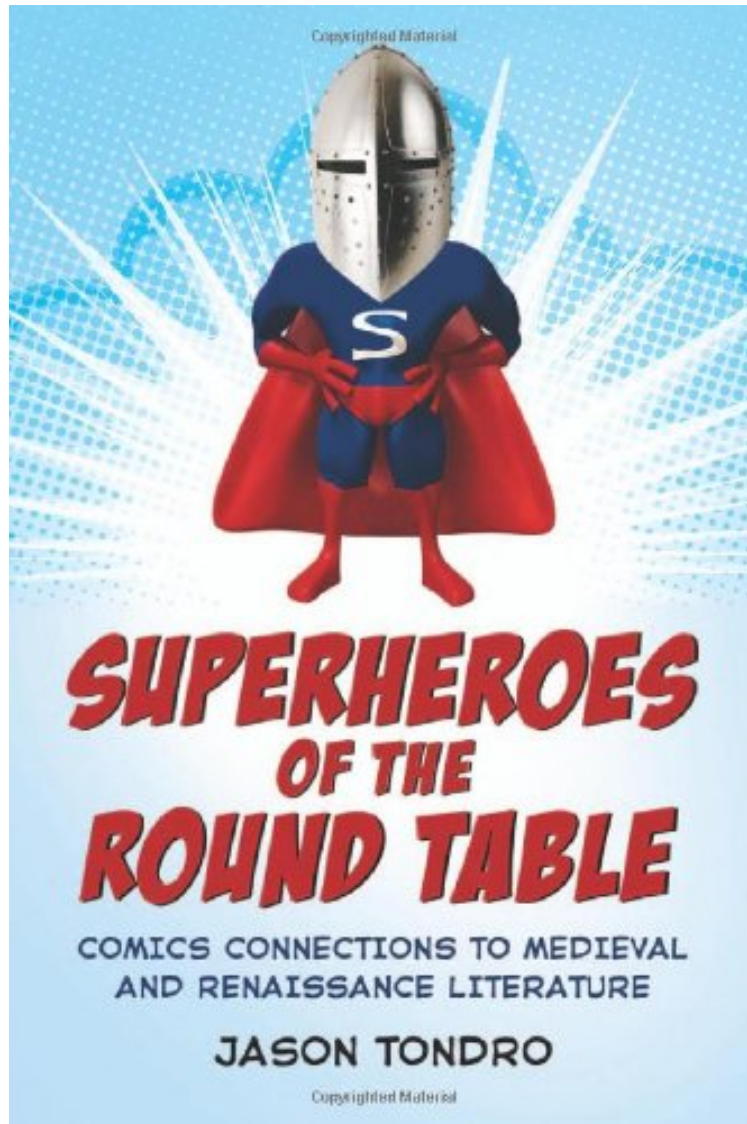


Superheroes of the Round Table: Comics Connections to Medieval and Renaissance Literature

Jason Tondro

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Jason Tondro : Superheroes of the Round Table: Comics Connections to Medieval and Renaissance Literature before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Superheroes of the Round Table: Comics Connections to Medieval and Renaissance Literature:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Myths, Epics, and SuperheroesBy Jeremiah WishonAs a fellow academic who had the opportunity to sit in on a number of lectures given by the author, Dr. Tondro, at the University

of California - Riverside, I was excited to read "Superheroes of the Round Table." At face value, it's a good read for those who love comics and gravitate toward allusion-filled books like Neil Gaiman's "Sandman," Bill Willingham's "Fables," or Del Col and McCreery's "Kill Shakespeare" - all of which are essentially stories about telling and interpreting stories. For the strengths of the book, I felt that the author did a pretty good job of providing background information on the comics he was discussing without wasting time telling us what avid comics readers already know. Likewise, the book provides a clear and concise history of comics, going over changes in comic readership over time, public hysteria over comics and the Comics Code, and how changes in comic book production have changed the medium. The author makes a good case for why comics can be used in the classroom, both in the abstract and by demonstrating concretely how they can be useful in approaching classic literature. Broadly speaking, Dr. Tondro's book is great in the sense that it shows strong parallels between comics and medieval/Renaissance literature, giving readers of each a reason to start reading the other. Since most of us comic book fans are lovers of stories, an author pointing us to more stories that we're likely to love is really the heart of what we want out of a book like this one. For the faults, I would primarily note that the book is academic and not intended for a general audience. As someone only vaguely familiar with the works of Chaucer, Dante, and so on, some of the points frankly went over my head. While I think most readers will find a number of things informative (see the strengths above), the book probably isn't going to be for everyone. That said, the book thankfully lacked the highly specialized vocabulary that makes a lot of academic writing (especially in the humanities) almost unreadable - and certainly unpleasant - for those outside of that discipline.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. A Discourse on Romance
By Asher J. Klassen
The term "romance" is drastically misunderstood in modern writing, especially when one is trying to use it in a traditional or academic context. Dr. Tondro approaches the area of heroic romance with the utmost respect and a love for the subject that is palpable as you read. It's not a book for everybody; it's certainly not a novel. It's a discussion for those readers of superhero comics both old and new who want to explore one more facet of the development of this cultural phenomenon. Tondro digs back into some of the more obscure annals of English literature to find thematic roots in Spenser and Jonson that have leafed out in the works of Morrison, Moore, and Kirby. This step-by-step investigation in the literary origins of modern heroism is well constructed, well researched, and written in a straightforward and crisp manner that makes the material accessible to those not used to ploughing through academic texts. It isn't a perfect book. There is the occasional editorial oversight, but not enough to soil the content of the book. I found Tondro's text a pleasure to read, a resource that I kept close by me through an entire year of upper level university courses as I pursued my own studies in comics. His passion for the medium and his area of research is infectious. I recommend this book to very nearly every English major I meet.

6 of 14 people found the following review helpful. Boring
By Human?
This book is extremely boring...and I'm saying this after having read Grant Morrison's "Supergods." Being an avid comic, fantasy and science fiction fan I am very interested in the subject matter but this...this is a snoozer regardless. The first problem is that the introduction is way too long and nowhere near interesting. It is also somewhat unnecessary in that it explains the premise/purpose of the entire book. It's like if someone told you to do a book report and you simply regurgitated the entire story. Very little point. The other main problem is that if you aren't a literary scholar you feel a little left out. Tondro writes as if everyone has the extensive background in Shakespeare that he does. He never adequately explains who Spencer or Chaucer are or why their works are relevant and his assumptions about the reader turn out to be fatal. This book didn't engage me at all. I'm a bit of a completionist so it disappoints me to admit that I only made it a little over halfway through this one (to page 124) and it was a chore to slog through that much. After a point one just realizes that their time is too valuable to waste on things that are unrewarding AND unentertaining.

Few scholars nursed on the literary canon would dispute that knowledge of Western literature benefits readers and writers of the superhero genre. This analysis of superhero comics as Romance literature shows that the reverse is true--knowledge of the superhero romance has something to teach critics of traditional literature. Establishing the comic genre as a cousin to Arthurian myth, Spenser, and Shakespeare, it uses comics to inform readings of *The Faerie Queene*, *The Tempest*, Malory's *Morte* and more, while employing authors like Ben Johnson to help explain comics by Alan Moore, Jack Kirby, and Grant Morrison and characters like Iron Man, the Hulk, the X-Men, and the Justice League. Scholars of comics, medieval and Renaissance literature alike will find it appealing.

"well-written, balanced, educated, intelligent, and also very seductive in its arguments"--Ler BD.
About the Author
Jason Tondro teaches superhero comics and graphic novels in the English department at the University of California, Riverside, as well as at community colleges in the Southern California area.