

Comics and Comic Characters H 1430

BACKGROUND: *This instruction sheet provides guidelines for assigning genre/form terms and subject headings to represent the content of graphic novels and selections from comic strips and cartoons; and also for assigning subject headings to works about individual comic strips, single panel cartoons, and comic characters.*

It is subject cataloging policy to assign a genre/form term to selections from a comic strip or single panel cartoon, and to graphic novels; for single works of fiction, assign headings to bring out topic(s) and form as described below. For classification of comic books and graphic novels, see F 565.

For works that consist of selections from a comic strip or single panel cartoon, as well as for works about a comic strip or cartoon, it is descriptive cataloging policy to provide an added entry for the title of the strip or cartoon when that title differs from the title of the work being cataloged, and to justify the added entry by means of a note if necessary. Descriptive catalogers are responsible for establishing these headings.

DEFINITIONS: *The following definitions apply for the purposes of this instruction sheet.*

Consider to be a comic book:

- *A collection or selection of comic strips or cartoons;*
- *A comic book cataloged as a serial; or,*
- *Selected issues of serial comics that have been collected and republished as monographs.*

Consider to be a graphic novel any work created specifically for the publication in hand and that is complete, or intended to be complete, in one or more volumes.

Comics and graphic novels are considered a form that includes both the written word and visual art. They include both fiction and nonfiction genres.

1. General rule. *Assign terms from LCGFT (e.g., **Comics (Graphic works); Graphic novels**) according to the guidelines in J 110 of the LCGFT manual. In case of doubt, assign the LCGFT term **Comics (Graphic works)**.*

*LC practice: Assign subject headings according to the guidelines in sec. 2 below, which follow general principles for fiction presented in H 1790, sec. 4. For an alternative approach to fictional comics, see the section **SPECIAL PROVISIONS FOR INCREASED SUBJECT ACCESS TO FICTIONAL COMICS** at the end of this instruction sheet.*

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2. *Selections of comic strips or cartoons and original works of fiction, including graphic novels.*

a. Biographical fiction. Assign the heading [*name of biographee*]-**Comic books, strips, etc.**

b. Historical fiction. Assign the headings for specific historical events, periods, etc., with the subdivision **-Comic books, strips, etc.**, e.g. **World War, 1939-1945-Comic books, strips, etc.**, **San Francisco Earthquake and Fire, Calif., 1906-Comic books, strips, etc.**

Do not assign a heading of this type when the event or period is merely the backdrop of the story. Assign it only when the event or period is the principal focus of the work.

Interpret the term **historical fiction** broadly to include works about entities such as movements, corporate bodies or other jurisdictions, camps, parks, structures, geographical features other than regions, ethnic groups, disasters, categories of events, etc.

c. Animal stories. Assign the heading **Animals-Comic books, strips, etc.** to individual works about animals in general. For a work about a specific type of animal, assign a heading for the type of animal with the subdivision **-Comic books, strips, etc.**, e.g. **Horses-Comic books, strips, etc.**

c. Assignment of additional form subdivisions. The form subdivision **-Comic books, strips, etc.** denotes both fiction and non-fiction works. In general, other form subdivisions, may be added or interposed if necessary, e.g. **-Biography-Comic books, strips, etc.**; **--Comic books, strips, etc.—Periodicals.**

However, do not add form subdivisions for juvenile literature to **-Comic books, strips, etc.** For juvenile works, assign an additional heading subdivided by **-Juvenile literature** (for nonfiction works) or **-Juvenile fiction.**

3. *Comic characters.*

a. Establishing headings for characters. Establish new subject headings for groups of characters in graphic novels, comic strips or single panel cartoons under their names (cf. H 1610). Names of individual characters are established in the name authority file.

3. *Comic characters. (Continued)*

b. Assignment of headings for individual characters or groups of characters. Assign such headings to works of criticism about a particular comic or cartoon character. If appropriate, assign also the heading for the strip or cartoon itself. Do not use the subdivision **–History and criticism**. Do not assign headings for characters to fictional works featuring the character unless following the guidelines in **SPECIAL PROVISIONS FOR INCREASED SUBJECT ACCESS TO FICTIONAL COMICS**, below.

