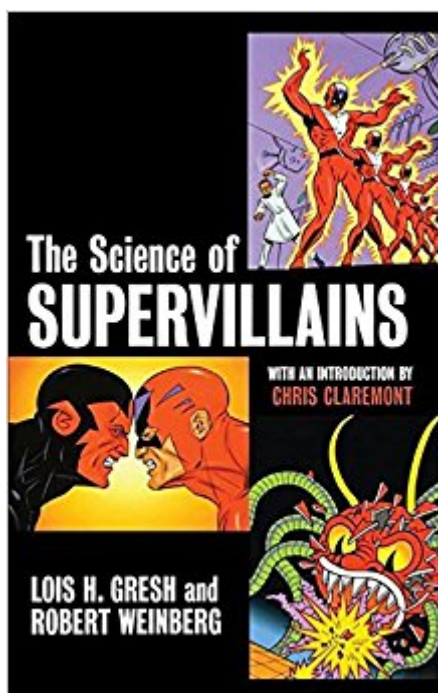


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The Science Of Supervillains



Synopsis

The authors of *The Science of Superheroes* now reveal the real genius of the most evil geniuses. Ever wonder why comic book villains, such as Spiderman's bionic archenemy Dr. Octopus or the X-Men's eternal rival Magneto, are so scary and so much fun? It's not just their diabolical talent for confounding our heroes, it's their unrivalled techno-proficiency at creating global mayhem that keeps comic book fans captivated. But is any of the science actually true? In *The Science of Supervillains*, authors Lois Gresh and Bob Weinberg present a highly entertaining and informative look at the mind-boggling wizardry behind the comic book world's legendary baddies. Whether it's artificial intelligence, weapons systems, anti-matter, robotics, or magnetic flux theory, this fun, fact-filled book is a fascinating excursion into the real-world science animating the genius in the comic book world's pantheon of evil geniuses. Lois Gresh (Scottsville, NY) and Bob Weinberg (Oak Forest, IL) are the authors of the popular *Science of Superheroes* (cloth: 0-471-0246-0; paper: 0-471-46882-7)

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Customer Reviews

The authors of *The Science of Superheroes* turn their attention to the heroes' spectacular foes in order to uncover just how worried we need to be that some day a Magneto, Dr. Octopus or Lex Luthor may arise to threaten world domination. Considering the science reality underlying the cartoon science fiction, the authors look at Luthor's youthful harnessing of solar energy and the basis for Brainiac as a form of artificial intelligence. While the idea behind this investigation is undeniably appealing, the authors are unclear about who their audience is. Several chapters, such

as the one on Lex Luthor, employ an overly simplistic sentence structure or seem otherwise aimed at middle-schoolers: "be a hero to your class by correcting your science teacher." Other topics are aimed at adults without a science background or "those who have forgotten their high school biology." While this inconsistency may serve to stimulate young readers, it will likely turn off adults—especially since the first chapter is particularly simplistic and underdeveloped. However, later chapters grow in complexity and provide a solid base of information about their topics. Taken as a whole, this primer is a fun way to introduce young adults to a vast range of subjects—from the solar system to the mechanics of flight, bioengineering and beyond—but it may seem patronizing to adults. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

"The best part of this book is not the science, which is fine but somewhat perfunctory, but the material on the various superheroes." ("Sci-Fi, December 2002)..".Gresh and Weinberg's wonderful little book is both a potted history of superhero comics, and a pop science manual for the extremely lazy..." (hero.ac.uk-Higher Education and Research Opportunities, 28 October 2002)..".children who enjoyed the Spider-Man and X-men movies will delight in The Science of SuperheroesPerfect for turning a comic-book obsession into an enthusiasm for the laboratory..." ("The Times," 7 December 2002)..".This is definitely a fun book..." ("The Alchemist," 9 January 2003)..".All in all I can thoroughly recommend this book to anyone with an interest in science and at least a nostalgic fondness for comics..." ("Chemistry In Britain," December 2002)..".The Science of Superheroes" could be a useful tool for encouraging comic fans to delve into science..." ("Physics World," February 2003)

Love the super villain .

This is an enjoyable book. Basically more of the same from Science of Super Heroes. Entertaining read, a little stripped down on the science aspect of things. However, it's still enjoyable and great for people who ARE NOT science nerds and fans of comic books.

bad smell from book

I am blessed with a superteen, a teenage son who is just coming into his superpowers! I am usually stumped by what to give him as a present but this book was a big hit, especially as he is deep in the

City of Villains video game. The game is not related to this book, but I think I got bonus points for actually realising what he was playing! I'd recommend parents of teens to buy this book!

PRETTY INTERESTING BOOK

In an age when superheroes have more than a certain "cache" this is an interesting and entertaining series of essays examining the science of their arch enemies. Makes you smile and reflect in equal measure.

I liked the book. I have several others that are similar (The Science of Christmas). I find it interesting how science can explain super powers and gadget and even how science mirrors them in some way. Good book.

