

## COMIC RELIEF

With at least three different major cinematic franchises on top of multiple TV and streaming shows, it can be hard to keep track of all the different superhero stories hitting the big (and small) screen. When you find a character or story line that resonates with you, it can be difficult to find an inaugural comic book. Most major characters have gone through decades of reboots, creative team changes and alternate universes, only compounding the problem. Fortunately, we've compiled a list of comic book recommendations for this season's most anticipated movies, perfect for an introduction to comics, starting out with a new character or just background for hordes of "This isn't how it happened in the comics" discussions.

### Batman vs. Superman: Dawn of Justice

Both Batman and Superman were created in the late 1930s. With almost 80 years of comics to wade through, and numerous joint ventures in various universes, picking a starting point can seem intimidating. But let's face it, they've been making Batman and Superman movies for decades, and if you haven't picked up one of their comics at this point, you might be better off trying a different hero. Instead, try Wonder Woman, who has been around almost as long as the boys, but is finally making her big screen debut in *Dawn of Justice*. If you want to make sure to include Bats and Supes, go for Christopher Moeller's *Justice League America: A League of One*. In this arc, Wonder Woman receives a prophecy about the awakening of a dragon. Unfortunately, it's predicted that the one who slays the dragon will die in the process, so Wonder Woman must cast her JLA teammates aside and take center stage to fulfil the prophecy.

### Captain America: Civil War

While the Civil War comics event is fantastic, it's one of the most daunting comic arcs to start with as a new fan. Not only is it long, spanning more than 100 issues, but it contains so many characters that even tenured Marvel fans may need a second reference. If the 2014 movie didn't convince you, start with Ed Brubaker's *Captain America: Winter Soldier Ultimate Collection*. Though the titular Winter Soldier doesn't have as much of a direct role in the comic *Civil War* as he does in the movie, the events of the two arcs happen concurrently. This gives

you a taste of Civil War without the complications of the multiverse, as the cast is much smaller and more familiar. That being said, if you feel up to the challenge, starting with the *Civil War* 7-part comic (penned by Mark Millar) and moving your way out to the full series may be the best way to go.

## X-Men: Apocalypse

As is the case for many comic book movies, *X-Men: Apocalypse* is not based on one arc, but is an amalgamation of several different incarnations of the Apocalypse character. For an introduction to Apocalypse himself, try Terry Kavanagh and James Felder's *The Rise of Apocalypse*, an origin story for one of the X-Men's most notorious villains. This arc takes place 5,000 years ago in Egypt where Apocalypse was born En Sabah Nur. The plot is short and simple, and the art can be lacking at times, so for a better story with Apocalypse as the villain instead of the hero, read *Uncanny X-Force: The Apocalypse Solution*. In this volume, well-known favorites like Wolverine and Deadpool team up to defeat threats to mutant-kind; in this case a young Apocalypse. Writer Rick Remender touches on many of the quintessential themes of the classic Apocalypse stories in this arc, and its spin-off, *The Dark Angel Saga*, is one of the best reviewed comics of the decade.

## Suicide Squad

The Suicide Squad, a team of criminals who complete dangerous missions in exchange for their freedom, was originally created in the 1950s, but writer John Ostrander took over in 1987 and turned the characters into the team we know today. In 2011, DC launched 52 new comics series, dubbed the "New 52." The ensuing Suicide Squad reboot brought fan-favorite Harley Quinn onto the team. However, the New 52 Suicide Squad has been passed between various creative teams and in many cases, pales in comparison to the original Ostrander run. Unfortunately, much of Ostrander's Suicide Squad is currently out of print. While not the easiest place to start, (as it relies heavily on the continuity from the greater DC universe) Ostrander's 2008 *Suicide Squad: From the Ashes* strikes the duo of good writing and characterization while still being fairly easily to find in shops.