4. *Nonfiction written in comic book or graphic novel style.* Assign the appropriate subject heading array. Subdivide each heading by **–Comic books, strips, etc.** Also assign a genre/form term from LCGFT (e.g., **Graphic novels**) according to the guidelines in the LCGFT manual.

5. *History and criticism.*

a. General rule. For works about particular themes in comics, assign as many headings as necessary to bring out the form (with subdivision **–History and criticism**) and the topic(s) (normally using headings of the type **[topic] in comics**). *Note:* Headings of the type **[topic] in comics**, the free-floating subdivision **–In comics**, and the non-free-floating subdivision **–Comics and the war** were authorized for use effective March 2022.

b. Works about individual graphic novels, comic strips, or cartoons. Assign the authorized title or name-title heading for a graphic novel, comic strip, or single panel cartoon to works about such comics.

c. Works about graphic novels, comic strips, or cartoons, treated collectively. Assign form and topical headings following the general principles in H 180 to bring out the form (e.g., **Graphic novels; Science fiction comic books, strips, etc.**), place of origin, and/or special topics discussed. Subdivide form headings by **–History and criticism** (e.g., **Graphic novels–History and criticism**).

d. Comics about individual persons and families. For criticism of comics about particular individuals or families, including dynasties and royal houses, assign the name of the person or family with the free-floating subdivision **–In comics**, e.g., **Hemingway, Ernest, 1899-1961–In comics; Romanov, House of–In comics; Bender family–In comics**.

e. Comics about imaginary persons. For criticism of comics about particular imaginary individuals, assign the name of the person. Also assign if appropriate for the work the name of the author with the subdivision **–Characters** (cf. H 1610).

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5. *History and criticism.* (Continued)

f. Comics about individual corporate bodies, places, and sacred works. For criticism of comics about particular corporate bodies, places, or sacred works, assign the name of the entity with the free-floating subdivision **—In comics**, e.g., **United States. Federal Bureau of Investigation—In comics; Guadeloupe—In comics; Bible—In comics**.

g. Comics about wars and similar events. For works about the comics of a specific war, revolution, uprising, etc., assign [*name of event*]**—Comics and the war, [revolution, uprising, etc.]** as a topical heading (cf. H 1200). *Note:* The free-floating subdivisions under Wars (H 1200) will not include this subdivision. Establish editorially all instances of this subdivision, in accordance with the policy in H 1090.

6. *Examples.*

Title: Superman, Batman.

[selected issues of a comic serial republished as a monograph]

655 #7 \$a Comics (Graphic works) \$2 lcgft

655 #7 \$a Superhero comics. \$2 lcgft

Title: The white lama.

[original work complete in six volumes]

655 #7 \$a Graphic novels. \$2 lcgft

Title: The battle of the Alamo.

[nonfiction work about the Alamo]

651 #0 \$a Alamo (San Antonio, Texas) \$x Siege, 1836 \$v Comic books, strips, etc.

655 #7 \$a Graphic novels. \$2 lcgft

655 #7 \$a Historical comics. \$2 lcgft

655 #7 \$a War comics. \$2 lcgft

655 #7 \$a Nonfiction comics. \$2 lcgft

Title: The Peanuts papers : writers and cartoonists on Charlie Brown, Snoopy & the Gang, and the meaning of life.

600 10 \$a Schulz, Charles M. \$q (Charles Monroe), \$d 1922-2000. \$t Peanuts.

600 10 \$a Schulz, Charles M. \$q (Charles Monroe), \$d 1922-2000 \$x Characters.

600 10 \$a Brown, Charlie \$c (Fictitious character)

600 00 \$a Snoopy \$c (Fictitious character)

655 #7 \$a Literary criticism. \$2 lcgft

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6. Examples. (Continued)

Title: Considering Maus : approaches to Art Spiegelman's "Survivor's tale" of the Holocaust.

600 10 \$a Spiegelman, Art. \$t Maus.
650 #0 \$a Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945), in comics.
655 #7 \$a Literary criticism. \$2 lcgft

Title: Webslinger : unauthorized essays on your friendly neighborhood Spider-Man.

