way the comic and the story can appear.

The next few pages contain the templates for the superhero and superwoman bodies to use in the digital art creation, as well as some sample comic art that the librarian can showcase.

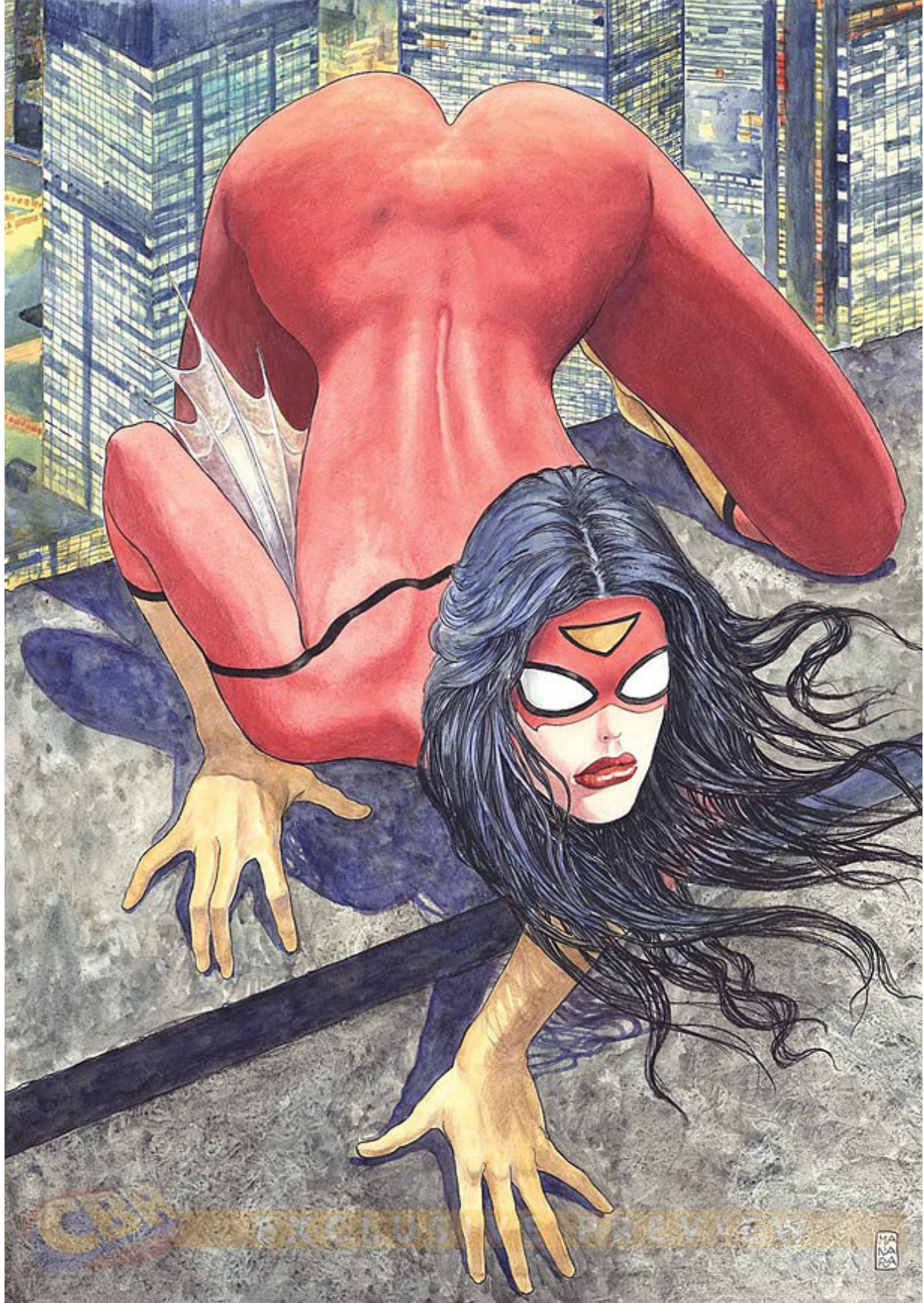


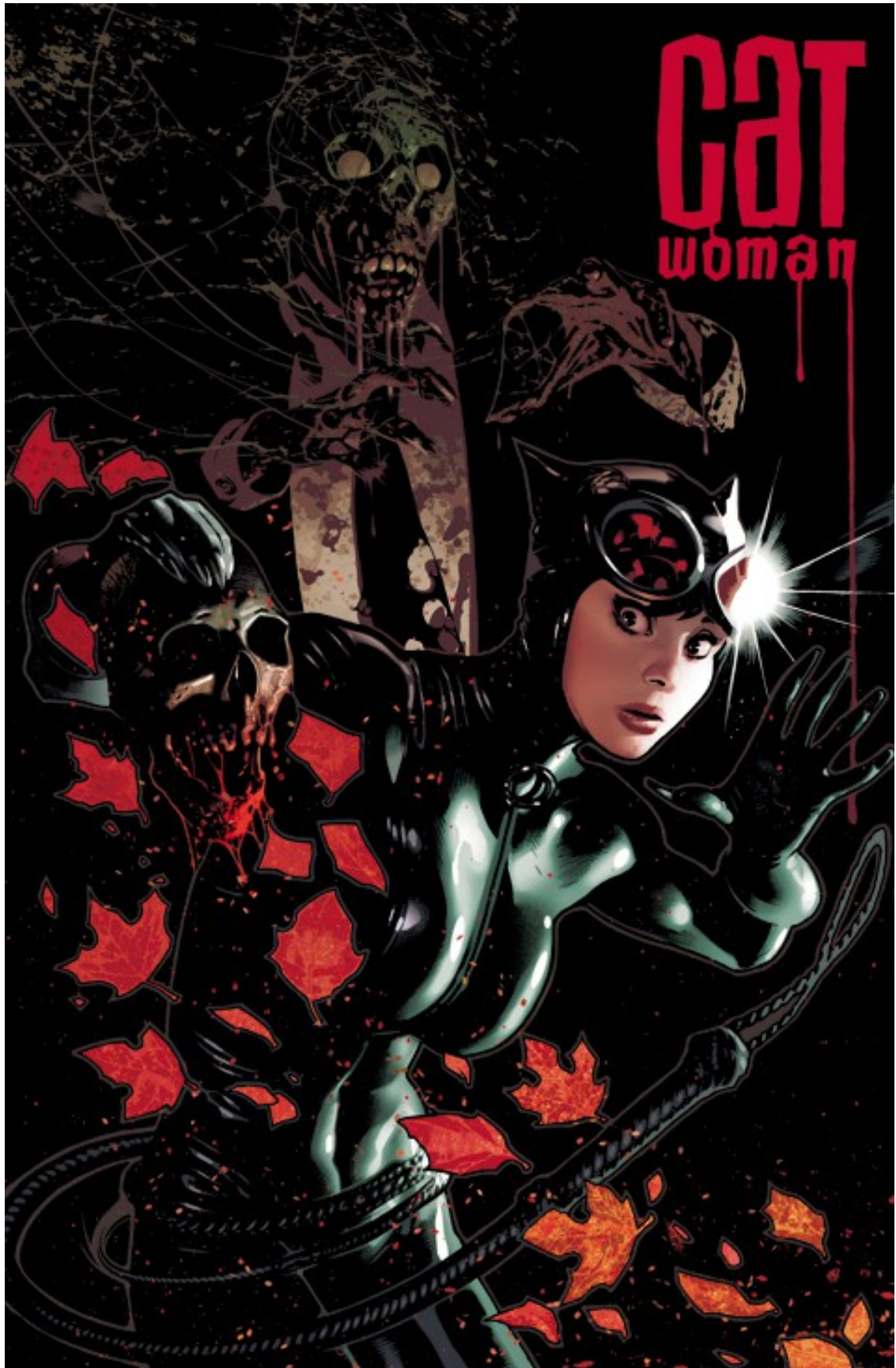




Examples to use for conversation:









