Comics and Conflict: War and Patriotically Themed Comics in American Cultural History From World War II Through the Iraq War

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Abstract
Illustration has been an integral part of human history. Particularly before the advent of media such as photography, film, television, and now the Internet, illustrations in all their variety have been the primary visual way to convey history. The comic book, which emerged in its modern form in the 1930s, was another form of visual entertainment that gave readers, especially children, a form of escape.

As World War II began, however, comic books became an integral part of war propaganda as well providing information and education for both children and adults. This dissertation looks at how specific comic books of the war genre have been used to display patriotism, adventure through war stories, and eventually to tell of the horrors of combat--from World War II through the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan in the first decade of the twenty-first century.

This dissertation also examines how war- and patriotically-themed comics evolved from soldier-drawn reflections of society, eventually developing along with the broader comic book medium into a mirror of American society during times of conflict. These comic books generally reflected patriotic fervor, but sometimes they advanced a specific cause. As war comic books evolved along with American society, many also served as a form of protest against United States foreign and military policy. During the country's most recent wars, however, patriotism has made a comeback, at the same time that the grim realities of combat are depicted more realistically than ever before.

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Though the Iraq war began under what are generally accepted to have been false pretenses (that they possessed nuclear warheads), the outcome of the war led to the overthrow and execution of Saddam Hussein. Still, the war is largely seen as a failure since the escalation of insurgency spilled over into the Syrian Civil War once Americans departed, and many argue that the country is worse off than when the US went in. It was part of the Cold War and was fought between Soviet-led Afghan forces and the multinational insurgent group Mujahideen. World War II was the deadliest conflict in human history, resulting in the deaths of between 50 and 85 million people. Download Citation on ResearchGate | Comics and Conflict: War and Patriotically Themed Comics in American Cultural History From World War II Through the Iraq War | Illustration has been an integral part of human history. Particularly before the advent of media such as photography, film, television, and now the Internet, illustrations in all their variety have been the primary visual way to convey history. This dissertation also examines how war- and patriotically-themed comics evolved from soldier-drawn reflections of society, eventually developing along with the broader comic book medium into a mirror of American society during times of conflict. These comic books generally reflected patriotic fervor, but sometimes they advanced a specific cause. Loyola eCommons. Comics and Conflict: War and Patriotically Themed Comics in American Cultural History From World War II Through the Iraq War. Loyola university chicago. Dissertations. Comics and conflict: war and patriotically themed comics in american cultural history. From world war II through the iraq war. A dissertation submitted to the faculty of the graduate school. In candidacy for the degree of doctor of philosophy.