

Batman: The Dark Knight Returns

- Published in 1986 by DC
- Author: Frank Miller (1957-)
- Artist: Miller & Klaus Janson
- considered a landmark in the history of comics
 - literary aspirations → seen as a novel more than a comic → “graphic” novel
- Influences
 - Dirty Harry film series w/ Clint Eastwood
 - *Sudden Impact* (1983)
 - Daredevil (Marvel character)
- Influenced and shaped all subsequent iterations of Batman
 - Christopher Nolan’s *Batman*



- **Form & Structure**
- **Layout**
 - Pages often composed of 16 symmetrical panels
 - disjointed multiple narratives
- **Narrative**
 - frequent first person musings / internal monologues
 - no narrative third person voice
- **Location?**
 - Gotham City
 - metaphor for 1980s New York
 - rise of crack cocaine epidemic
 - crime rates massively spiked in 1980s in cities
 - high profile crime incidents
 - vigilantes
- **Real world events/allusions**
 - Cold War
 - Personalities
 - President Reagan (p. 108)
 - David Letterman (p. 122)
 - Institutions
 - FBI (p. 139)

Themes

- Vulnerable superhero
 - older
 - wounded
- Crime-ridden cities
 - crimes by kids
- Vigilante justice
 - who's responsible
 - who condemns it?
 - What was Batman's position?
 - role of state vs. subject
- question of fascism?
 - use of physical violence to solve problems
 - Batman's disregard for civil rights
 - masculinity
- what does Superman vs. Batman represent?

