

# *Iron Man (2008)* and *The Dark Knight* (2008)



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- *Iron Man* (2008)
- Director: Jon Favreau
- 1<sup>st</sup> installment in the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU)
- produced by Avi Arad & Kevin Feige
- original Iron Man origin
  - parents killed in car accident
  - inherited father's company
  - captured by Wong-Chu
  - Stark builds a suit and escapes w/ help from Ho Yinsen
  - meets James Rhodes
  - shrapnel lodged in his heart



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- **Questions/Themes**
- role of corporations
  - intellectual property
- role of military-industrial complex
- role of technology
  - as savior? as an instrument of death?
- commentary on Silicon Valley?
- Orientalist?
- gender?
- commentary on contemporary political moment?
  - who was the super villain?
  - conservative? liberal?
- Overall cinematic issues
  - establishment of long-form narrative? stand-alone movie?
    - introduction of Agent Coulson/SHIELD, Nick Fury
    - Pepper Potts, Rhodey, Jarvis
  - special effects caught up with imagination?

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- **The Joker**
  - created by Bill Finger, Bob Kane, Jerry Robinson
  - cultural roots
    - joker in a deck of cards
    - jester in medieval times
    - clown figure in a circus
  - multiple origins
    - all involve vat of acid
    - “unreliable narrator”
- **Cesar Romero**
  - played Joker in 1960s serial
  - prankster
- **Jack Nicholson**
  - star billing in *Batman* (1989)
    - much like Marlon Brando
  - origin?
  - “world’s first fully functional homicidal artist”



*Batman # 1 (April 1940)*



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- *The Dark Knight* (2008)
- Director: Christopher Nolan
- 1<sup>st</sup> of a trilogy of movies
- Batman = Christian Bale
- The Joker
  - Heath Ledger
  - agent of chaos



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- 1. The movie *Iron Man* (2008) inaugurated the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) which generally tends to have a more 'positive' outlook than, say, movies such as Christopher Nolan's *Batman* movies. Yet, these movies often also function at multiple levels, as typical summer popcorn movies but also often dealing with larger political and social issues. Describe briefly how *Iron Man* can be interpreted on multiple levels, using examples of scenes from the movie. (Hint: think of political issues, issues of fame, even personal issues, etc.).
- 2. Tom Breihan in his article on *The Dark Knight* (2008) calls it “the most important superhero movie in history.” First explain why he thinks so. Second, tell me if you agree or disagree and then justify/explain your answer. Use a scene or two from the movie to support your position. You may use any of the other readings we have done for class to justify your answer.
- 3. Fun question: Joaquin Phoenix or Heath Ledger? Explain!

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