Last year, I reviewed Gresh and Weinberg's previous book, The Science of Superheroes and I wasn't all that impressed with it. Which, as I noted in the review, is weird. As I'm pretty sure you're aware by now, I am a big fan of science and I loves me my superheroes. Putting those two things together should, by all rights, be just the book for me. Unfortunately, I was less than thrilled with it. I found it kind of clunky, dry, and generally dismissive of comic books due to their misuse of science. I couldn't fault them for the topics they chose - they were interesting enough. Things like the problems with characters who grow and shrink, or why the original origin for Superman made no sense - these were the things that are valid targets if you're looking for bad science, but Gresh and Weinberg were really only looking for bad science. I got this book, and I had hoped that they'd learned from their previous one. Unfortunately, they haven't learned all their lessons. To their credit, they did stop focusing on comic book history, which was a big part of why the first book dragged the way it did, but their overall attitude towards comic books and science is pretty much the same. Only this time, they're looking at the supervillains. As much as I've always wanted to be a superhero, there have been plenty of times when I've wanted to join the other side as well. I mean, how many times have you wanted to don some goggles and a lab coat, stand on your parapet (you do have a parapet, right?), backlit by lightning as you scream, "The FOOLS! They called me mad? I WILL SHOW YOU MADNESS! HA! HAHAAAAHA!! HAAAAAAHAHAHAHAHA!!" Or something like that. Anyway, there's something to be said for the life of a supervillain, and if you're a really good one then you'll make it into the pages of history. Names such as Lex Luthor, Doctor Doom, Magneto and Sinestro - these are names that will live in the hearts of comic book fans forever. Indeed, it is

said that the greatness of a hero depends on the greatness of his villain. Where would Superman be if he only had to foil a few muggings once in a while? Or Spider-Man if he were just tracking down garden-variety murderers? They might be heroes, but they certainly wouldn't be SUPERheroes. So what can we learn from these megalomaniacs? Well, we can learn a lot, so long as we are willing to ignore a whole lot of bad science. Lex Luthor, for example, was a fan in his early days of things like weather machines that would completely change the climate of an area. Is that possible? Well no, of course not. There's no way to completely alter weather using a wooden tower and a parabolic dish. Or what about the Anti-Monitor's attempt to destroy the Infinite Earths? While it looked good in the pages of the comics, the nature of infinity is such that no matter how many Earths he destroyed, there would still be an infinite number of Earths left. And that's not even getting into the matter/anti-matter self-destruction problem. And how about The Vulture? What's so wrong with an elderly man strapping some wings to his arms and committing dastardly crimes? As it turns out, what's wrong is everything we know about flight. On the other hand, there are villains who kind of show us a goal to reach, in a weird way. Doctor Doom, for example, uses a metal exoskeleton that confers upon him great strength and endurance. Would it be possible for us to build such a thing, only not looking several centuries out of date? As it turns out, yes we can. Or at least we will be able to soon. The science of body assistance has been making great progress recently, and it's only a matter of time before we are able to augment our own bodies from the outside and do amazing things. Or look at Poison Ivy, one of Batman's recurring villains (and the only female in the book). She makes great use of plants that look like nothing Nature has ever produced. Could we, with biological engineering, do the same? It turns out we already are, just not as cool. Instead of giant venus flytraps that catch and eat human beings, we're engineering better strains of vegetables that will go towards feeding more people for less money. But if we really wanted to, we could have murderous plants in our future. All of these bad guys offer us a chance to explore science, both fundamental and cutting-edge. The Lizard, a poor, beleaguered enemy of Spider-Man's who cannot control the beast within, may give us the clues to regenerating our own limbs. Magneto offers us an understanding of how powerful and pervasive electromagnetism really is. Dr. Octopus shows us the potential of prosthetics, and Mr. Mxyzptlk is a great way to start looking at not just the fifth dimension, but the very concepts of dimensions that are beyond the paltry ones that we inhabit. So why didn't this book shine for me? Well again, it comes down to the authors' approach to the topic at hand. Other books about superheroes and science start off by accepting the reality of the comic book. James Kaklios' *The Physics of Superheroes* does exactly that - he grants the heroes a "miracle exception" and then moves on from there. His book is founded on the tacit understanding

that comic book writers are more interested in the story than the science, but that if you look hard enough, you can find scientific lessons everywhere. Gresh and Weinberg seem to take a much more dismissive view of comics, bordering on the sarcastic in several places. More than once, they strayed from the science to criticize the villains' motives - why is Vandal Savage so hot to take over the world? Why not just invest his money, wait a few hundred years and live a life better than any human had before him? Or why would Lex Luthor do something so stupid as to drop a nuclear bomb from a helicopter? Helloooo? Ever hear of a little something we like to call "poison gas?" While those may be excellent story points, this book is not called "The Plot Holes of Supervillains." It's about the science, and trying to gain the appreciation of comic book fans by pointing out why their favorite bad guys are idiots, well.... That's probably not the best way to handle it. While I don't doubt that Gresh and Weinberg know their comics, I don't get the feeling that they really love comic books for what they are - fantasies with just enough science stuck on to make them seem plausible. Rather than looking for ways that comic books can open readers' eyes to science, they seem to be more interested in tearing down the comics themselves for trying - and failing - to use science in their stories. They're more focused on the flaws than the potential, and I found that tiring after a while. So while I can't say that I disliked this book - the chapter on the fifth dimension was really interesting, and they certainly raised a lot of good questions about the viability of comic book-inspired science - I can say that I'm somewhat disappointed. It seems to me that it's a book for people who feel slightly ashamed that they like comics, and want someone to tell them that they were right to feel that way. Well, I'm not ashamed, but I will be more considerate of my villains from now on. They may be evil, underhanded, greedy, selfish and yes - just a little crazy. But that doesn't mean they don't have anything to teach us.-----"By now, anyone reading these books knows that we never ask a question without having an unpleasant answer ready." - Lois Gresh and Robert Weinberg, *The Science of Supervillains*-----

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