[work of history and criticism]

650 #0 \$a Spider-Man (Fictitious character)
655 #7 \$a Essays. \$2 lcgft
655 #7 \$a Literary criticism. \$2 lcgft

Title: The 10 cent war : comic books, propaganda, and World War II.

[work of history and criticism]

650 #0 \$a Comic books, strips, etc. \$z United States \$x
History and criticism.
650 #0 \$a World War, 1939-1945 \$x Comics and the war.
650 #0 \$a National characteristics, American, in comics.
650 #0 \$a Literature and society \$z United States \$x History
\$y 20th century.
655 #7 \$a Literary criticism. \$2 lcgft

Title: Korean War comic books.

[work of history and criticism]

650 #0 \$a Comic books, strips, etc. \$z United States \$x
History and criticism.
650 #0 \$a Korean War, 1950-1953 \$x Comics and the war.
650 #0 \$a Censorship \$z United States \$x History \$y 20th
century.
650 #0 \$a War in comics.
655 #7 \$a Literary criticism. \$2 lcgft

Title: Calamity Jane : the calamitous life of Martha Jane Cannary, 1852-1903

600 00 \$a Calamity Jane, \$d 1856-1903 \$v Comic books, strips,
etc.
650 #0 \$a Women pioneers \$z West (U.S.) \$v Biography \$v Comic
books, strips, etc.
650 #0 \$a Frontier and pioneer life \$v Comic books, strips,
etc.
655 #7 \$a Biographical comics. \$2 lcgft
655 #7 \$a Graphic novels. \$2 lcgft

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LC practice:

SPECIAL PROVISIONS FOR INCREASED SUBJECT ACCESS TO FICTIONAL COMICS

1. Application of special provisions. The Library of Congress applies special provisions for increased subject access to fictional comics as internal resources permit. As of April 2022 these provisions may be applied to cataloging for current acquisitions of fictional comic strips, cartoons, and graphic novels.

2. General principles. The assignment of subject headings to individual works of fiction is intended to provide library users with an additional method of discovering and selecting comics. Several types of subject headings are available to provide this access. Any, all, or none of the following categories of headings may be appropriate for an individual fictional comic: form/genre, character, setting, topic. These headings should be assigned only as they come readily to mind after an initial review of the work being cataloged.

3. Form and genre headings. Select an appropriate term or terms from *Library of Congress Genre/Form Terms for Library and Archival Materials* (LCGFT), for example, **Biographical comics**; **Spy comics**. Assign terms from LCGFT in accordance with the instructions in J 235 of the LCGFT manual. For MARC coding of LCGFT, see memo J 105.

4. Character(s).

a. Individual characters. If the work prominently features a real person, a legendary character, or other major character not created by the author of the work, assign a subject heading for the name of the character with the subdivision **—Comic books, strips, etc.** If the primary character is a fictitious character created by the author, assign a subject heading only if the character appears in three or more works. For instructions on establishing subject headings for fictitious characters, see H 1610.

Note: Fictitious characters may be borrowed by an author from another author, or from another source, and used in the creation of a new work. Assign the same heading to works by the original creator of the character and to works in which the character has been borrowed.

4. *Character(s).*

a. Individual characters (Continued)

Assign a separate heading when characters share a name but are clearly unrelated to each other. Example:

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600 00 $a Guardian $c (Fictitious character from DC Comics,  
Inc.) $v Comic books, strips, etc.
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or

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600 00 $a Guardian $c (Fictitious character from Marvel  
Comics Group) $v Comic books, strips, etc.
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b. Classes of persons. A heading may also be assigned for the class of persons to which the primary character belongs if that class of persons is established and is likely to be sought by library users, for example, women detectives or teenage superheroes. Generally follow the same principles that are used for selecting class-of-persons headings for individual biographies (cf. H 1330).

5. *Setting.* Assign a subject heading for a place, event, or time period that is featured prominently in an individual work with the subdivision —**Comic books, strips, etc.** Since almost all fictitious works have a specific place and time, assign these headings only if the place or time is significant. Generally do not assign headings for a time period that is contemporaneous to the period in which the work was written, for example, do not express the 19th-century setting of a work that was written in the 19th century.

