

Kingdom Come Study Guide

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Plot Summary

The world is in terrible shape after falling into the hands of a new breed of super heroes. Unlike the old super heroes, these skip the justice system all together and kill their adversaries. When most of those adversaries are gone, there is no one left for them to fight but each other. Innocent people begin losing their lives and that is when the old supers decide to step in.

Pastor Norman McCay hears prophecies of Armageddon given by an old man, Wesley Dodd. Norman thinks Wesley is nuts, but soon finds out after his death that he was not insane. Since Wesley shared all the visions of doom with Norman, the Spectre pays Norman a visit. The Spectre needs to know Wesley's visions so he can pass judgment on whomever is responsible for Armageddon.

Norman and the Spectre invisibly travel in and out of various time frames to witness first-hand the events that lead to Armageddon.

At the urging of Wonder Woman, Superman comes out of a 10-year self-imposed exile to fight the renegade supers. Captain Marvel also comes out of exile. Having been brainwashed for years by Lex Luthor, Luthor programs Marvel to attack Superman.

In the middle of their fight, Superman talks through Captain Marvel's brainwashing to reason with him. The bombs are headed for the gulag when Superman tells Marvel to decide who should be spared—the humans or the super heroes. As Superman flies up to deflect the bombs, Marvel passes him. Marvel detonates the bombs. Many super heroes are killed, but there are survivors. Marvel dies in his heroic act.

In the end, the old generation super heroes see how they let society down by not continuing their crime-fighting work when the new supers took their place. They also realize they have been acting above the law and above humanity for some time. The surviving super heroes tell the U.N. that they will live among them and work with them from now on.

The old super heroes find hope. The U.N. finds hope in the promises of the supers and in their opportunity to control their own human issues from now on. The Spectre even finds hope. He has watched Norman throughout the ordeal and grows to respect him. The Spectre takes off his hood and assumes his human persona again and becomes part of Norman's congregation.

Norman has also found hope. When his mission with the Spectre is complete, the Spectre tells Norman that he has been able to keep up with the super heroes during their travels together. "Perhaps you are more like them than you realize," he adds.



Chapter 1, Strange Visitor

Chapter 1, Strange Visitor Summary

Kingdom Come is a DC comics mini-series of four comic books, bound together to create one graphic novel. The compelling story entwines a number of old favorite super heroes who join forces once again—not to defeat evil, but to defeat the younger generation of super heroes that runs wild and endangers the very world they should be working to save.

The opening pages of Chapter One display quotes from Revelation in the Bible. The graphics depict a soaring eagle colliding with a bat. The next two pages depict horrific warfare along with more quotations from the Book of Revelation.

The chapter begins with Rev. Norman McCay visiting a sick church member in the hospital. The old, frail man seems crazy and talks of the end of the world. Norman tries to calm him down, but the strange old man insists he listens to him talk about his visions.

The old man's name is Wesley. He strips his own IV out of his arm as he tells Norman that "Seven thunders will utter their voices! And it was given unto him to make war with the saints." Norman again tries to calm the old man. As a doctor and nurse try to reconnect his IV and stabilize his condition, the old man tells Norman he has nothing to leave behind to him but his insight. Then he says he gives power to the doctor and nurse.

As the doctor and nurse work to stabilize Wesley, the panel switches to show the view that Wesley has of them. Until this point, the story is seen from a third person point of view. The doctor and nurse, in his view, are both wearing fedoras and gas masks. This foreshadows information that will be learned later in the chapter, but will be a dead giveaway for many DC Comics readers.

As Norman reads scripture to him, the old man dies. In following panels, the illustrator depicts the goings-on since Wesley's death while the writer tells Norman's thoughts. Although Wesley had attended Norman's church for some time, Norman wonders where Wesley will spend his eternity. Norman explains that Wesley began attending his church in search of something to believe in. The old man used to tell Norman stories of days past, claiming he was a super hero himself known as the Sandman.

Norman wanders the streets, reflecting on his old conversations with Wesley, truly believing he was nothing more than a crazy old man. He stops by a restaurant where the servers dress like super heroes. He is greeted by one dressed like the Green Lantern. The server refers to himself as the Green Arrow, showing that the generation no longer has any real recollection of the super heroes that existed before Magog and his new breed. Norman thinks about all his conversations with Wesley. The super



heroes of today are the children and grandchildren of the super heroes from Wesley's generation. They brag about eliminating all the old super villains from the world, leaving no one for them to fight but each other. They no longer fight for truth and justice. They simply fight to fight. Then, in the city square, he sees a news bulletin broadcast on an outdoor monitor. As he and other citizens stop to hear the bulletin, they learn that Kansas and parts of neighboring states have been destroyed. Segments of Wesley's visions begin coming back to Norman.

That Sunday, church members attend services needing to hear a message of hope. Instead, Norman preaches on Revelation, telling the church that the end is near, to fear God and give him glory. He feels like he let his church members down, but the Kansas tragedy proved to Norman that Wesley's nightmares were instead, truly visions of the near future. Even though he believes Wesley's visions are coming to pass, he cannot help wondering if he is going crazy instead.

Then the Spectre appears before him. "I have need of you, Norman McCay," says the man cloaked to look like the grim reaper. The Spectre tells Norman he was sent by a higher power to punish those responsible for the pending devastation. In order to fulfill his task, he must attach himself to a human soul who seeks justice. When Norman tells him that he does not seek justice, the Spectre replies, "You will." He goes on to explain he should have gotten to Wesley sooner. Wesley's visions would lead him through the chain of events that would certainly lead to the end. When Wesley died, he passed his insight—those visions—to Norman. At this point, readers who know the legend of the Sandman will realize that when Wesley lay dying in the hospital, the reason he viewed the doctor and nurse with fedoras and gas masks is because he passed his gift of comforting sleep to them. With that gift, he was able to die in peace.

Armed with Norman's recollection of Wesley's visions, the Spectre will be able to follow the path to the world's destruction and correctly pass judgment. The Spectre tells Norman that in his younger days he would have been quick to pass judgment, but his maturity leads him to make more educated decisions.

Their first stop as invisible witnesses is a midwestern farm. This has been Superman's farm for the last 10 years. Superman, devastated by a new society that picked the vengeful Magog's type of super heroism over his own, left Metropolis behind and has lived all alone on his farm for the last 10 years. Coupled with society's favoritism to Magog, the events were too much to deal with, so Superman put himself in a self-imposed exile.

Wonder Woman stops by to visit Superman. She informs him that the world is in terrible trouble and encourages him to turn on all the television monitors he has set up that he once used to monitor the world. He turns his monitors on to see that the entire world is talking about the destruction of Kansas. Magog and his justice team were fighting a villain named the Parasite. Even though the Parasite surrendered and begged for Mercy, they savagely beat him. In desperation, he retaliated, hitting and splitting Captain Atom which caused the destruction of the state of Kansas. The radiation emitted also



destroyed parts of neighboring states. The only survivors of the incident were Magog and Alloy.

Wonder Woman pleads with Superman to get him to return to crime fighting. She tells him that he is the leader of the super heroes of their generation and without him, they cannot effectively reunite to save the world from the younger generation of super heroes. He seems disinterested and tells her to go back to Paradise Island for safety. He does not say he will not help, but does say "There's nothing I can do from here," leading the reader to believe Superman has no interest in leaving his farm.

The Spectre explains to Norman that when Superman left the world of crime fighting ten years earlier, many of the heroes contemporaries were disappointed and confused. Not able to walk completely away from their duties as Superman had, they continue to protect certain areas, often from behind the scenes with much less notoriety than they had in their glory days. The Spectre says that Keystone City is patrolled by the Flash. The Pacific Northwest is guarded by Hawkman. The Green Lantern protects outer space. Batman controls Gotham City.

Norman believes the Spectre is a messenger of hope, but the Spectre never claims to be. Norman tells him part of Wesley's vision, saying that the new breed of heroes is "worse than before! They're not acting out of boredom! They're acting out of abandon!"

Norman and the Spectre are in Metropolis and witness a crashing cable car caused by Harlequin, daughter of the Joker. Norman realizes the incident is also part of Wesley's vision and he quotes the vision as the graphic panels show the vision come to pass. The citizens find hope when Superman appears from the sky, saving the cable car full of people and capturing Harlequin. The public is hopeful, but Norman says that Armageddon has not ended, but has only just begun.

