

Introduction



*'THERE'S NEVER BEEN A STRANGE STORY LIKE THIS!
THERE NEVER WILL...'* (Detective Comics, No. 347)

1.1 Why are comics read?

*'ACTION MAN HAS USED HIS STEALTH TRAINING TO
REMAIN UNDETECTED, BUT THE TIME FOR WATCHING IS
OVER. THE TIME FOR ACTION IS NOW. SMACK! WHACK!'*
(Action Man, No. 122)

Most of us will have fond memories of our first contact with comics. To indulge in personal childhood reminiscing is not merely being nostalgic, it can help us to remember the pleasures of comics and give us a retrospective entrée into the world of children's reading. As educationalists this pleasure may also be tinged with a feeling of guilt about the content and level of literacy of such texts as they are often spurned as being 'subliterature'. In spite of these reservations many generations of children have enjoyed comics and the other texts which have spawned such blockbuster films like *Spider-Man* (2002).

There can be very few people who do not know the iconic names of Batman, Dennis the Menace and Dan Dare, heroes from this subliterature who have survived in the collective memory even in today's multi-mediascape.

Possible reasons for their survival could be the following:

- They have the advantage of being easily accessible; every super-market, corner shop and news-stand sells them.
- They are cheap to buy and match pocket money spending for young children.
- They are ephemeral with new stories appearing weekly.