

Captain America

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Captain America is a fictional character, a superhero, created by American cartoonists Joe Simon and Jack Kirby. The character first appeared in *Captain America Comics* #1 (cover dated March 1941) from Timely Comics, a predecessor of Marvel Comics. Designed as a patriotic superhero who often fought the Axis powers of World War II, Captain America was Timely Comics' most popular character during the wartime period. The popularity of superheroes waned following the war and the *Captain America* comic book was discontinued in 1950, with a short-lived revival in 1953. Since Marvel Comics revived the character in 1964, Captain America has remained in publication.

Captain America wears a costume that bears an American flag motif, and is armed with a nearly indestructible shield that he throws at foes. The character is usually depicted as the alter ego of **Steve Rogers**, a frail young man enhanced to the peak of human perfection by an experimental serum to aid the United States government's imminent efforts in World War II. Near the end of the war, he was trapped in ice and survived in suspended animation until he was revived in the present day to subsequently become the long-time leader of the Avengers.

Captain America was the first Marvel Comics to have appeared in media outside comics with the release of the 1944 movie serial *Captain America*. Since then, the character has been featured in such other films and television series, more recently in the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) portrayed by Chris Evans in *Captain America: The First Avenger*, *The Avengers*, *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* and the upcoming *Avengers: Age of Ultron*.

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Captain America



Captain America #109 (Jan. 1969).

Cover art by Jack Kirby and Syd Shores.

Publication information

Publisher	Marvel Comics
First appearance	<i>Captain America Comics</i> #1 (March 1941)
Created by	Joe Simon Jack Kirby

In-story information

Alter ego	Steve Rogers
Team affiliations	All-Winners Squad Avengers Avengers Unity Squad Illuminati Invaders Landau, Luckman, and Lake New Avengers Project: Rebirth Redeemers S.H.I.E.L.D. "Secret Avengers" (Civil

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	War)
	Secret Avengers
	Secret Defenders
	U.S. Army
Partnerships	Winter Soldier/Bucky (James Barnes)
	Falcon
	Nomad (Jack Monroe)
	Free Spirit
	Jack Flag
	Demolition Man
	Sharon Carter
Notable aliases	Nomad, The Captain
Abilities	Olympic-level athlete
	Master martial artist, agility expert, tactician, and marksman
	Excellent field commander
	Peak human physical condition
	Wields vibranium-steel alloy shield

Publication history

Golden Age

In 1940, writer Joe Simon conceived the idea for Captain America and made a sketch of the character in costume.^[1] "I wrote the name 'Super American' at the bottom of the page," Simon said in his autobiography, and then considered that,

No, it didn't work. There were too many 'Supers' around. 'Captain America' had a good sound to it. There weren't a lot of captains in comics. It was as easy as that. The boy companion was simply named Bucky, after my friend Bucky Pierson, a star on our high school basketball team."^[2]

Simon recalled in his autobiography that Timely Comics publisher Martin Goodman gave him the go-ahead and directed that a Captain America solo comic book series be published as soon as possible. Needing to fill a full comic with primarily one character's stories, Simon did not believe that his regular creative partner, artist Jack Kirby, could handle the workload alone:

I didn't have a lot of objections to putting a crew on the first issue ... There were two young artists from Connecticut that had made a strong impression on me. Al Avison and Al Gabriele often worked together and were quite successful in adapting their individual styles to each other. Actually, their work was not too far from [that of] Kirby's. If they worked on it, and if one inker tied the three styles together, I believed the final product would emerge

as quite uniform. The two Als were eager to join in on the new *Captain America* book, but Jack Kirby was visibly upset. 'You're still number one, Jack,' I assured him. 'It's just a matter of a quick deadline for the first issue.'

'I'll make the deadline,' Jack promised. 'I'll pencil it [all] myself and make the deadline.' I hadn't expected this kind of reaction ... but I acceded to Kirby's wishes and, it turned out, was lucky that I did. There might have been two Als, but there was only one Jack Kirby.

I wrote the first *Captain America* book with penciled lettering right on the drawing boards, with very rough sketches for figures and backgrounds. Kirby did his thing, building the muscular anatomy, adding ideas and peppering up the action as only he could. Then he tightened up the penciled drawings, adding detailed backgrounds, faces and figures.^[2]



1974 Comic Art Convention program featuring Simon's original sketch of Captain America.

Al Liederman would ink that first issue, which was lettered by Simon and Kirby's regular letterer, Howard Ferguson.^[3]

Simon said Captain America was a consciously political creation; he and Kirby were morally repulsed by the actions of Nazi Germany in the years leading up to the United States' involvement in World War II and felt war was inevitable: "The opponents to the war were all quite well organized. We wanted to have our say too."^[4]

Captain America Comics #1 — cover-dated March 1941^[5] and on sale December 20, 1940,^{[6][7]} a year before the attack on Pearl Harbor, but a full year into World War II — showed the protagonist punching Nazi leader Adolf Hitler in the jaw; it sold nearly one million copies.^[8] While most readers responded favorably to the comic, some took objection. Simon noted, "When the first issue came out we got a lot of ... threatening letters and hate mail. Some people really opposed what Cap stood for."^[4] The threats, which included menacing groups of people loitering out on the street outside of the offices, proved so serious that police protection was posted with New York Mayor Fiorello La Guardia personally contacting Simon and Kirby to give his support.^[9]