Chapter 1, Strange Visitor Analysis

The way words and graphics work together to tell a story in a graphic novel is very unique. If one of those two elements is lacking, the entire story will be affected. The graphics in Kingdom Come are so realistic that sometimes it is as if the reader is looking at photographs instead of drawings. The wording works perfectly with the graphics.

In the opening pages of Chapter One, the art depicts a soaring eagle colliding with a bat. The eagle has images of an American flag superimposed onto it. The image of the American bird along with the flag is symbolic of Superman. Superman is truly an American hero, standing for truth and justice. The bat is symbolic of Batman. The bat looks frightening, which indicates that Batman rules by fear. Even though the two heroes have the same goal—protecting citizens—they often collide when deciding how to go about protecting the general population.

Graphics play an important role in the novel again when Wesley is dying. After yanking his own IV out of his arm, a doctor and nurse try to stabilize him. Wesley verbally says he leaves his insight behind to the preacher and gives "power" to his doctor and nurse.



Without the visual of the following panel, the reader would not know what this power was. In the panel, Wesley sees his doctor and nurse wearing fedoras and gas masks, which are the costume of the Sandman. The "power" he passed to them was the ability to relax people to help them sleep. Instead of sleep, however, Wesley was made comfortable to die.

When Wonder Woman goes to Superman to ask him to leave his self-imposed exile to help correct the problems caused by the younger breed of heroes, the writer makes his comment vague to add suspicion and interest. Superman simply says, "There's nothing I can do from here," which sounds like he is not interested in leaving his exile. However, he was simply stating fact: there is not anything he could do from his vast lonely farmland to change the problem. However, since he did not elaborate and tell Diana he would leave his farm to start making plans, all she could assume is that he was not going to do anything at all.

Using an illustration key in the back of the book, it is possible to learn the name of the super villain who is responsible for the crashing cable car in Metropolis. Since this story moves so quickly, the illustrator and writer chose to include this illustration key in the back as a reference. Since the reader actually sees the culprit in the graphics, it is possible to find the character in the key and match its number to the legend. This is how the reader learns that the villain responsible is Harlequin, the daughter of the Joker.



Chapter 2, Truth and Justice

Chapter 2, Truth and Justice Summary

Chapter Two "Truth and Justice" also begins with Revelation scripture, talking about how the seven angels prepare themselves to sound.

The first incident Norman and the Spectre witness in Chapter Two occurs at the Statue of Liberty. The statue, one of America's greatest symbols of freedom and hope, is in need of repairs and has been vandalized. DC readers will likely catch the "Lobo wuz here" graffiti that refers to another popular character who does not appear in this book.

They witness the Americommando and his Minutemen declare war on immigrants. The Americommando says they have overlooked the "most insidious menace of all—the poor, tired, huddled masses camping on our shores, begging for citizenship." He tells them that since Kansas no longer exists there is no room for immigrants. The panels show desperate immigrants hurling themselves into the water trying to flee. In the meantime, other young super heroes show up to fight Americommando, saying "Defend yourself, Americamando." The fight between them kills innocent bystanders. The next page shows super heroes of yesteryear led by Superman entering to take control of the situation. There are seven superheroes, like the seven angels from Wesley's visions. The seven heroes are Superman, Wonder Woman, The Green Lantern, Power Woman, the Flash, Hawkman and the Ray. As the super heroes of yesteryear fight outside the Statue of Liberty, Robin takes on villains inside the torch. When the torch breaks from the statue, Wonder Woman uses her golden lariat to catch it. Once the bystanders are safe, the super heroes head to the U.N.

At the U.N., the super heroes of yesteryear answer questions from the media at a spontaneous press conference. Superman addresses the crowd, telling them that the absence of the old super heroes gave way to a new breed of meta-humans, heroes that had no willingness to serve humanity or defend truth and justice. He says they have returned to teach the younger heroes the concepts of truth and justice. He promises to teach the new breed with wisdom and, if needed, force, to restore order to the world. As the super heroes wrap up the media questions, delegates to the U.N. take a minute to discuss what they have heard. None of them are happy with the announcement. Norman thinks he sees fear in the room of delegates, but the Spectre says it is instead a validation of fear because the humans realize they are no longer in control of their own destiny.

Leaving the U.N. building, the Spectre and Norman see Superman enter the batcave. Bruce is wearing a steel frame as a body brace. It seems all his years of crime fighting are taking a toll on him physically. When Superman calls out "You can't hide from me," it brings a sarcastic retort from Batman. "You know all about hiding, don't you Clark?"



Superman reminds Bruce not to call him Clark, but Bruce continues to do so any way—every chance he gets. The conversation between the two seems strained, with Bruce taking every shot he can against Superman. Batman tells Superman that the conflict is nothing new. It has been escalating all the while Superman was in hiding. Superman lets Batman know that Robin has joined the justice league, but he is not swayed. Batman lets Superman know that he has his own controls and that they are slower and more methodical than Superman's takeover ideas. He also tells Superman that he has human allies working with him.

Norman asks the Spectre if Batman and Superman were ever friends. Their meeting does not seem too friendly. The Spectre explains that great minds do not always think alike. The Spectre points out their differences: Batman was the "zenith of human fortitude and ambition" while Superman was the "pinnacle of otherworld power" since he is an alien. The Spectre also says Wonder Woman is the one contemporary Superman should watch closely. Her dual roles as an ambassador of peace and a master warrior are contradictions of each other and can therefore cause conflict within herself.

The league of yesteryear super heroes begins negotiating and enforcing peace and transforming enemies into allies. Wonder Woman's warrior instinct comes to the forefront in one battle against the young supers. Superman calms her down, but agrees with her when she says the young crew has very little regard for human life.

The Spectre and Norman travel next to Lex Luthor's board room. They witness a man break the secretary's neck because she gave him one sugar in his coffee instead of two. While the group complains because the super heroes have no compassion for human life, it seems as though this group of humans likewise has no regard for life. Luthor invites the man and his guest in to attend the board meeting for a group called the Mankind Liberation Front. The board includes Catwoman and the Riddler. Luthor tells the board they must act more quickly than planned with the emergence of the old justice league. He goes on to tell them that he has an "anti-superman plan." The man who has come in to shave Luthor during the meeting looks like he is involved with the plan. The Spectre connects the man with another part of Wesley's visions: "The captain of the lightning and the thunder." The man is Captain Marvel. The Spectre and Norman leave, moving on to the next scene—a club full of the young breed of heroes.

They see Superman stop their party, asking who is willing to join the justice league. Many of the younger generation are in awe of Superman. After he leaves, one of Batman's representatives stops in to ask for those interested in forming an alliance with him.

The next scene witnessed by Norman and the Spectre represents another Revelation scripture, with all the super heroes meeting to make plans. America begins healing, so the super friends branch out to help the entire world. Superman's team is growing, with most of the younger generation falling into place just because they are in awe of his presence. Superman is truly a world leader. The pressure against Superman grows as rebellions against truth and justice become more frequent. Superman begins to wonder



what to do with the rebellions he cannot convert to the side of justice. Wonder Woman has an idea.

She takes Superman below the ocean to ask King Arthur, formerly Aqua Man, if they can build a jail for rebellions under the sea. Aqua Man denies the request. Wonder Woman tells Arthur that she has been stripped of her title and her heritage because her sisters believe she has let them down as an ambassador and teacher of peace. Superman knows nothing about Diana's idea for an underwater jail or about her loss of title until they visit Arthur under sea. The two super heroes almost share a kiss when interrupted by other heroes—they have located Magog.

Magog returns to Kansas. Superman confronts him there. Magog tells Superman that the destruction of the world is his fault because he left crime fighting. Magog says that the world changed, but Superman would not. He points out that the public wanted a hero who would kill, and now those people are dead. He begs Superman to kill him so he can rid his mind of the memories of all the people he has killed.

Next, Superman visits Orion, the Lord of Apokolips. Orion tells Superman that saving the world could lead to its destruction. With no help from Orion, Superman recruits Mister Miracle, Big Barda and their daughter Avia. Barda offers help with a security system for the prison Superman is building in Kansas.