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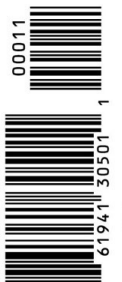
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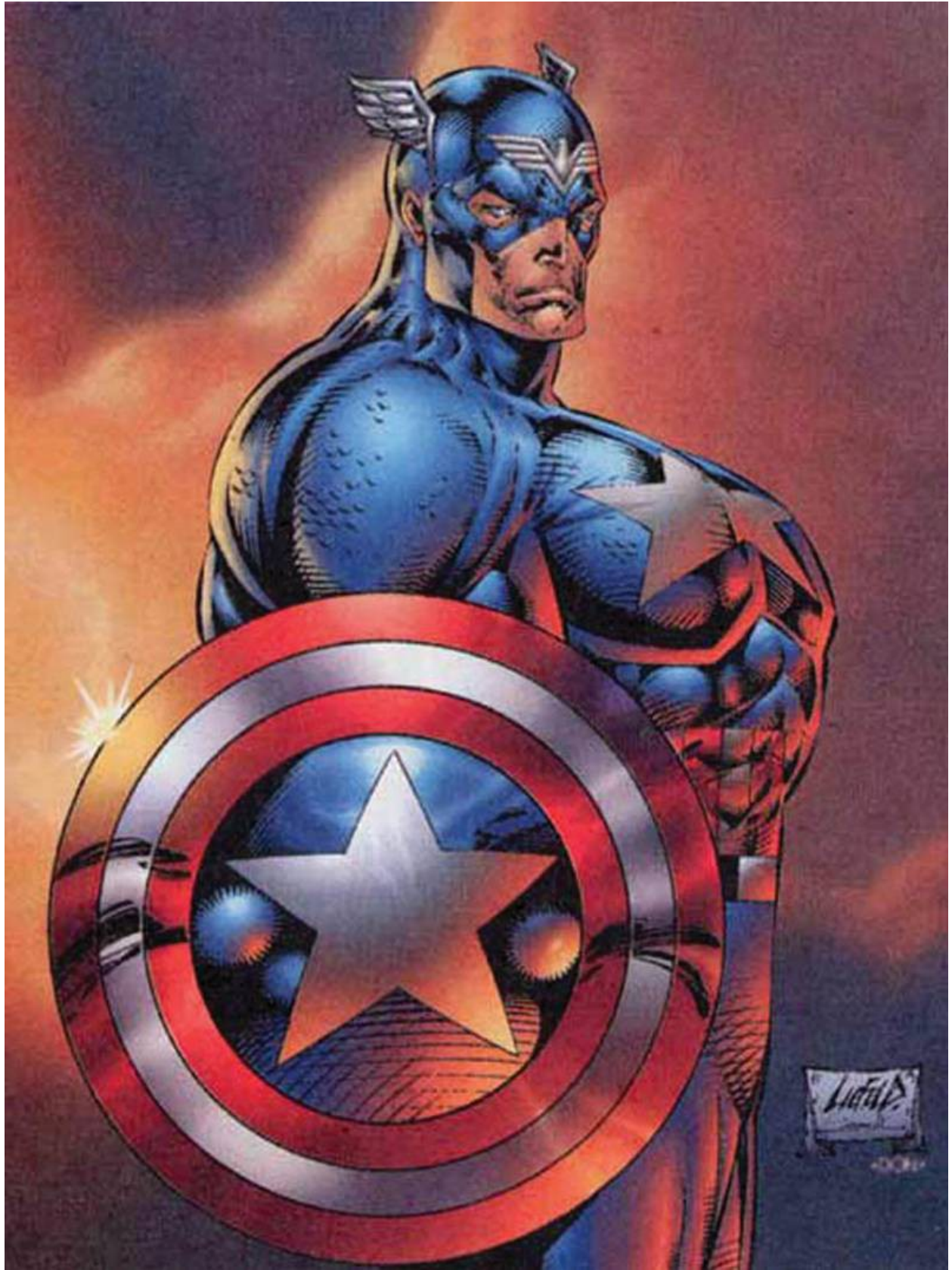