Though preceded as a "patriotically themed superhero" by MLJ's *The Shield*, Captain America immediately became the most prominent and enduring of that wave of superheroes introduced in American comic books prior to and during World War II,^[10] as evidenced by the unusual move at the time of premiering the character in his own title instead of an anthology title first. This popularity drew the attention and a complaint from MLJ that the character's triangular shield too closely resembled the chest symbol of their *Shield* character. In response, Goodman had Simon and Kirby create a distinctive round shield for issue 2, which went on to become an iconic element of the character.^[11] With his sidekick Bucky, Captain America faced Nazis, Japanese, and other threats to wartime America and the Allies. Stanley Lieber, now better known as Stan Lee, contributed to the character in issue #3 in the filler

text story "Captain America Foils the Traitor's Revenge", which introduced the character's use of his shield as a returning throwing weapon.^[12] Captain America soon became Timely's most popular character and even had a fan-club called the "Sentinels of Liberty."^[4]

Circulation figures remained close to a million copies per month after the debut issue, which outstripped even the circulation of news magazines such as *Time* during the period.^{[10][13]} After the Simon and Kirby team moved to DC Comics in late 1941, having produced *Captain America Comics* through issue #10 (January 1942), Al Avison and Syd Shores became regular pencillers of the celebrated title, with one generally inking over the other. The character was featured in *All Winners Comics* #1-19 (Summer 1941 – Fall 1946), *Marvel Mystery Comics* #80-84 and #86-92, *USA Comics* #6-17 (Dec. 1942 – Fall 1945), and *All Select Comics* #1-10 (Fall 1943 – Summer 1946).

In the post-war era, with the popularity of superheroes fading, Captain America led Timely's first superhero team, the All-Winners Squad, in its two published adventures, in *All Winners Comics* #19 and #21 (Fall–Winter 1946; there was no issue #20). After Bucky was shot and wounded in a 1948 *Captain America* story, he was succeeded by Captain America's girlfriend, Betsy Ross, who became the superheroine Golden Girl. *Captain America Comics* ran until issue #73 (July 1949),^[14] at which time the series was retitled *Captain America's Weird Tales* for two issues,^[15] with the finale being a horror/suspense anthology issue with no superheroes.

Atlas Comics attempted to revive its superhero titles when it reintroduced Captain America, along with the original Human Torch and the Sub-Mariner, in *Young Men* #24 (Dec. 1953). Billed as "Captain America, Commie Smasher!" Captain America appeared during the next year in *Young Men* #24-28 and *Men's Adventures* #27-28, as well as in issues #76-78 of an eponymous title. Atlas' attempted superhero revival was a commercial failure,^[16] and the character's title was canceled with *Captain America* #78 (Sept. 1954).

Silver Age revival

In the Human Torch story titled "Captain America" in Marvel Comics' *Strange Tales* #114 (Nov. 1963),^[17] writer-editor Stan Lee and artist and co-plotter Jack Kirby depicted the brash young Fantastic Four member Johnny Storm, the Human Torch, in an exhibition performance with Captain America, described as a legendary World War II and 1950s superhero who has returned after many years of apparent retirement. The 18-page story ends with this Captain America revealed as an impostor: it was actually the villain the Acrobat, a former circus performer the Torch had defeated in *Strange Tales* #106, who broke two thieves out of jail, hoping to draw the police away while trying to rob the local bank. Afterward, Storm digs out an old comic book in which Captain America is shown to be Steve Rogers. A caption in the final panel says this story was a test to see if readers would like Captain America to return.

Captain America was then formally reintroduced in *The Avengers* #4 (March 1964),^[18] which explained that in the final days of World War II, he had fallen from an experimental drone plane into the North Atlantic Ocean and spent decades frozen in a block of ice in a state of suspended animation. The hero found a new generation of readers as leader of that superhero team. Following the success of other Marvel characters introduced during the 1960s, Captain America was recast as a hero "haunted by past memories, and trying to adapt to 1960s society."^[19]

After then guest-starring in the feature "Iron Man" in *Tales of Suspense* #58 (Oct. 1964), Captain America gained his own solo feature in that "split book," beginning the following issue.^[20] Issue #63 (March 1965), which retold Captain America's origin, through issue #71 (Nov. 1965) was a period feature set during World War II and co-starred Captain America's Golden Age sidekick, Bucky. Kirby

drew all but two of the stories in *Tales of Suspense*, which became *Captain America* with #100 (April 1968);^[21] Gil Kane and John Romita, Sr., each filled in once. Several stories were finished by penciller-inker George Tuska over Kirby layouts, with one finished by Romita Sr. and another by penciller Dick Ayers and inker John Tartaglione. Kirby's regular inkers on the series were Frank Giacoia (as "Frank Ray") and Joe Sinnott, though Don Heck and Golden Age Captain America artist Syd Shores inked one story each. The new title *Captain America* continued to feature artwork by Kirby, as well as a short run by Jim Steranko, and work by many of the industry's top artists and writers. It was called *Captain America and the Falcon* from #134 (Feb. 1971) to #222 (June 1978)^[22] although the Falcon's name was not on the cover for issues #193, 200, and 216. The 1972–1975 run on the title by writer Steve Englehart and artist Sal Buscema saw the series become one of Marvel's top-sellers.^[23] In 2010, Comics Bulletin ranked Englehart and Buscema's run on *Captain America* fourth on its list of the "Top 10 1970s Marvels".^[24] Kirby returned to the series as writer and penciler with issue #193 (Jan. 1975)^[25] and remained through #214 (Oct. 1977).