Assign a subject for an imaginary place or organization only if the place appears in three or more works. The place featured in a work may also be included as a subdivision of a topical heading, in accordance with normal subject cataloging practice, either in addition to a separate heading for place or as a substitute for a separate heading.

6. *Topical access.* Assign headings for specific topics that are the focal point of a fictional comic. Assign headings only for topics that have been made explicit by the author or publisher, such as those topics that are mentioned in the title, series, introductory matter, dustjacket, or other prominent location. The purpose of the topical heading is to provide access for those topics that distinguish the work from most other works.

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6. *Topical access.* (Continued)

Do not assign headings for vague and general topics, such as fate, evil, belief, psychology, interpersonal relations, emotions, social customs, or community life. The same principle of specificity should be applied as is used in non-literary cataloging. Do not assign both a broader and more specific heading to the same work; assign only the most specific heading that is appropriate. Some works may have no topical heading.

7. *Examples.*

Title: Scooby apocalypse

[monthly comic book]

600 00 \$a Scooby-Doo \$c (Fictitious character)\$v Comic books, strips, etc. \$v Periodicals.
650 #0 \$a Dogs \$v Comic books, strips, etc. \$v Periodicals.
655 #7 \$a Comics (Graphic works). \$2 lcgft
655 #7 \$a Apocalyptic comics. \$2 lcgft
655 #7 \$a Horror comics. \$2 lcgft
655 #7 \$a Periodicals. \$2 lcgft

Title: The empty man : recurrence.

[selected issues of a comic serial republished as a monograph]

650 #0 \$a Pandemics \$v Comic books, strips, etc.
650 #0 \$a Families \$v Comic books, strips, etc.
610 10 \$a United States. \$b Federal Bureau of Investigation \$v Comic books, strips, etc.
610 20 \$a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (U.S.) \$v Comic books, strips, etc.
650 #0 \$a Cults \$v Comic books, strips, etc.
650 #0 \$a Quarantine \$v Comic books, strips, etc.
655 #7 \$a Comics (Graphic works). \$2 lcgft
655 #7 \$a Graphic medicine (Comics) \$2 lcgft
655 #7 \$a Dystopian comics. \$2 lcgft

Title: Superb. Vol. 1, Life after the fallout.

[selected issues of a comic serial republished as a monograph]

650 #0 \$a Superheroes \$v Comic books, strips, etc.
650 #0 \$a Superheroes with disabilities \$v Comic books, strips, etc.
650 #0 \$a Teenage superheroes \$v Comic books, strips, etc.
650 #0 \$a Down syndrome \$x Patients \$v Comic books, strips, etc.
650 #0 \$a Robots \$v Comic books, strips, etc.
651 #0 \$a Youngstown (Ohio) \$v Comic books, strips, etc.
655 #7 \$a Comics (Graphic works) \$2 lcgft
655 #7 \$a Superhero comics. \$2 lcgft
655 #7 \$a Science fiction comics. \$2 lcgft

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Title: Whistle : a new Gotham City hero.

[a graphic novel for young adults]

650 #0 \$a Ability \$v Comic books, strips, etc.
650 #0 \$a Ability \$v Juvenile fiction.
650 #0 \$a Gotham City (Imaginary place) \$v Comic books, strips,
etc.
650 #0 \$a Gotham City (Imaginary place) \$v Juvenile fiction.
600 00 \$a Riddler \$c (Fictitious character) \$v Comic books,
strips, etc.
600 00 \$a Riddler \$c (Fictitious character) \$v Juvenile
fiction.
650 #0 \$a Women superheroes \$v Comic books, strips, etc.
650 #0 \$a Women superheroes \$v Juvenile fiction.
650 #0 \$a Jewish superheroes \$v Comic books, strips, etc.
650 #0 \$a Jewish superheroes \$v Juvenile fiction.
650 #0 \$a Superheroes \$v Comic books, strips, etc.
650 #0 \$a Superheroes \$v Juvenile fiction.
655 #7 \$a Graphic novels. \$2 lcgft
655 #7 \$a Superhero comics. \$2 lcgft
655 #7 \$a Science fiction comics. \$2 lcgft