Chapter Two ends with Batman joining Lex Luthor's group. Batman tells Luthor that alone, neither would be successful, but together they could work to actually cause the downfall of the justice league once and for all.

Chapter 2, Truth and Justice Analysis

Revelation plays an important role in this story. Revelations that the Sandman has are direct prophetic visions that correspond with the Bible's Book of Revelation. When the seven super heroes descend from the sky to save the immigrants from the fighting young super heroes, they fulfill the prophesy of seven angels appearing in the sky. Symbolism of the Statue of Liberty's broken torch is two-fold. It shows that the young supers have no regard for America's past, and symbolizes that as it crumbles, a super hero from past generations is there to protect and save it.

Superman's visit with Batman in the batcave is wrought with sarcasm and irony. When Superman enters, he calls out, "You can't hide from me." Batman, never one to pass up a snappy comeback, replies "You know all about hiding, don't you Clark?" Batman's comment sarcastically refers to Superman's self-imposed exile. While Superman has been hiding from society, Batman has continued to protect his Gotham City despite physical disability. Throughout this conversation, Batman continually refers to Superman as Clark. He never calls him Kal. As the writer explains earlier, Superman prefers Kal because he believes his existence as a human named Clark ceased when Clark's parents and wife were killed. The reader must decide if Batman is not honoring his wish out of disrespect or out of respect. It is possible that Batman disrespects Superman's



retreat from crime fighting, therefore will not honor his request to be called by a different name. Or, Batman could respect Superman so much that he refuses to let him off humanity's hook so easily. Maybe the reason he continues to call Superman by the name Clark is to force the hero to see that neither the hero nor the man ceased to exist just because he took time to grieve in solitude.

When Superman and Magog finally see each other, Magog explains that the destruction he has inflicted is the fault of humanity and Superman. He says humanity chose his style of heroism because he would kill the villains to eliminate them forever. Ironically, the very people who chose Magog's renegade style were all eventually killed in the process. Superman continually turned the villains over to law enforcement for processing through the country's legal system. Magog blames Superman for not stopping him. The writer is pointing out that there is a blameless generation who is a victim of humanity's progress. Magog begs Superman to kill him so he will not have to think about all the murders he has committed. This proves Superman's point that most people can be reformed. Superman does not kill him or incarcerate him, but Magog himself does not appear any more throughout the story.



Chapter 3, Up in the Sky

Chapter 3, Up in the Sky Summary

Chapter Three "Up in the Sky" begins like the other chapters, with scriptures from the Book of Revelation. The Spectre and Norman are in Kansas at the prison for non-conformists that the justice league has built. Norman's visions are growing and appearing to him more quickly than ever.

The prison was built after all the radiation from Magog's fight had been cleaned up. It is constructed to hold a large number of prisoners for some time, but it is filling rapidly. Mister Miracle's past as an escape artist helps him design the very best traps to keep prisoners inside. Holograms of Superman are brought in to teach truth and justice concepts, but the prisoners do not seem interested in learning the new way of life. They rebel against the holograms and the teachings of truth and justice as a way of life.

Norman bumps into a character named "Deadman." Deadman is another D.C. Comics character who is a super hero. In this instance, he is a skeleton because the book takes place in the future. Deadman, although just a skeleton, is friendly and talkative. He strikes up a conversation with Norman and tells him what he knows about the Spectre. The Spectre was a cop and formerly a super hero himself, according to Deadman.

Wonder Woman and Superman talk more about her tribe stripping her of her title. She tells Superman that her trial happened shortly after he went into seclusion. She explains that as the world's situation continued to worsen, her tribe began to wonder if she was doing her job well enough. Wonder Woman tells Superman that she was not warrior enough to do the job, but Superman tells her he has always admired her gentility. He reminds her that they have an obligation to keep the peace. She tells Superman that she has an obligation to war and combat. Superman tells her that given who they are and the extreme powers they possess, they have a greater obligation as peace keepers. No fight would truly be fair against them and their super powers, and Superman is concerned first and foremost with fairness.

The next panels show Lex Luthor's torture and brainwashing of Billy, Captain Marvel. Billy left his super hero work behind when he was younger. Luthor brainwashes him and tells him that super heroes are evil and made the world a bad place. Luthor places worms in Billy's ears as a form of torture, a practice used by D.C. Comics' mad scientist Sivana. He convinces Billy he does this so the worms will eat away the super hero inside him, killing the monster known as Captain Marvel. One of Batman's robo-bats witnesses the event.

Batman watches Luthor's crews as they manufacture warrior robots and he reminds the villain that their objective is world order, not world domination. They talk about why the group cannot simply use kryptonite to stop Superman. Luthor says that because of exposure to radiation, kryptonite no longer affects Superman.



Batman tells Luthor that he and his super alliance will be ready to step in if needed. He tells Luthor his alliance is formed of the children and grandchildren of the old super hero generation. Questioned by Lex Luthor's son whether the young people would fight their families, Batman ironically replies with the question, "Aren't all young people?"

The Spectre and Norman watch a meeting between Batman and John Jones, former Manhunter from Mars. The Spectre explains that John wanted to understand the human psyche so much that when he finally was able to open his mind to the world, he was shattered. He can no longer control his power of molecular restructuring, such as walking through walls, as is seen when he cannot pick up a simple coffee cup without his hand going through it. Batman is asking him to verify who the young man is that his robo-bat saw Luthor torturing. John, however, is no help. He is incredibly nervous and upset that he cannot help. Batman appreciates his time and willingness to help, but tells him to go home and rest. As John attempts to leave, he is seen walking into a wall in the panel. Normally, he would be able to walk through it.

Captain Marvel walks among Batman's group of young super heroes, intimidating them only as Superman has been able to do in the past. The difference is that Superman's presence brings respect. They are afraid of Captain Marvel, the mightiest mortal of all. Superman seems cool and collected. Captain Marvel walks around with a crazy smile on his face and a far-away look in his eyes that alarms the young super heroes.

The Spectre and Norman witness the justice league as they monitor the world, when Norman's existence is discovered. Norman is discovered by the Flash, who sensed him as he traveled through the seconds of various dimensions. The Flash pulls Norman into the realistic realm where Norman tries to warn Superman that he sees Armageddon in the near future. Superman does not heed the warning and tells Norman that the super heroes are going to save the world, not destroy it. Just then, Robin sees a report from the prison that says the prisoners have gone crazy and are rioting. Superman and Wonder Woman head to the U.N. while Flash, Green Lantern, and Power Woman hurry to the prison to find out what is happening.

Superman tells the U.N. about the super hero prison for non-converts. While informing them that the prison exists, he also must level with them to let them know there is a riot taking place at it that very moment. U.N. representatives are upset at the news and tell Superman that the hope they had from his return to crime fighting is quickly melting away since he was not up front with them about the jail from the beginning. They say they will begin to decide some things for themselves from now on.

With the news of the prison riot, Luthor decides it is time to strike against the justice league. He tells Billy that he will be the one to take them all down. Confused, Billy argues that Luthor has taught him that super heroes are evil. Luthor tells him that it is true, but only he can take them down. As Luthor talks to Billy, he rubs his ear, an intimidating reminder about the worm torture treatment. At that moment, Batman punches Billy and knocks him out. He explains that Luthor turned Billy into a schizophrenic with his "treatments." Batman says his only goal in allying with Luthor



was to learn about his wild card. Batman's group of young super heroes take that as their cue and attack Luthor's group.

Batman finds Billy and tells him what Luthor has been doing to him. The worms have been chemically engineered to secrete certain chemicals to drive Billy mad. Billy runs into an overhead container full of worms and they fall all over him, making him shout "Shazam," the word that transforms him into his mightier alter ego.

Next, Superman walks in as Wonder Woman finalizes her warrior outfit. Superman says he is not comfortable with her warrior side. Superman tells her he will not allow any killing of the rioters. They are students, he says, who are supposed to be learning truth and justice as a way of life.

An argument between the two ensues. She says the problem is that the super heroes have rules but the rebelling super heroes do not. News comes to break up the argument. The riot is getting out of control and Captain Comet has already been killed. Superman is visibly shaken. Wonder Woman says it is time to give the prisoners an ultimatum—surrender or war. Superman does not like war. Wonder Woman gives him a final cold kiss goodbye and leads the remaining justice league members to fight in the riot. Superman appears to stay behind.