This series — considered *Captain America* volume one by comics researchers and historians,^[26] following the 1940s *Captain America Comics* and its 1950s numbering continuation of *Tales of Suspense* — ended with #454 (Aug. 1996).

After the Silver Age

This series was almost immediately followed by the 13-issue *Captain America* vol. 2 (Nov. 1996 – Nov. 1997, part of the "Heroes Reborn" crossover),^[27] the 50-issue *Captain America* vol. 3 (Jan. 1998 – Feb. 2002),^[28] the 32-issue *Captain America* vol. 4 (June 2002 – Dec. 2004),^[29] and *Captain America* vol. 5 (Jan. 2005 – Aug. 2011).^[30] Beginning with the 600th overall issue (Aug. 2009), *Captain America* resumed its original numbering, as if the series numbering had continued uninterrupted after #454.

As part of the aftermath of Marvel Comics' company-crossover storyline "Civil War", Steve Rogers was ostensibly killed in *Captain America* vol. 5, #25 (March 2007). Series writer Ed Brubaker remarked, "What I found is that all the really hard-core left-wing fans want Cap to be standing out on and giving speeches on the street corner against the George W. Bush administration, and all the really right-wing fans all want him to be over in the streets of Baghdad, punching out Saddam Hussein."^[31] The character's co-creator, Joe Simon, said, "It's a hell of a time for him to go. We really need him now."^[31] Artist Alex Ross designed a slightly revised Captain America costume that former sidekick Bucky Barnes began to wear as the new Captain America in vol. 5, #34 (March 2008).^[32] As of 2007, an estimated 210 million copies of "Captain America" comic books had been sold in 75 countries.^[33]

The storyline of Rogers' return began in issue #600.^{[34][35]} Rogers, who was not dead but caroming through time, returned to the present day in the six-issue miniseries *Captain America: Reborn* (Sept. 2009 – March 2010).^[36]

After Rogers' return, Barnes, at Rogers' insistence, continued as Captain America, beginning in the one-shot comic *Captain America: Who Will Wield the Shield?* (Feb. 2010). While Bucky Barnes continued adventuring in the pages of *Captain America*, Steve Rogers received his own miniseries (*Steve Rogers: Super-Soldier*) as well as taking on the leadership position in a new *Secret Avengers* ongoing series.

Spinoff series included *Captain America Sentinel of Liberty* (Sept. 1998 – Aug. 1999) and *Captain America and the Falcon* (May 2004 – June 2005). The 1940s Captain America appeared alongside the 1940s Human Torch and Sub-Mariner in the 12-issue miniseries *Avengers/Invaders*.^{[37][38]} The 2007 mini-series *Captain America: The Chosen*, written by David Morrell and penciled by Mitchell

Breitweiser, depicts a dying Steve Rogers' final minutes, at S.H.I.E.L.D. headquarters, as his spirit guides James Newman, a young American Marine fighting in Afghanistan. *The Chosen* is not part of the main Marvel Universe continuity.^{[39][40]}

The character, first as agent Steve Rogers and later after resuming his identity as Captain America, appeared as a regular character throughout the 2010–2013 *Avengers* series, from issue #1 (July 2010) through its final issue #34 (January 2013). The character appeared as agent Steve Rogers as a regular character in the 2010–2013 *Secret Avengers* series, from issue #1 (July 2010) through issue #21 (March 2012); the character made guest appearances as Captain America in issues #21.1, #22-23, #35, and the final issue of the series #37 (March 2013).

Marvel stated in May 2011 that Rogers, following the public death of Bucky Barnes in the *Fear Itself* miniseries, would resume his Captain America identity in a sixth volume of *Captain America*, by writer Ed Brubaker and artist Steve McNiven.^{[41][42]} The *Captain America* title continued from issue #620 featuring team up stories with Bucky (#620-#628),^[43] Hawkeye (#629-#632),^[44] Iron Man (#633-635),^[45] Namor (#635.1),^[46] and Black Widow (#636-#640),^[47] and the title ended its print run with issue #640.

Captain America is a regular character in *Uncanny Avengers* (2012), beginning with issue #1 as part of Marvel NOW!. *Captain America* vol. 7 was launched in November 2012 with a January 2013 cover date by writer Rick Remender and artist John Romita Jr..^[48]

On July 16, 2014 Marvel Comics announced that the mantle of Captain America would be passed on by Rogers (who in the most recent storyline has been turned into a 90-year-old man) to his long-time ally The Falcon to which the series will be relaunched as *All-New Captain America*.^[49]

Legal status

In 1966 Joe Simon sued the owners of Marvel Comics, asserting that he – not Marvel – was legally entitled to renew the copyright upon the expiration of the original 28-year term. The two parties settled out of court, with Simon agreeing to a statement that the character had been created under terms of employment by the publisher, and therefore it was work for hire owned by them.^[50]

In 1999, Simon filed to claim the copyright to Captain America under a provision of the Copyright Act of 1976 which allowed the original creators of works that had been sold to corporations to reclaim them after the original 56-year copyright term (but not the longer term enacted by the new legislation) had expired. Marvel Entertainment challenged the claim, arguing that the settlement of Simon's 1966 suit made the character ineligible for termination of the copyright transfer. Simon and Marvel settled out of court in 2003, in a deal that paid Simon royalties for merchandising and licensing use of the character.^{[50][51]}

Fictional character biography

1940s

Steven Rogers was born in the 1920s in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, New York City, to poor Irish immigrants, Sarah and Joseph Rogers.^[52] Joseph died when Steve was a child, and Sarah died of pneumonia while Steve was a teen. By early 1940, before America's entry into World War II, Rogers is a tall, scrawny fine arts student specializing in illustration, and a comic book writer and artist.

