

MARVEL AND THE X-MEN COMICS

Professor Charles Xavier and his team of X-Men were around a long time before the X-Men films. They first appeared in a Marvel comic in 1963. What do you know about Marvel and the X-Men comics?

MARVEL COMICS

The company started in 1939 but it didn't use the name Marvel Comics until later. One of its first super-heroes was Captain America, a character who is still popular today. By 1961 the company was using the name Marvel Comics. Around this time there was an explosion of new super-hero comics. A young writer called Stan Lee joined artist Jack Kirby to make a comic called the *Fantastic Four*. More Marvel characters followed, including Spider-Man and the Hulk. In 1963, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby introduced the X-Men.

THE FIRST X-MEN

At first Stan Lee wanted to call the comic 'The Mutants', but he thought that readers might not understand this name. Readers might also expect his teenage characters to be happy and confident because of their special powers. But really these young super-heroes had many problems, hopes and fears. And because most humans hated mutants and were afraid of them, these teenage mutants often felt very frightened and alone.

All of the first team of the X-Men are in *The Last Stand* – Jean Grey (in the comics she is called Marvel Girl), Cyclops, Iceman, Beast, and Angel (Warren Worthington Junior in the film). Their characters and their stories are quite different from in the comics.



The cover of a *Fantastic Four* comic

DID YOU KNOW ...?

Stan Lee appears in many of the films of his comics. You can see him in the first scene of the film *X-Men: The Last Stand*. When Charles Xavier and Eric Lensherr visit Jean's house, Lee is a neighbour watering his garden.



THE NEW X-MEN

During the 1960s, the X-Men comics weren't as successful as some other Marvel comics. By the end of 1960s the company stopped making new stories about the team. But the comic was brought back to life in 1975.

The new X-Men were very different. Some of the old faces were there – including Cyclops and Jean Grey – but there were new characters like Logan and Storm. The new *X-Men* became the most popular comic in the world, with several different comics about the mutants.



The cover of an *X-Men* comic

FROM COMIC TO FILM

Some of the ideas for *X-Men: The Last Stand* came from two famous stories in the comics:

- In a 1980 story, Jean Grey seems to die and then comes back with much more power. She is called the Phoenix, but the reason for her return and new powers is very different from in the film.
- In 2004, there was a story in the comic called 'Gifted'. In this story, Dr Kavita Rao discovers a 'cure' for mutants.

But the film changes many other things from the X-Men comic. For example, in the comic . . .

- Leech is a small green boy.
- Juggernaut isn't a mutant. He is Charles Xavier's step-brother.
- Callisto cannot sense other mutants' powers.

Have you read any Marvel comics? Which ones? Who are your favourite super-heroes? Why?

What do these words mean? You can use a dictionary.

super-hero scene
step-brother sense