Superman hurries to the batcave to get Batman's help. Instead of asking for help, Superman demands Batman help. Batman tells him that maybe war is what is needed to allow humanity to regain control of itself. Superman says that the killing of humans—or super humans in this case, is wrong and is the one thing on which they always agree. Batman breaks the news to Superman that Captain Marvel is on his way to the prison to do away with the justice league. Superman breaks away as Batman is talking.

Norman witnesses the sky split as Superman blazes through its vastness to reach his super hero friends as they fight the rioting prisoners. He witnesses the end as it unfolds. As a determined Superman enters the fight, he is soon knocked out of it by Captain Marvel. The look on Captain Marvel's face is one of insanity. He smiles wickedly as he looks down on Superman who was knocked down by the sheer power of his entry. Norman says "Armageddon has arrived."

Chapter 3, Up in the Sky Analysis

The Deadman character is introduced in this chapter for two reasons. One, he provides short comic relief. The skeletal super hero is very talkative and friendly—characteristics that are not normally associated with a skeleton. His delightful, lively attitude is a contrast to his appearance. The second reason he comes to this story is to tell Norman a little more about the Spectre. He gives Norman the background information that the Spectre was a police officer and former super hero himself.

Superman continues to show his concern for humanity during a conversation with Wonder Woman. He is worried that she is taking on a more warrior personality. It is her softer side of being a teacher and goodwill ambassador that he has always admired.



Superman, despite humanity's choice of Magog's renegade style, still holds onto his genuine belief that super heroes should keep peace.

Lex Luthor's torture of Billy Batson (also known as Captain Marvel) comes to light in this chapter. Billy left his super hero persona as a younger boy when he saw the path humanity was choosing. He, like Superman, retreated because he did not want to be part of the new order that involved killing. Luthor capitalizes on Billy's fear and tortures him, using chemically engineered worms to slowly eat away at his mind and make him the crazy minion Luthor needs to do away with Superman. The writer effectively marries the story of D.C.Comic mad scientist Sivana into this story line by introducing the worms. Sivana used the worm often and was one of Captain Marvel's arch enemies. Luthor verbally makes reference to Sivana to give the reader a clue to the connection.

Throughout the book, one may wonder why Luthor and the Mankind Liberation Front do not just expose Superman to kryptonite to kill him. In the history of comic books and super heroes, most people who know the Superman legend know that he loses all powers when exposed to kryptonite. Luthor explains that growing radiation on Earth has hindered kryptonite's affects on the super hero.

The reader should expect a surprise from Batman's alliance with Luthor. Luthor's inflated ego is the only reason he is able to believe that Batman would become his ally. When Luthor's son asks if the children and grandchildren of the super heroes are willing to fight their elders, Batman replies that all youth rebel against their parents. This foreshadows later incidents where the young Batman crew actually turn on Luthor to protect their parents.

It appears that Superman is once again retreating, leaving the other super heroes to go fight the rioting prisoners. They all leave him standing behind as they exit to go to the riot. Instead of staying behind and doing nothing, Superman goes to Batman again, just like the first time Wonder Woman asked for his leadership. Once Batman tells Superman that Captain Marvel will be there to kill the heroes, Superman leaves before he can even finish his statement. "So that's what that feels like," Batman says. He is ironically referring to his own style of exit.



Chapter 4, Never Ending Battle

Chapter 4, Never Ending Battle Summary

Chapter Four "Never Ending Battle" starts with scripture and graphics depicting all out war between the super heroes. Norman begs the Spectre to stop the violence, but he says he cannot. Superman pleads with Captain Marvel to snap out of it and tries to remind him that he is an ally, not an enemy. As they continue fighting, Superman never ceases to try to snap Captain Marvel out of his brainwashed spell.

In the meantime, the U.N. decides to send nuclear weapons to destroy the warring super humans and heroes. The decision is not an easy one. One U.N. rep says the only way to ensure future generations will recall the decision as humanity's last choice is to ensure that there will be future generations.

The super heroes fight the rebels, and Captain Marvel keeps Superman on the defensive, not responding to Superman's attempts to snap him out of his Luthor-induced confusion. There is no hope for the super heroes until Batman enters in his full body armor. Batman's troops fly in silently, using manpower and robots. Batman brings hope to the super heroes. However, when Wonder Woman kills von Bach, the riot picks up. Wonder Woman tells Batman that if he stands in her way of forcing peace, she will move him. Batman argues that super heroes are to be enforcers of peace, not forcers of it. As Wonder Woman and Batman argue, they see the U.N. nuclear carriers headed toward the prison.

Inside, Superman continues to fight Captain Marvel. Superman tries using his x-ray vision to penetrate Captain Marvel's mind, a desperate attempt to break through the years of brainwashing by Lex Luthor. Every time Captain Marvel shouts "Shazam" a bolt of lightning strikes more super heroes.

Back outside, Batman tells Wonder Woman that the war they are fighting does not end just a few lives. It will, instead, be the ending to the entire world. Each tries to stop the nuclear war planes to no avail.

The Spectre tells Norman to decide who is accountable for the Armageddon but Norman says he cannot do it. Superman stops Captain Marvel, with a grasp on his cheek and ear, much like the intimidating grasp used by Luthor when dispensing the mind-eating worms into his ear. Superman tells Captain Marvel to let him go stop the bomb. Superman heads toward the sky, but is pulled back by Captain Marvel. Captain Marvel reaches the bomb, shouting "Shazam" multiple times. He keeps the bomb from touching the ground and is killed in the process.

Superman is in great anguish, feeling alone because he does not realize there are survivors. He goes to confront his human attackers at the U.N. The Spectre tells Norman goodbye since judgment was passed. Norman gets mad and tells the Spectre



that he will not settle for watching hordes of people die. "If what happens next happens the only way it can... and you let it... that is evil," Norman tells the Spectre. The Spectre and Norman travel through time again to arrive at the U.N. to witness a raging Superman. Norman tells the Spectre to let him talk to Superman.

Norman shouts out to Superman, "They won't forgive you for this," he says, "Forgive yourself." He goes on to tell Superman that his greatest power has always been his instinctive knowledge of right and wrong. He tells Superman that turning his back on society ten years earlier had cost him that power.

Now, other super heroes join Superman at the U.N. Superman is surprised to see that they are alive. They explain to him that Captain Marvel detonated the bomb in the sky. Batman tells him that there are enough survivors to have the exact same problems they had prior to the war. Superman tells the U.N. that he no longer cares about the mistakes of yesterday. His only concern now is coping with the challenges of tomorrow as a group effort between the super heroes and the U.N. He tells the U.N. that the super heroes will not solve the world's problems for them, but will instead work to solve the problems with them. Superman adds that the heroes will not help by ruling, but by living among them. At this point, Batman removes his head armor and Wonder Woman takes off her crown. They vow to earn the trust of the U.N. in honor of Captain Marvel, who gave his life so both humans and super heroes could live.

As Norman and the Spectre near the end of the chapter, they seem to be witnessing a hospital ward. They saw the destruction caused by the super hero war and now they witness the healing. This ward is actually the batcave transformed into a hospital. Prisoners work in the hospital which is overseen by Batman. Batman's quick sarcastic wit is demonstrated as he teases Lex Luthor, an orderly in the hospital. Luthor wears a tracking collar that helps control insubordinates as well as track them. Batman, standing behind him, quietly says "Shazam." This angers Luthor which pleases Batman. Robin is one of the patients in Batman's makeshift hospital. Batman and Robin make amends as Robin's daughter looks on.

Now that order is restored, Wonder Woman returns to her home, Paradise Island, and is restored as princess among her all female Amazon tribe. With her title and crown back, Wonder Woman no longer feels like a failure and can progress in her role as teacher of peace.

In the U.N., representatives are happy to have super heroes as allies. Superman returns to Kansas where he alone builds a memorial to remember all the lives lost—not just due to the bomb, but to all those who died due to mistakes made by the super heroes. Wonder Woman gives Superman a gift. He opens it to find his old glasses, the ones worn by his human personality Clark Kent. He puts them on and smiles toward the sun, then embraces Wonder Woman with a passionate kiss. As Wonder Woman flies away, she refers to him as Clark and he does not correct her. This signifies that Superman is ready to get on with his life as Clark Kent again. Superman returns to plowing his field.