Disturbed by the rise of the Third Reich, Rogers attempts to enlist but is rejected due to his frail body. His resolution attracts the notice of U.S. Army General Chester Phillips and "Project: Rebirth." Rogers is used as a test subject for the Super-Soldier project, receiving a special serum made by "Dr. Josef Reinstein",^{[53][54]} later retroactively changed to a code name for the scientist Abraham Erskine.^[55] The name "Erskine" was first used in a Captain America novel *The Great Gold Steal* by Ted White published by Bantam Books in 1968.

The serum is a success and transforms Steve Rogers into a nearly perfect human being with peak strength, agility, stamina, and intelligence. The success of the program leaves Erskine wondering about replicating the experiment on other human beings.^[54] The process itself has been inconsistently detailed: while in the original material Rogers is shown receiving injections of the Super-Serum, when the origin was retold in the 1960s, the Comic Code Authority had already put a veto over graphic description of drug intake and abuse, and thus the Super-Serum was retconned into an oral formula.^[56] Later accounts hint at a combination of oral and intravenous treatments with a strenuous training regimen, culminating in the Vita-Ray exposure.

Erskine refused to write down every crucial element of the treatment, leaving behind a flawed, imperfect knowledge of the steps. Thus, when the Nazi spy Heinz Kruger killed him, Erskine's method of creating new Super-Soldiers died. Captain America, in his first act after his transformation, avenges Erskine. In the 1941 origin story and in *Tales of Suspense* #63, Kruger dies when running into machinery but is not killed by Rogers; in the *Captain America* #109 and #255 revisions, Rogers causes the spy's death by punching him into machinery.^[54]

Unable to create new Super-Soldiers and willing to hide the Project Rebirth fiasco, the American government casts Rogers as a patriotic superhero, able to counter the menace of the Red Skull as a counter-intelligence agent. He is supplied with a patriotic uniform designed by Rogers,^[52] a bulletproof shield, a personal side arm, and the codename Captain America, while posing as a clumsy infantry private at Camp Lehigh in Virginia. He forms a friendship with the camp's teenage mascot, James Buchanan "Bucky" Barnes.^[53]

Barnes learns of Rogers' dual identity and offers to keep the secret if he can become Captain America's sidekick. During their adventures, Franklin D. Roosevelt presents Captain America with a new shield, forged from an alloy of steel and vibranium, fused by an unknown catalyst, so effective that it replaces his own firearm.^[55] Throughout World War II, Captain America and Bucky fight the Nazi menace both on their own and as members of the superhero team the Invaders as seen in the 1970s comic of the same name.^[57] Captain America battles a number of criminal menaces on American soil, including a wide variety of costumed villains: the Wax Man,^[58] the Hangman,^[59] the Fang,^[60] the Black Talon,^[61] and the White Death,^[62] among others.

In addition to Bucky, Captain America was occasionally assisted by the Sentinels of Liberty.^[63] Sentinels of Liberty was the title given to members of the *Captain America Comics* fan club who Captain America sometimes addressed as an aside, or as characters in the *Captain America Comics* stories.



Captain America Comics #1 (March 1941). Cover art by Joe Simon (inks and pencils) and Jack Kirby (pencils).

In late April 1945, during the closing days of World War II, Captain America and Bucky try to stop the villainous Baron Zemo from destroying an experimental drone plane. Zemo launches the plane with an armed explosive on it with Rogers and Barnes in hot pursuit. The pair reaches the plane just before take off. When Bucky tries to defuse the bomb, it explodes in mid-air. Rogers is hurled into the freezing waters of the North Atlantic. Both are presumed dead, though it is later revealed that neither one died.^[64]

Late 1940s to 1950s

Captain America appeared in comics for the next few years, changing from World War II-era hero fighting the Nazis to confronting the United States' newest enemy, Communism. The revival of the character in the mid-1950s was short-lived, and events during that time period are later retconned to show that multiple people operated using the code name to explain the changes in the character. These post World War II successors are listed as William Naslund and Jeffrey Mace.

The last of these other official Captains, William Burnside,^[65] was a history graduate enamored with the Captain America mythos, having his appearance surgically altered to resemble Rogers and legally changing his name to "Steve Rogers", becoming the new "1950s Captain America".^[66] He self-administered to himself and his pupil James "Jack" Monroe a flawed, incomplete copy of the Super-Serum, which made no mention about the necessary Vita-Ray portion of the treatment. As a result, while Burnside and Monroe became the new Captain America and Bucky, they became violently paranoid, often raving about innocent people being communist sympathizers during the height of the Red Scare of the 1950s. Their insanity forced the U.S. government to place them in indefinite cryogenic storage until they could be cured of their mental illness.^[67] Monroe would later be cured and assume the Nomad identity.^[68]

1960s to 1970s



Captain America #180 (Dec. 1974). Captain America becomes "Nomad". Cover art by Gil Kane and Frank Giacoia.