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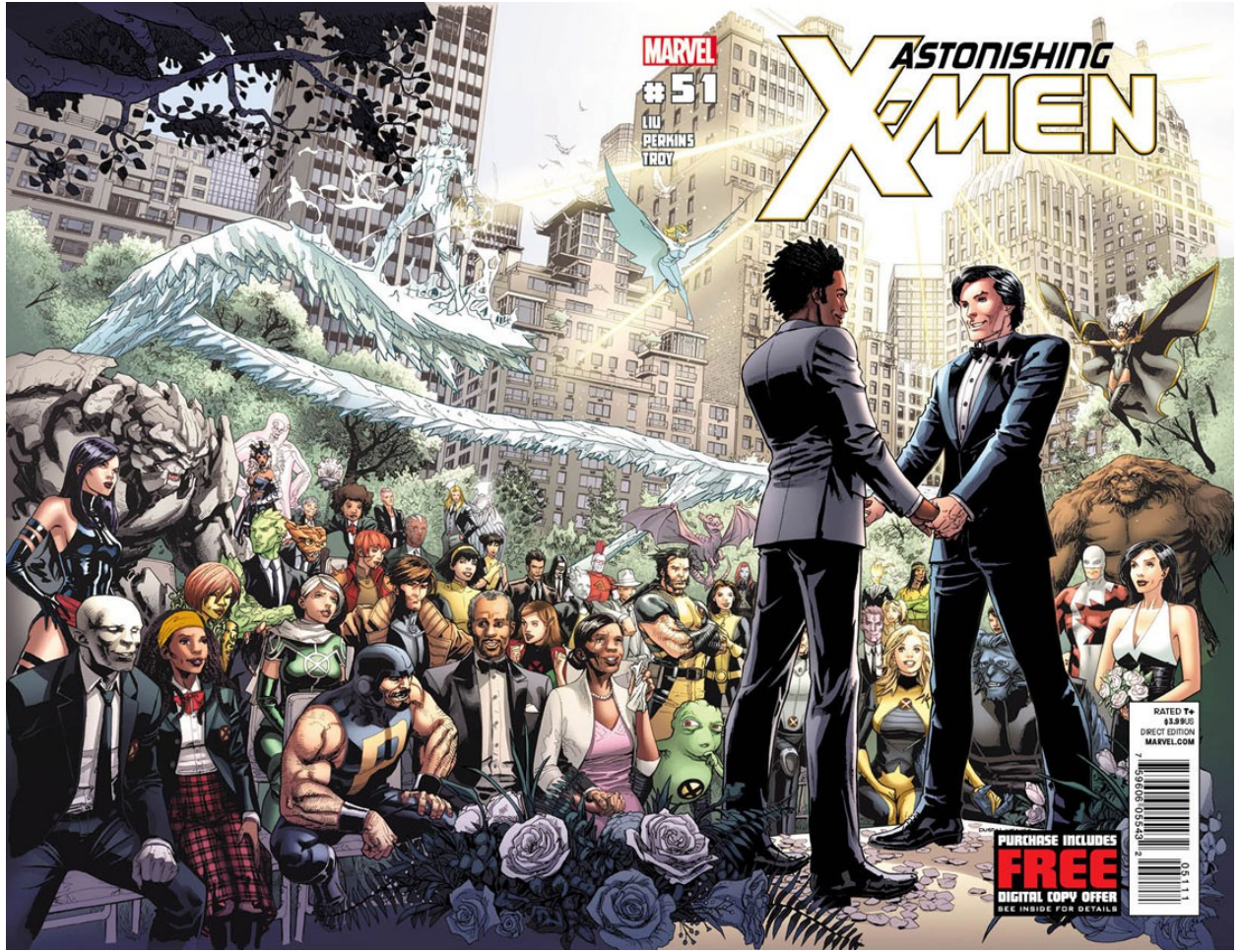












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"WE WERE OUR WORLD'S GREATEST HEROES..."

"...AND THE DAY WE SLEW THE WORST MONSTER WHO EVER THREATENED THE DOMINION OF CANADA..."

"...WE REVEALED OUR LOVE."