Norman turns to the Spectre and asks who was responsible for the Armageddon. The Spectre says no one needs to suffer any more. Norman asks the Spectre what his perspective would have been when he was an ordinary human man. The Spectre removes his hood but does not answer. He only tells Norman that he asked a good question. He wished Norman well then told him "You exist...to give hope." Norman finds himself standing in his own church alone instead of in the fields of Kansas watching Superman.

Next, Norman is seen preaching in church. He points out that humanity has faith again. He teaches the lessons learned through the visions that carried him and the Spectre to Armageddon. He teaches that a dream is not always a prophesy and that the future should be open to interpretation. He also says that "hope is brightest when it dawns from fear." The Spectre sits in his congregation as a man, listening to the sermon as the rest of the church goes on—with hope.

Chapter 4, Never Ending Battle Analysis

The goodness of Superman and his belief that good exists in everyone is never more evident than in his battle with Captain Marvel. Even while fighting for his own life, Superman tries to break through the years of brainwashing and torture that Lex Luthor inflicted upon Billy.

When Batman enters the fight, the super heroes have hope again. They find hope in fear.

When Superman believes he was the sole survivor of the prison war, he goes to the U.N. to confront his attackers. This leads the reader to believe he is mad enough to kill for revenge. When he gets there, he makes a mess, but does not kill anyone, still holding true to his deepest belief, his regard for life. Norman calls out to Superman and gives him advice about forgiveness, an appropriate topic for a minister to give. He tells Superman to forgive himself.

When the other surviving super heroes show up at the U.N., they give Superman purpose. They have all learned a lesson, too. The supers will no longer fight battles for humanity, but will fight with humanity instead.

The bat cave is a visual oxymoron when the dark, hallowed chambers that once hid Batman become a white, sterilized facility that houses many injured. Even Batman's attire changes. He goes from a suit to a white t-shirt with a red bat on the front, symbolic of a medical symbol, or red cross.

Superman accepts his role as Clark Kent again when Wonder Woman gives him his old glasses. By putting the glasses on, he acknowledges that his existence did not stop simply because his parents died or because his wife Lois was killed by the Joker. He also accepts his old identity by wearing the glasses. Wonder Woman, who was always careful to refer to him as Kal, then calls him Clark and he does not correct her. This is a verbal declaration that he has accepted his identity and has dealt with his grief.



Norman, also, has come to grips with his role in life. As the Spectre returns him to his own dimension and his own church, he tells Norman that he exists to give hope. Norman felt like he let his congregation down in the beginning of the story because he did not preach a hopeful sermon when the people needed it most. By leading the Spectre with his visions of prophesy, he found hope himself and helped Superman find hope, too.



Epilogue, One Year Later

Epilogue, One Year Later Summary

The Epilogue, "One Year Later," is not shown from the view of the Spectre and Norman as the rest of the book was. In "One Year Later," Clark and Diana stop in for lunch at the Planet Krypton restaurant in Metropolis. The staff dresses as super heroes as part of the restaurant's gimmick. The establishment is decorated with various super hero paraphernalia to follow the restaurant theme. Both Clark and Diana are amused with the surroundings although Clark is a little unsettled by it all. They find a seat and are obviously waiting for someone. The guest they are waiting for is someone they want to surprise.

As they wait, Clark worries that he and Diana might be recognized as Superman and Wonder Woman. He is wearing a plaid shirt, jeans, and his traditional Clark Kent disguise — his signature glasses. Diana is wearing a simple white dress. and lace up sandals.

Bruce arrives, sneaking up on both Clark and Diana. He wears a black suit and his skeletal body frame, but is not recognized as Batman. Clark jokes about how Bruce stealthily appears from nowhere, just like as Batman has been known to do for many years. Both Bruce and Diana refer to Superman as Clark, showing that his period of grieving for his parents and wife Lois has come to a close.

A server dressed like Aqua Man takes their drink order. Clark gets milk, an all-American, wholesome, healthy favorite which is symbolic of the truth and wholesomeness Superman promotes. Diana orders water, true to her life on an Amazon island — a piece of land surrounded by water. Bruce asks for coffee and tells the waiter to "keep it coming." Bruce's Batman character was always the dark character, moving quietly through the night. Coffee, a dark drink, is his characteristic drink of choice.

When their drinks arrive, they toast past friends who died in the super hero war, Captain Comet and Captain Marvel. Their drinks were coincidentally served in cups featuring the two fallen heroes.

In the following panels we see that the super friends are seated beneath a Batman helicopter display. Their server arrives and introduces himself as Robin. Batman, always sarcastic, is only slightly amused. As they ask for recommendations, the waiter tells them the day's special is the Power Girl Chicken Sandwich. When Bruce asks what cut the meat is, the server tells them it is a breast, a play on words since Power Girl (now Power Woman) has large breasts which her costume accentuates. When Batman orders a well-done steak, the waiter tries to get him to pick one from the menu by the restaurant's theme names. Batman refuses, pushes the menu back to him and just insists on a steak well-done.



As they talk, the reader learns what has been happening in the lives of the three super heroes since the war. Diana has been teaching. She points out that teaching is tough because students must want to learn. She says she learned that lesson from the imprisoned younger super heroes. Clark has been cultivating his land. His x-ray vision helped strip the land of its radioactivity after the nuclear wars caused by Magog and by the super hero war. He jokes about growing 10 foot carrots in radiated dirt. Clark has been constructing a memorial to honor all the lives lost because of the super heroes, including the lives lost when Magog destroyed Kansas, those caught in the middle of fighting the younger breed heroes, and those killed in the war between the super heroes and the imprisoned young ones. Bruce explains that things are going well in his hospital which is staffed by the Mankind Liberation Front founded by Lex Luthor. He explains that there have been no problems with members of the Mankind Liberation Front because he put special inhibitor collars on their necks to keep them subdued as needed.

As they begin to eat, Diana tells Bruce they have an announcement. Without looking up from his plate, he simply states without any show of emotion, "You're pregnant." Both Diana and Clark are surprised. He wishes them well and tells Diana his first clue was that she has gained a little weight, rather obvious on a usually very fit Amazon warrior princess, he adds.

Diana surprises both Clark and Bruce when she asks Bruce to be the baby's godfather. Diana tells Bruce that there are things he can teach their child that she and Clark cannot. Bruce is concerned because, as he says, Clark and Diana rule by trust and he rules by fear. Clark adds that their child will need the balance of a mortal man, adding a "moral man...who we can count on." Bruce admits that trust is the center of his world. He says that despite their differences in the past, he has always trusted Clark. The two men hug.

As they leave the restaurant, the three super friends joke about how they will raise the baby. Bruce suggests naming the baby after him, then turns his attention to another conversation going on in the restaurant. He sees the Spectre, now in his man form, looking over the menu with Norman. The Spectre is disgusted to learn that the restaurant's "Spectre platter" is spinach and cottage cheese. Norman consoles him by telling him that it is flattering just to be remembered somehow. As Batman watches them, he apologizes to Clark and Diana for ignoring them, saying "Sorry. Just wandering for a second," leading the reader to believe he recognizes the pair by the use of his word "wandering."

Following the Epilogue in the "Apocrypha" section, the author and illustrator share sketches and character descriptions of the book's main characters. The section briefly describes the Spectre and Norman McCay, Superman, Wonder Woman, Captain Marvel and Batman. Normally, "Apocrypha" refers to legends that may or may not be true about a character or story. In this case, the section gives the reader additional insight into the characters both literally and visibly through artistic renderings.



The reader can find additional assistance in recognizing characters throughout the book by referring to the illustration legend that follows the character descriptions. The illustrations are broken down into three books. Each character is numbered so identifying them is easy. The legend tells the character's name and a very brief background. This is especially helpful to readers who have not followed the D.C Comic legends and because in some cases, the characters are never referred to by name. One such character is Harlequin. She is spotted causing the cable car derailment in Metropolis, but her character is not named there. Flipping to the back of the book to spot her in the illustration legend allows the reader to put names and histories with the faces of the characters even as the story continues to move so fast.