Years later, the superhero team the Avengers discovers Steve Rogers' body in the North Atlantic. After he revives, they piece together that Rogers has been preserved in a block of ice since 1945, surviving because of his enhancements from Project: Rebirth. The block began to melt after the Sub-Mariner, enraged that an Inuit tribe is worshipping the frozen figure, throws it into the ocean.^[64] Rogers accepts membership in the Avengers, and his experience in individual combat service and his time with the Invaders makes him a valuable asset. He quickly assumes leadership,^[69] and has typically returned to that position throughout the team's history.

Captain America is plagued by guilt for having been unable to prevent Bucky's death. Although he takes the young Rick Jones (who closely resembles Bucky) under his tutelage, he refuses for some time to allow Jones to take up the Bucky identity, not wishing to be responsible for another youth's death. Insisting that his hero move on from that loss, Jones convinces Rogers to let him don the Bucky costume,^[70] but this partnership lasts only a short time; a disguised Red Skull, impersonating Rogers with the help of the Cosmic Cube, drives Jones away.

Rogers reunites with his old war comrade Nick Fury, who is similarly well-preserved due to the "Infinity Formula." As a result, Rogers regularly undertakes missions for the security agency S.H.I.E.L.D. for which Fury is public director.^[71] Through Fury, Rogers befriends Sharon Carter, a S.H.I.E.L.D. agent,^[72] with whom he eventually begins a romantic relationship.

Rogers later meets and trains Sam Wilson, who becomes the superhero the Falcon,^[73] the first African-American superhero in mainstream comic books.^{[74][75]} The characters established an enduring friendship and adventuring partnership, sharing the series title for some time as *Captain America and the Falcon*.^[22] The two later encounter the revived but still insane 1950s Captain America.^{[66][67][76][77][78]} Although Rogers and the Falcon defeat the faux Rogers and Jack Monroe, Rogers becomes deeply disturbed that he could have suffered his counterpart's fate. During this period, Rogers temporarily gains super strength.^[79]

The series dealt with the Marvel Universe's version of the Watergate scandal,^{[80][81][82]} making Rogers so uncertain about his role that he abandons his Captain America identity in favor of one called Nomad,^[83] emphasizing the word's meaning as "man without a country". During this time, several men unsuccessfully assume the Captain America identity.^[84] Rogers eventually re-assumes it after coming to consider that the identity could be a symbol of American ideals and not its government; it's a personal conviction epitomized when he later confronted a corrupt Army officer attempting to manipulate him by appealing to his loyalty, "I'm loyal to nothing, General ... except the [American] Dream." Jack Monroe, cured of his mental instability, later takes up the Nomad alias.^[85] Sharon Carter is believed to have been killed while under the mind control of Dr. Faustus.^[86]

1980s to 1990s

The 1980s included a run by writer Roger Stern and artist John Byrne. Stern had Rogers consider a run for President of the United States in *Captain America* #250 (June 1980),^[87] an idea originally developed by Roger McKenzie and Don Perlin. Stern, in his capacity as editor of the title, originally rejected the idea but later changed his mind about the concept.^{[88][89]} McKenzie and Perlin received credit for the idea on the letters page at Stern's insistence.^[90] Stern additionally introduced a new love interest, law student Bernie Rosenthal, in *Captain America* #248 (Aug. 1980).^[91]

Writer J. M. DeMatteis revealed the true face and full origin of the Red Skull in *Captain America* #298-300, and had Captain America take on Jack Monroe, Nomad, as a partner for a time.^[85] Around this time, the heroes gathered by the Beyonder elect Rogers as leader during their stay on Battleworld in the 1984 miniseries *Secret Wars*. Homophobia is dealt with as Rogers runs into a childhood friend named Arnold Roth who is gay.^{[92][93]}

Mark Gruenwald became the writer of the series with issue #307 (July 1985) and wrote 137 issues for 10 consecutive years from until #443 (Sept. 1995),^[94] the most issues by any single author in the character's history. Gruenwald created several new foes,



Captain America #350 (Feb. 1989). Rogers as "the Captain" vs. John Walker as Captain America. Cover art by Kieron Dwyer and Al Milgrom.

including Crossbones and the Serpent Society. Other Gruenwald characters included Diamondback,^[95] Super Patriot,^[96] and Demolition Man.^[97] Gruenwald explored numerous political and social themes as well, such as extreme idealism when Captain America fights the anti-nationalist terrorist Flag-Smasher;^[98] and vigilantism when he hunts the murderous Scourge of the Underworld.^[99]

Rogers receives a large back-pay reimbursement dating back to his disappearance at the end of World War II, and a government commission orders him to work directly for the U.S. government. Already troubled by the corruption he had encountered with the Nuke incident in New York City,^[100] Rogers chooses instead to resign his identity,^{[101][102]} and then takes the alias of "the Captain".^[103] A replacement Captain America, John Walker, struggles to emulate Rogers' ideals until pressure from hidden enemies helps to drive Walker insane. Rogers returns to the Captain America identity^[104] while a recovered Walker becomes the U.S. Agent.^[105]

Sometime afterward, Rogers avoids the explosion of a methamphetamine lab, but the drug triggers a chemical reaction in the Super-Soldier serum in his system. To combat the reaction, Rogers has the serum removed from his body and trains constantly to maintain his physical condition.^[106] A retcon later establishes that the serum was not a drug *per se*, which would have metabolized out of his system, but in fact a virus-like organism that effected a biochemical and genetic change. This additionally explained how nemesis the Red Skull, who at the time inhabited a body cloned from Rogers' cells, has the formula in his body.

