

As I began to research my history paper, I was filled with a doubt; how can one possibly write an academic paper on comic books? In order to justify my thesis, namely that comic books served as a major cultural marker in America during the 1930's and 40's, I knew that I needed to find proper support. I understood that, in light of the subject matter, I must be careful in my selection of support material. Internet articles written by comic book fan boys would not suffice; any claims I would make needed to have the respect of historical record. For that reason, I initially shunned the internet, the go-to source of my generation, in lieu of the time-honored bookshelf. Using a keyword search, I found the section of the library that contained all of the books relating to comic books. I began somewhat injudiciously, grabbing any book that seemed to have the potential to touch on my topic, which totaled two dozen. Even though I did not use all of the books I came across, I felt a certain benefit in immersing myself in the topic. To be honest, this was the first time I took to the task of research authentically and in earnest. I scanned each book individually, further dividing them into texts that had a more specific relation to my discussion. In many respects, I was rewarded for my wide scope; a book on the philosophy of comic books, a field fairly removed from my aim, included a useful quote from the creator of Wonder Woman. Left with a dozen books, I took to the task of reading each text. I marked page numbers, wrote down important quotes, and further revised my initial outline based on my research. In my research, I learned that my initial fear was unfounded, and that many respected historians felt that this was a topic worth writing books about. After creating my outline, I discussed my outline and its sources with my professor to make sure that I was on the right track.

My professor told me that she would like to see more primary sources, and suggested that I look into Michigan State's comic book archive. By suggesting this internet source, my professor was able to quell my fears about using the internet. I used Michigan State's online archive to

find the issue numbers of first issues of popular titles or other issues that I had read about. I found color copies of these issues on a popular comic website, checking their validity against the issue numbers found in the Michigan State archive. I did not scoff at using this non-academic site because I was using the comics as a primary source that I could interpret in light of my past research.

As my research began to draw to a close, it became clear that I had spent days in the library, and had yet had not begun to write. This fact seemed to go against most undergraduate sensibilities and the belief that progress is based on the number of pages completed. Had I wasted my time? Only when I began to write my paper did I begin to understand the benefit of my research. With my outline as my guide, confident in my research, I was able to focus my attention on writing. As I had already written down or marked my support, I was able to properly cite my works using the Chicago Style. I was not running around trying to track down sources while I wrote, as I had already devoted time to research. In the end, the paper was written relatively quickly. In fact, I had spent much more time researching than actually writing. As I handed in my paper, I was confident that the time spent researching was well worth it. My research was the key to positively answering my initial question; one can write an academic paper on comic books.