The section called "Evolution" describes the process used in creating a graphic novel. Mark Waid, the writer of the novel, writes briefly about the process of story development for a graphic novel. Waid wrote a detailed script that helped pace the story. An example shows that the writer verbally breaks the action and dialogue down by panels. Illustrator Alex Ross starts with rough sketches based on the script then develops them into full size color pieces of art. This section explains that Ross uses a color layering technique to develop the art work that draws him accolades.

Additional pieces of art close out the book, including t-shirt designs, comic book covers, trading card samples, and promotional posters, among others. The illustrator also explains that his own father was the inspiration for Norman McCay. His father even posed as a model for the project. He also thanks other people who modeled for characters in the book.

In their acknowledgments, the writer thanks several people, including Elliot S. Maggin and Christopher Reeve who "taught me who Superman really was and who he could be." Maggin was one of the writers of Superman comics in the 1970s and 1980s. Christopher Reeve portrayed Superman on the screen in movies made during the late 1970s and into the 1980s.

Epilogue, One Year Later Analysis

The Epilogue, "One Year Later," is a follow up that lets the reader know what has taken place since the devastating war. It also shows the super heroes living among the rest of humanity, not lording above it.

Humanity is still enamored with the days of the super heroes as proven by the restaurant called Planet Krypton. In this view of the restaurant, the human waiters and waitresses know more about the super heroes than when the story began. This shows a rebirth of interest in the supers as well as a respect for their work.

The atmosphere makes Clark uncomfortable. He worries they might be recognized. The writer adds this humor in since the only "disguise" Clark ever had was human clothing and a pair of glasses. In all these years, he has never been recognized. One wonders if



he might like to be recognized now. As they look for Bruce, Diana jokes that Clark should use his x-ray vision to find him.

The graphics in this chapter explain a lot and set the atmosphere. It is funny to see these three incognito super heroes dining in a restaurant surrounded by staff dressed like them and their contemporaries. Through their language and their discussions, the reader learns that the heroes really are living among the humans. They have worries, they joke, they are serious, they enjoy companionship, they have families just like humanity.

The epilogue also shows the Spectre having lunch with Norman. They have formed a lasting friendship due to their Armageddon experience. The Spectre, now a man, turns to Norman as his pastor for hope, much as the Spectre turned to him for hope and prophesy in the beginning of the story.

The "Apocrypha" section is helpful to readers who have not followed the Elseworld's story lines that have developed over the years through D.C. Comics. Here, the author and illustrator provide drawings and descriptions of the book's main characters. There is also a helpful character legend, allowing the reader to match a character's face to a brief description. This feature is also useful for readers who might not have followed comics for some time.

Another interesting section of the book is called "Evolution." In it, the writer and illustrator take time to explain and demonstrate the process used to create a graphic novel.



Characters

Rev. Norman McCay

In a story about super heroes, it is a meek older man named Rev. Norman McCay who tells the Kingdom Come story.

When the story opens, Norman is fulfilling his pastoral obligation of visiting the sick. Norman thinks the sick man is crazy when he talks of Armageddon and recites prophetic scripture from Revelation. However, the dying man passes his visions on to Norman, enabling him to carry the reader and the Spectre through the story as it unfolds.

Through a sermon he preaches, the reader learns that Norman has lost faith in his own beliefs. He looks around and sees the world in a terrible mess. Add the horrific visions of doom that the dying man shared with him and Norman loses sight of any hope. He knows his congregation looks to him for hope, but he can only preach of the pending judgment. He realizes he has disappointed them when they needed him most, and he loses faith in himself as well.

Rather than being fearful of the Spectre, Norman interacts quite comfortably with him. When the Spectre first appears, Norman thinks he is losing his mind. He very quickly, however, regains composure and asks the Spectre questions.

Norman wants to believe that the Spectre is an angel or messenger of hope. Norman, along with everyone else in the story, wants to find hope.

Alex Ross, the illustrator of Kingdom Come modeled his drawings of Norman in the book after his father, Clark Norman Ross, who is also a preacher.

The Spectre

Without the Spectre, Norman would have never been able to travel between dimensions unnoticed nor would there have been a need for him to do so. The Spectre is challenged with the chore of casting judgment on whomever ends the world.

In order to fulfill his obligation to a higher power, the Spectre must attach himself to a human soul who seeks justice. In the beginning, Norman does not seek justice. He actually just feels sorry for himself and civilization. As the events unfold, Norman does begin to seek justice, just as the Spectre knows he will.

Deadman gives Norman a little insight into who the Spectre is. Deadman tells Norman that the Spectre is indeed an angel—an angel of death. The graphics confirm this since all close up renderings of the Spectre show a small skull in the pupil of his eye. Deadman also explains that the Spectre was once a superhero himself and in real life



had been a police officer. Deadman explains that the Spectre started losing touch with his human side and "he's gotten weirder and weirder."

The Spectre explains that he cannot fulfill his obligation to pass judgment without actually witnessing the events leading to it himself. This is in line with his human career as a police officer. Police cannot issue a ticket for speeding or running a stop sign if they do not witness it themselves.

In addition to fulfilling his obligation to witness the events leading to Armageddon, the Spectre finds hope from Norman and the series of events and is able to get in touch with his human side again. He begins attending Norman's church and the two become friends.

Superman

Once admired by the people of Metropolis for his commitment to justice and his decency, Superman withdraws to a life of isolation when the public shuns him in favor of a new breed of superhuman represented by Magog. Rather than capturing evil-doers and leaving them for the legal system to process like Superman does, Magog takes justice into his own hands and kills the super villains he catches.

The community began to turn away from Superman because he did not change with the times. He still preached a lesson of moral code and decency that the general public did not like.

When Superman enters this story, he has been out of super hero circulation for a full ten years. He has lived quietly on his farm since the death of his parents and wife Lois and since the public made known their preference for Magog.

As he enters this story, the Superman wears a visible symbol showing that he is changing with the times. In years past, the "S" symbol on his shirt was red with a yellow background. Now, that yellow background is black. The fact that the black background is on his chest symbolizes that Superman bears a heavy, or dark, burden for society. His heart mourns for a decent society. It is also a symbol of his mourning for his parents and wife. The difference is a small one, but significant when considering that Superman has not ever changed anything about his appearance or crime fighting approach. He also asks fellow super friends to call him Kal rather than Clark. Since the humans in his life have died (his parents and wife Lois), he tries to give up his own human name because it carries too many painful memories with it.

Batman

Batman is somewhat of a rival to Superman, even though they both have justice as their priority. Throughout their past together, they have different ideas about how to achieve their goals. Superman rules by trust while Batman rules by fear.



The Batman in this story is not the caped-masked avenger most readers will recall. Batman traded in his cape and cowl for an exoskeleton frame to help him stand upright. Years of fighting evil have taken its toll on Batman's body, but he has not lost the will to serve as a crime fighter.

Abandoned by Superman and left in the care of Magog, Metropolis becomes a city of crime, but Gotham City is still kept safe by Batman. His body does not allow him to fight crime the same way he did as a younger, healthier man, so he creates robotic bats to keep an eye on the city. He monitors from the batcave.

When Superman asks Batman to help fight for control over the renegade super heroes, Batman declines. Batman, as Bruce Wayne, was a millionaire. He has the opinion that anyone strong enough to take power deserves it. He does not believe Superman and the former super friends can take control over the young heroes who are abusing their powers. However, Batman does not like that the young crew is making a mockery of all the values and standards he helped set through his years of crime fighting. While he rejects Superman, Batman does have a plan on his own.

Wonder Woman

Wonder Woman is an Amazon princess with super powers who serves as an ambassador of peace. Her mother is queen of an all-female Amazon tribe, making Wonder Woman a princess. Her tribe name is Princess Diana, so she adopts the worldly name of Diana Prince for her non-super hero persona.

With the chaos created by the new breed of super heroes, Diana's tribe strips her of her royalty title and her heritage. She is exiled from her home, Paradise Island. Her tribal sisters vote to take away her privileges because Diana fails to stop the turmoil caused by the younger supers.