Because of his altered biochemistry, Rogers' body begins to deteriorate, and for a time he must wear a powered exoskeleton and is eventually placed again in suspended animation. During this time, he is given a transfusion of blood from the Red Skull, which cures his condition and stabilizes the Super-Soldier virus in his system. Captain America returns to crime fighting and the Avengers.^{[107][108]}

Following Gruenwald's departure from the series, Mark Waid took over and resurrected Sharon Carter as Cap's love interest. The title was then relaunched under Rob Liefeld as Cap became part of the Heroes Reborn universe for 13 issues^[109] before another relaunch restored Waid to the title^[110] in an arc that saw Cap lose his shield for a time using an energy based shield as a temporary replacement. Following Waid's run, Dan Jurgens took over and introduced new foe Protocide, a failed recipient of the Super Soldier serum prior to the experiment that successfully created Rogers.

2000s

In the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks, Rogers reveals his identity to the world and establishes a residence in the Red Hook neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York, as seen in *Captain America* vol. 4, #1-7 (June 2002 – Feb. 2003).^[111] Following the disbandment of the Avengers in the "Avengers Disassembled" story arc, Rogers, now employed by S.H.I.E.L.D., discovers Bucky is alive, having been saved and deployed by the Soviets as the Winter Soldier. Rogers resumes his on-again, off-again relationship with S.H.I.E.L.D. agent Sharon Carter.

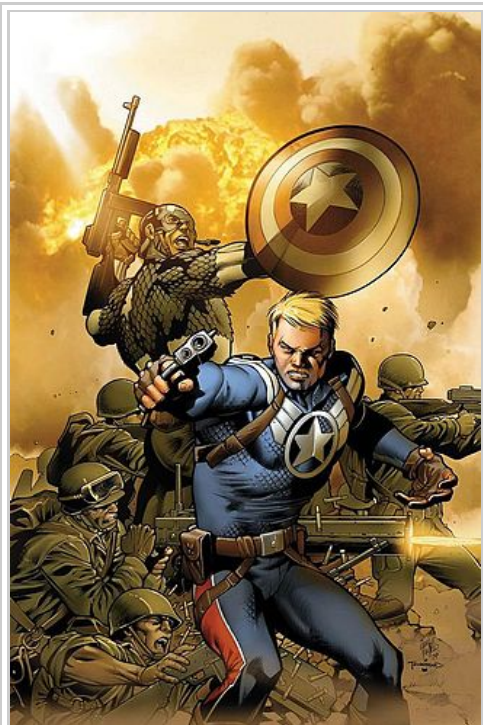
In the 2006–2007 company-wide story arc "Civil War", and its anchoring, seven-issue miniseries, *Civil War* (July 2006 - Jan. 2007), Rogers opposes the new mandatory federal registration of super-powered beings, and leads the underground anti-registration movement. After significant rancor and danger to the public as the two sides clash, Captain America voluntarily surrenders and orders the Anti-Registration forces to stand down.

In the story arc "The Death of Captain America", Rogers is indicted on criminal charges for his anti-registration efforts, and in *Captain America* vol. 5, #25 (April 2007) is shot outside a federal courthouse; taken to a hospital, he is pronounced dead.^[112] The assassination, orchestrated by the Red Skull, involves Crossbones as a sniper and Dr. Faustus, who poses as a S.H.I.E.L.D. psychiatrist and gives Carter a hypnotic suggestion to surreptitiously shoot Rogers at close range during the chaos surrounding the sniper shot.

The miniseries *Fallen Son: The Death of Captain America* #1-5 (June–Aug. 2007) follows the stunned superhero community after the apparent assassination. Captain America is purportedly laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery, but Tony Stark (Iron Man) and others have actually returned Rogers' body to the Arctic where Rogers had been found years before, and whereupon Namor swore to guard him. In *Captain America* vol. 5, #30 (Sept. 2007), Stark, who previously had tried to convince close friend and colleague of both Rogers and Stark, Clint Barton to take up the role, receives a letter containing Rogers' request that Bucky become the next Captain America, which Bucky agrees to do four issues later. Adopting the original shield, he dons a new costume incorporating a pistol and a knife. The Norse god superhero Thor communicates with what appears to be Rogers' spirit on the first anniversary of Rogers' death, in *Thor* vol. 3, #11 (Oct. 2008).



Steve Rogers' presumed death. Art by Steve Epting.



Promotional art for *Steve Rogers: Super Soldier* #1 (Sept. 2010) by Carlos Pacheco and Tim Townsend.

