

Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America. By Bradford W. Wright. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001. xxii, 336 pp. \$34.95.

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***Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America.* By Bradford W. Wright. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001. xxii, 336 pp. \$34.95, ISBN 0-8018-6514-X.)**

[Bernard Mergen](#)

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Comic books, Bradford W. Wright argues, have been an important part of youth culture, especially boy culture, since the late 1930s. Until the rise of television and rock and roll in the 1950s, the chief commercial rivals for the attention and spare change of American pre-teen consumers were Saturday matinee movies and pulp magazines. Unregulated until the adoption of an industry code in 1954, comic book publishers were freer than filmmakers to satisfy the tastes of their customers. As those tastes changed in the years of World War II, nuclear weapon testing, and anticommunist crusades, some comic book writers and artists experimented with what the author calls “mature themes like murder, lust, psychosis, and political intrigue.” Competition for an ever-changing, fickle, and largely undefined audience drove some publishers to introduce increasingly lurid characters, plots, and graphic design. Others perpetuated stereotypes that continue...

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