It is Wonder Woman who initiates the rebellion against the young super heroes. She pays Superman a visit on his farm. She encourages the very isolated Superman to turn on his round-the-world news monitoring system to see that affects of Magog and his counterparts. She tells Superman that he is the leader of their generation of super heroes and without his lead, none of them will fight Magog.

As the fight against Magog ensues, Wonder Woman occasionally oversteps her authority in the planning stages. Having been stripped of her titles of princess and of ambassador, Wonder Woman resorts to the other behavior she knows—Amazon warrior. She is ready to kill to gain control of the world again and Superman disagrees with the tactic. He wants to teach the young heroes right from wrong and convince them to join the side of justice. Wonder Woman, however, struggles to regain the respect of her tribe.

Wonder Woman has a gleam of passion in her eyes for Superman, a gleam that is literally visible in the graphic novel.



Captain Marvel

Billy Batson, much like Superman, was distraught when he learned that the world picked the avenging, killing kind of super hero like Magog over their truth and justice method of protecting. Still a young boy, he exited the world of crime fighting, keeping his "Shazam" to himself and not converting into super hero mode again.

Lex Luthor took Billy under his wing, teaching him that super heroes were evil. Luthor brainwashed him and gave him a treatment to kill his evil super hero deep down inside. All along, Luthor was actually preparing the boy to transform into Captain Marvel again in order to do away with the justice league.

Billy's inner conflict coupled with Luthor's brainwashing has created quite a lot of turmoil within the young man. He has great shame about being a super hero and that is why he joined the Mankind Liberation Foundation to promote human rights.

Captain Marvel is known as the mightiest of all mortals. His powers are the only ones that can truly give Superman a run for his money. When he shouts "Shazam," Billy turns into Captain Marvel. His costume has a lightning bolt on it. Whenever he shouts "Shazam" lightning strikes with huge, powerful bolts.

Magog

Magog is an arrogant super hero, one of the new breed. Unlike Superman and the super heroes of yesteryear, Magog and his generation kill the villains. The public likes this new renegade style of justice. Superman does not like it and retreats to a self-imposed exile. Captain Marvel does not like it either and gives up crime fighting.

Magog and Captain Atom are responsible for the destruction of Kansas. They are fighting a villain known as the Parasite. The Parasite surrenders and begs for mercy, but they continue to attack. Out of desperation, the Parasite tries to fight back and splits Captain Atom. The splitting of Atom creates a nuclear explosion that devastates the entire state of Kansas and several surrounding states.

When confronted by Superman, Magog arrogantly accuses Superman of being afraid of him and tries to belittle him by talking about Superman's exile. Yet, moments later, he blames Superman for the destruction the world is seeing. He contends that if Superman had changed with the times, people would have never had to pick between the two of them. They picked the newer model over the old-fashioned one, Magog explains.

Magog believes himself blameless, yet he suffers from the haunting memories of all the lives he has taken. He is burdened by the murders and shows remorse, still somehow convincing himself that it is all Superman's fault and no fault of his own.



Lex Luthor

Lex Luthor is a long time villain of the super hero world. His character represents big business and uncontrolled, selfish intellect. His current organization, the Mankind Liberation Foundation, is established with a board of directors, just like a large corporation would be. Luthor runs his rebellion just like a business.

Luthor's inflated ego allows him to believe that Batman would actually side with him in order to see the downfall of Superman.

While the MLF focuses on liberating mankind, Luthor himself does not have much regard for human life. A visitor kills his secretary over the preparation of a cup of coffee, and Luthor nonchalantly comments that he had just gotten her trained.

Luthor has the money to back his evil plans, including torturing Billy Batson with chemically engineered worms. Luthor tells Billy how evil super heroes are while placing the special worms in the young man's ears. They eat away at his brain, making him a loony minion for Luthor.

The U.N.

The U.N. is a collective group of national leaders, much like the United Nations that actually exists. In days long ago, the U.N. was happy to receive the help of super heroes like Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman, but in current times, the group is not so thrilled to see the super heroes.

Power has gone astray. The U.N. has lost control over the world thanks to the new breed of renegade heroes. U.N. representatives have lost faith in the heroes because they no longer fight for life and liberty. Instead, they kill whomever gets in their way of fighting each other. Once the heroes killed all their long-time foes, they basically had no one left to fight but each other.

The secretary-general of the U.N. lets Superman know that the agency is not pleased to learn about the prison for renegade super heroes after the fact. The agency believes the super heroes have too much control and are ready to regain that control.

The U.N. takes control of the rioting super prison the only way its representatives know how—by dropping bombs on it. The decision was a hard one for them to make, realizing they would be taking lives just like the renegade heroes have done.

In the end, the U.N. is pleased to learn that the surviving super heroes want to work with the U.N., not control it.

Deadman

The introduction of Deadman offers a little comic relief and a lot of valuable information to Norman.

"Hiya," the skeleton says to Norman, setting the light-spirited tone of the rest of their conversation. Norman asks if Deadman can see him, referring to his invisible travel with the Spectre. Deadman jokes back that even with no eyeballs in his eye sockets, he can see Norman. He tells Norman that he is a ghost and introduces himself as Boston. D.C. Comic readers will recognize this as Boston Brand, also known as Deadman.

Deadman was a daredevil trapeze performer in a circus. He refers to Norman as "padre" but is corrected by Norman that he is a pastor. Deadman and Norman have a brief conversation about religion, then Deadman fills Norman in on the Spectre's past.

Deadman is all bones, dressed in a red shredded suit that looks like it must have been one of the costumes in which he once performed his circus stunts. The reader does not learn about any of Deadman's powers except that he travels from realm to realm frequently for enjoyment.



Objects/Places

Planet Krypton

The Planet Krypton restaurant in Metropolis is a themed attraction, which features costumed employees who serve the customers.

Revelation

Revelation is the final book in the Bible. It foretells of the end of the world. Many scriptures from it are used in this story.

Paradise Island

Princess Diana, also known as Wonder Woman, is from an all female Amazon tribe that lives on Paradise Island.

Batcave

The batcave is Bruce's safe haven. He runs his Gotham City security system from there.

Statue of Liberty

This real American landmark is a symbol of America recognized by many immigrants who entered the United States through New York's harbor. In Kingdom Come, it is the site of a war against immigrants, waged by a new breed of renegade heroes.

The Mankind Liberation Front

An organization founded by Lex Luthor to put control of the world back into the hands of humans—namely himself.

Judgment

The Spectre was sent to see that judgment was served. When Captain Marvel dies while detonating the bombs, several heroes are killed along with Marvel. As Superman drops to his knees alone in the cloud of nuclear dust, the Spectre points to him and says "Judgment."



Gulag

The super heroes refer to the prison for renegade heroes as the gulag.

Hologram

A hologram of Superman teaches the renegade imprisoned heroes about truth and justice. They do not respect the hologram.

The U.N.

This agency of world leaders has lost faith in the super heroes. It wants to regain control of humanity again, so representatives from around the world agree to bomb the gulag.

Armageddon

Armageddon is a final war. In the Bible, Armageddon is the war between good and evil that ends the world and prepares survivors for Judgment Day.

Hope

Hope is a feeling that something good will happen. Everyone has lost hope at the beginning of the story, but at the end, most rediscover hope.

Apocrypha

Apocrypha means additional writings that are not genuine or authentic. In this case, the Apocrypha section in the back of the book simply means that the information provided there is not part of the actual story itself. However, there is good information about the characters of the book and how a graphic novel is created.



Themes

Hope

Hope is one of the main themes of this story.

In the beginning of the story, the reader sees that Norman has no hope for humanity. He watches the world erode around him and feels helpless. As a pastor, he believes he should encourage his congregation to have faith, yet he himself does not have faith anymore. Instead, he discourages them by preaching gloom and doom that he says is certain to be sooner rather than later.

Wonder Woman approaches Clark, hoping Superman will intervene to help save the world. In this segment, the reader learns that Superman lost hope for humanity ten years earlier and left crime fighting for self-imposed exile. He left when people voiced their preference for the new breed of super heroes that actually killed their foes. In Superman's view, it was his job to thwart the villains' attempt at wrong doing, then leave them for humanity to punish. He also believed that everyone could have a good side. Killing even his worst enemies was never a consideration for him. Superman believes that life is precious and it is not his prerogative to end a life.