Captain America: Reborn #1 (Aug. 2009) reveals that Rogers did not die, and that the gun Sharon Carter had been hypnotized to use had caused Rogers to phase in and out of space and time, appearing at events in his lifetime and fighting battles. The Skull returns Rogers to the present, where he takes control of Rogers' mind and body. Rogers eventually regains control, and with help from his allies, defeats the Skull in the fourth and final issues of this miniseries. In the subsequent one-shot comic *Captain America: Who Will Wield the Shield?*, Rogers formally grants Bucky his Captain America shield and asks his former sidekick to continue as Captain America. The American President grants Rogers a full pardon for his anti-registration actions.

2010s

Following the company-wide "Dark Reign" and "Siege" story arcs, the Steve Rogers character became part of the "Heroic Age" arc.^[113]

The U.S. president appoints Rogers, in his civilian identity, as "America's top cop" and head of the nation's security,^[114] replacing Norman Osborn as the tenth *Executive Director of S.H.I.E.L.D.*. The Superhuman Registration Act is repealed and

Rogers re-establishes the superhero team the Avengers, spearheaded by Iron Man, Thor, and Bucky as Captain America. In the miniseries *Steve Rogers: Super Soldier*, he encounters Jacob Erskine, the

grandson of Professor Abraham Erskine and the son of Tyler Paxton, one of Rogers' fellow volunteers in the Super-Soldier program. Shortly afterward, Rogers becomes leader of the Secret Avengers, a black-ops superhero team.

During the *Fear Itself* storyline, Steve Rogers is present when the threat of the Serpent is known.^[115] Following the apparent death of Bucky at the hands of Sin (in the form of Skadi), Steve Rogers ends up changing into his Captain America uniform.^[116] When the Avengers and the New Avengers are fighting Skadi, the Serpent ends up joining the battle and breaks Captain America's shield with his bare hands.^[117] Captain America and the Avengers teams end up forming a militia for a last stand against the forces of the Serpent.^[118] When it comes to the final battle, Captain America uses Thor's hammer to fight Skadi until Thor manages to kill the Serpent. In the aftermath of the battle, Iron Man presents him with his reforged shield, now stronger for its uru-infused enhancements despite the scar it bears.^[119] It is then revealed that Captain America, Nick Fury, and Black Widow are the only ones who know that Bucky actually survived the fight with Skadi as Bucky resumes his identity as Winter Soldier.^[120]

In the *Avengers vs. X-Men* story arc, Captain America attempts to apprehend Hope Summers of the X-Men. She is the targeted vessel for the Phoenix Force, a destructive cosmic entity. Captain America believes that this Phoenix Force is too dangerous to entrust in one person and seeks to prevent Hope from having it. Cyclops and the X-Men believe that the Phoenix Force will save their race, and oppose Captain America's wishes.^[121] The result is a series of battles that eventually take both teams to the blue area of the moon.^[122] The Phoenix Force eventually possesses the five X-Men present, leaving the Avengers at an extreme disadvantage.^[123] The *Phoenix Five*, who become corrupted by the power of the Phoenix, are eventually defeated and scattered, with Cyclops imprisoned for turning the world into a police state and murdering Charles Xavier after being pushed too far, only for him to note that, in the end, he was proven right about the Phoenix's intentions.^[124] From there, Captain America proceeds to assemble the Avengers Unity Squad, a new team of Avengers composed of both classic Avengers and X-Men.^[125]

After Cyclops was incarcerated, and Steve accepted the Avengers should've done more to help mutants, and allowed the world to hate them, he started planning a new sub-team of Avengers in the hopes of unifying mutant and humankind alike. He chose Havok to lead his team and become the new face to represent mutants as Professor X and Cyclops once were.

Their first threat was the return of Red Skull, who usurped Professor X's body to provide himself with telepathic powers, which he would use to provoke citizens of New York into a mass assault against mutants, or anyone who could be one, and force Scarlet Witch and Rogue to allow themselves to be attacked. With the help of the S-Man Honest John, he managed to even manipulate Thor.

However, Red Skull's skills were still erratic, and couldn't completely control Captain America, an attack against him was enough of a distraction to lose control on Rogue and Scarlet Witch. After being overpowered by the rest of the Uncanny Avengers, Red Skull decided to escape, but promises to return. In the aftermath, both Rogue and Scarlet Witch joined the team.

During a battle with an enemy called the Iron Nail, the Super-Soldier Serum within Rogers's body was neutralized, causing him to age rapidly to match his chronological age of over 90. No longer able to take part in field missions but retaining his sharp mind, Rogers decided to take on a role as mission co-ordinator, organizing the Avengers' plans of attack from the mansion, while appointing Sam Wilson as his official 'replacement' as Captain America.^[126] However, when various Avengers and X-Men were inverted into villains and several villains inverted into heroism due to a miscast spell by the Scarlet

Witch and Doctor Doom,^[127] Rogers not only coordinated the efforts of Spider-Man and the inverted villains, now called the "Astonishing Avengers",^[128] but also donned his old armor to battle the inverted Falcon,^[129] until the heroes and villains could be returned to normal with the aid of the White Skull (The inverted Red Skull).^[130]

Powers and abilities

Captain America has no superhuman powers, but through the Super-Soldier Serum and "Vita-Ray" treatment, he is transformed and his strength, endurance, agility, speed, reflexes, durability, and healing are at the zenith of natural human potential. Rogers' body regularly replenishes the super-soldier serum; it does not wear off.^[106]

The formula enhances all of his metabolic functions and prevents the build-up of fatigue poisons in his muscles, giving him endurance far in excess of an ordinary human being. This accounts for many of his extraordinary feats, including bench pressing 1200 pounds (545 kg) and running a mile (1.6 km) in 73 seconds (49 mph/78 kph).^[131] Furthermore, his enhancements are the reason why he was able to survive being frozen in suspended animation for decades. He is highly resistant to hypnosis or gases that could limit his focus.^[132] The secrets of creating a super-soldier were lost with the death of its creator, Dr. Abraham Erskine.^[56] In the ensuing decades there have been numerous attempts to recreate Erskine's treatment, only to have them end in failure. Even worse, the attempts have instead often created psychopathic supervillains of which Captain America's 1950s imitator and Nuke are the most notorious examples.



Steve Rogers' physical transformation, from a reprint of *Captain America Comics* #1 (March 1941). Art by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby.

Rogers' battle experience and training make him an expert tactician and an excellent field commander, with his teammates frequently deferring to his orders in battle. Thor has stated that Rogers is one of the very few humans he will take orders from and follow "through the gates of Hades".^[133] Rogers' reflexes and senses are extraordinarily keen. He has blended judo, western boxing, kickboxing, and gymnastics into his own unique fighting style and is a master of multiple martial arts. Years of practice with his near-indestructible shield make him able to aim and throw it with almost unerring accuracy. His skill with his shield is such that he can attack multiple targets in succession with a single throw or even cause a boomerang-like return from a throw to attack an enemy from behind. In canon, he is regarded by other skilled fighters as one of the best hand-to-hand combatants in the Marvel Universe, limited only by his human physique.^{[134][135]} Although the super-soldier serum is an important part of his strength, Rogers has shown himself still sufficiently capable against stronger opponents, even when the serum has been deactivated reverting him to his pre-Captain America physique.^[136]

Rogers has vast U.S. military knowledge and is often shown to be familiar with ongoing, classified Defense Department operations. He is an expert in combat strategy, survival, acrobatics, military strategy, piloting, and demolitions. Despite his high profile as one of the world's most popular and recognizable superheroes, Rogers has a broad understanding of the espionage community, largely

through his ongoing relationship with S.H.I.E.L.D. He is a talented artist, and has worked on the *Captain America* comic book published in the Marvel universe. Other career fields include commercial arts, teaching high school history, and law enforcement.

Although he lacks superhuman strength, Captain America is one of the few mortal beings who has been deemed worthy enough to wield Thor's hammer Mjolnir.^[137]

Weapons and equipment

Captain America has used multiple shields throughout his history, the most prevalent of which is a nigh-indestructible disc-shaped shield made from an experimental alloy of steel and the fictional vibranium.^{[138][139]} The shield was cast by American metallurgist Dr. Myron MacLain, who was contracted by the U.S. government, from orders of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, to create an impenetrable substance to use for tanks during World War II.^[138] This alloy was created by accident and never duplicated, although efforts to reverse-engineer it resulted in the discovery of adamantium.^[140]

Captain America often uses his shield as an offensive throwing weapon. The first instance of Captain America's trademark ricocheting shield-toss occurs in Stan Lee's first comics writing, the two-page text story "Captain America Foils the Traitor's Revenge" in *Captain America Comics* #3 (May 1941).^[12] The legacy of the shield among other comics characters includes the time-traveling mutant superhero Cable telling Captain America that his shield still exists in one of the possible futures; Cable carries it into battle and brandishes it as a symbol.^[141]



Captain America's shield

When without his trademark shield, Captain America sometimes uses other shields made from less durable metals such as steel,^[142] or even a photonic energy shield designed to mimic a vibranium matrix.^[143] Rogers, having relinquished his regular shield to Barnes, carried a variant of the energy shield which can be used with either arm, and used to either block attacks or as an improvised offensive weapon able to cut through metal with relative ease.^[144] Much like his vibranium shield, the energy shield can be thrown, including ricocheting off multiple surfaces and returning to his hand.^[145]

Captain America's uniform is made of a fire-retardant material, and he wears a lightweight, bulletproof duralumin scale armor beneath his uniform for added protection.^[55] Originally, Rogers' mask was a separate piece of material, but an early engagement had it dislodged, thus almost exposing his identity. To prevent a recurrence of the situation, Rogers modified the mask with connecting material to his uniform, an added benefit of which was extending his armor to cover his previously exposed neck. As a member of the Avengers, Rogers has an Avengers priority card, which serves as a communications device.

Captain America has used a custom specialized motorcycle, modified by the S.H.I.E.L.D. weapons laboratory, as well as a custom-built battle van, constructed by the Wakanda Design Group with the ability to change its color for disguise purposes (red, white and blue), and fitted to store and conceal the custom motorcycle in its rear section with a frame that allows Rogers to launch from the vehicle riding it.

Enemies

Captain America has faced numerous foes in over 70 years of published adventures. Many of his recurring foes embody ideals contrary to the American values Captain America is shown to strive for and believe. Some examples of these opposing values are Nazism (Red Skull, Baron Zemo), Neo-Nazism (Crossbones, Doctor Faustus), technocratic fascism (AIM, Arnim Zola), Communism (Aleksander Lukin), anarchism (Flag Smasher), and international and domestic terrorism (HYDRA).

Other versions

In other media

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