When Deadman enters the story, the reader learns that the Spectre lost hope somewhere in his career. As he witnesses the events that lead to judgment through the visionary leadership of Norman, he also finds faith and hope.

In the end, Superman tells the U.N. that the supers and the U.N. have both been at fault for putting too much faith and hope in the super heroes. The new renegades lost the respect, faith and hope of the U.N. Superman gave them new hope when he said the supers would begin working with them side by side, not lording over them.

Judgment

The events in this story turn based on judgment.

Norman judges Wesley to be a crazy old codger in the beginning of the story. Very early on, however, he learns that his judgment was incorrect.

The Spectre is sent by a higher power, never named but called "The big G" by Deadman, to cast judgment.

Human society and super hero society both cast judgment on Superman for his exile. Humans viewed Magog as the stronger hero since he would actually judge whomever he killed. When Magog talks to Superman about the killing he has done, he admits to being haunted by the ghosts. While he is quick to kill, being the one who makes that judgment is haunting him. The super heroes of yesteryear mostly followed in



Superman's footsteps. Those who did not leave crime fighting all together took a more behind-the-scenes approach.

Representatives of the U.N. agency are tired of having super heroes make judgments about their issues. Since the super hero world is in chaos, they want to regain control of humanity.

After the U.N. bombs have destroyed Captain Marvel and many other super heroes, the Spectre points to Superman and says, "Judgment."

Armageddon

The end of the world, or Armageddon, is an important theme in this book. With warring super heroes, Armageddon is certain. The Spectre must witness the events that lead to it so he can render judgment.

The book relies heavily on biblical scriptures regarding Armageddon. Wesley starts the talk of Armageddon in Book One and the theme continues until the war is over and lives begin healing.

When Captain Marvel enters the war at the super hero prison, Norman says "Armageddon has arrived." That personification gives "Armageddon" a face. Captain Marvel is the only hero stronger than Superman, the only one who can beat him. The arrival of Captain Marvel means the end is near.

During the war, Captain Marvel converts back into his human form as a young man named Billy. Superman is able to reason with him at that point. It is true that Captain Marvel brought Armageddon to the situation. In addition to being labeled by Norman as "Armageddon" from the moment he arrives at the gulag, he brings about the end in a different than expected way. Most readers will probably believe Captain Marvel will wreck Superman and kill everyone in the gulag. Instead, Captain Marvel brings about Armageddon by detonating nuclear weapons. There are a large number of casualties, but it is much smaller than it could have been.

Style

Point of View

The story is narrated from a first person point of view. The narrator is Norman, a preacher who has lost hope. Norman's narration tells the reader what he sees, hears and thinks. The graphics make it possible for the reader to also actually see what Norman witnesses.

Norman's character narrates the story with a unique point of view. As a pastor, he is well versed in the Book of Revelation. Perhaps his unique experience with the scripture is what allows him to handle some of its horrific detail. He remains relatively mild-mannered, even though he is guided through time warps with a dark character known as the Spectre. After the initial shock of meeting the Spectre, Norman really never seems nervous or upset about traveling with him through time. His even-tempered, mild-mannered attitude builds his character into a realistic, believable narrator. There is additional believability in the story line because, since it is told in the form of a graphic novel, the reader can also actually witness the events Norman is narrating.

The only part of the book that is not written from Norman's point of view is the Epilogue. It is a third person look into a lunch meeting with Superman, Wonder Woman and Batman. The reader also sees the man who formerly was the Spectre and Norman having lunch together.

Setting

The setting moves as Norman and the Spectre move through time to watch the events of Armageddon unfold.

In the beginning, the setting is a hospital room. It is safe to assume that the town is Metropolis because of the Planet Krypton restaurant located there.

The setting moves to Superman's farm, a mid-western farm, then to New York's Statue of Liberty.

After saving the Statue of Liberty, the setting is the batcave where Superman seeks assistance from Bruce, also known as Batman.

The climax of the story is set in Kansas where the super heroes built a gulag to imprison the rowdy renegade heroes of the younger generation. When rioting begins, all the good super heroes fly there to battle the evil, imprisoned ones. The U.N. sends nuclear bombs to the area to end the fighting once and for all in their attempt to regain control of humanity and themselves.



The ending of the story takes the reader back to the Planet Krypton restaurant. Clark, Diana and Bruce meet there for lunch and the reader also sees Norman and the man formerly known as the Spectre having lunch together. The final setting offers closure to the reader, showing that everyone is doing fine after the war and the other conflicts that occurred throughout the book.

Language and Meaning

The language in this book is very straight forward. There is little hidden meaning for the reader to interpret. Readers who are not familiar with the D.C. Comics characters might feel as though they need more time to research some of the language or its meaning, however, any confusion can likely be addressed by using the character legend provided in the Apocrypha section in the Epilogue.

The language in the graphic novel is actually very simple to read. The writer does an excellent job of not complicating the wording. Remember, since this is a graphic novel, the pictures also play a large role in the development of language and its meaning. The book is written as most people would talk, without formal use of punctuation.

In keeping with most comic book styles, the words are written in all capital letters. This has no special meaning. Instead, it is just traditional comic book style.

While most books consider only the text when talking about language and meaning, the drawings in a graphic novel cannot be overlooked. They show what words sometimes cannot state or state effectively. The art also gives additional meaning to the written word, to help the reader gain insight into a particular attitude. One example is when Superman and Batman are talking in the batcave and Batman tells Superman about Captain Marvel's involvement. Before Batman could finish sharing his information, Superman had quietly and quickly left the scene. Batman says, "So THAT'S what that feels like." The drawing in that panels shows Batman with a smirk on his face, confirming to the reader the sarcasm in his remark.

Structure

Kingdom Come is actually a compilation of four comic books. They were published simply as Kingdom Come 1-4 in 1996 by D.C. Comics. The mini-series was compiled and divided into four chapters and an epilogue.

In the book, however, the writer actually breaks the story down into chapters. It is actually like reading four separate comic books, but the flow of the story is never interrupted by the structure, making it an easy and enjoyable read.

Each chapter except the Epilogue starts with scriptures from Revelation, demonstrating just how important Revelation is to this story.

There is no given panel structure to the graphic novel, but the first page or two from each chapter are heavy on graphics and low on text. From there on, the writer and illustrator simply use however many panels are necessary to effectively tell the story. The panels vary from horizontal to vertical layout design, depending on the graphics needed.

Past the Epilogue section is a helpful tool called the Apocrypha. The guide includes a character drawing and brief description to allow the reader to locate any unnamed character they see. The feature will give a name and a few words of history about them



Quotes

"These are my roots."
Kingdom Come, p. 33

"Leave me alone! Leave me alone!"
Kingdom Come, p. 37

"We need hope!"
Kingdom Come, p. 51

"Magog will be dealt with...if he surfaces. Given the consequences of his actions in Kansas, that seems unlikely."
Kingdom Come, p. 69

"But they could have. And really, that's the point, isn't it?"
Kingdom Come, p. 126

"Look me up."
Kingdom Come, p. 122

"They've begun to build a gulag. You know this."
Kingdom Come, p. 107

"Just make the ghosts go away."
Kingdom Come, p. 101

"I have responsibilities you cannot even dream of."
Kingdom Come, p. 92

"Passion."
Kingdom Come, p. 93

"They're not evil...they're just misguided."
Kingdom Come, p. 79

"I don't have that dark a side."
Kingdom Come, p. 72

"There's a fear in the room."
Kingdom Come, p. 70



"'Force peace.' The Amazon tenet."
Kingdom Come, p. 171

"To past friends."
Kingdom Come, p. 207



Topics for Discussion

Was Superman a coward for retreating to a self-imposed exile for ten years?

Who was at fault—the renegade super heroes with their lack of respect for life or society for picking that style of heroism over the old style that was Superman's?

Choose and discuss two characteristics that meek minister Norman and powerful Superman have in common.

How do Batman and Superman differ? How are they alike?

There is one change in Superman's costume. Describe the change and discuss its meaning.

Superman built the gulag to house renegade super heroes of the new generation. What was his goal for the prison?

What were the drinks that each super friend orders at Planet Krypton and what do the drinks symbolize?