

Jason Todd, Robin, was murdered over twenty years ago at the hands of the Joker, a loss devastating to Bruce Wayne, Batman. Ten years ago, still burdened by this tragedy, Bruce decided to conclude his one-man war on crime in Gotham City. In his seminal 1986 graphic novel *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*, Frank Miller writes and draws 55-year-old Bruce becoming Batman again, but it is clear that this Bruce Wayne is not mentally well. After ten years away from crime-fighting, Bruce hears voices that he attributes to Batman. He subconsciously walks to the site of his parents' murders and collapses. While watching TV, he intrusively re-imagines their deaths. He caves into his urges and decides to become Batman again, but with one caveat: that, in Jason's memory, he will never endanger a child again. Within two weeks, though, Batman has taken on 13-year-old Carrie Kelley as the new Robin. All these behaviors and mental processes add up to Batman being one of the field of psychology's greatest case files. And with all the *Batman* fiction that has been published, there is no shortage of material with which to analyze the Caped Crusader.

Conceived in 1939 by Bob Kane and Bill Finger, Batman has since enjoyed a rich 78-year history spanning comics, television, and film. From the beginning, Batman's backstory, disposition towards darkness, and devotion to justice have remained relatively constant. But the Dark Knight's history has also been characterized by change, especially with changes in writers and national culture. As a consequence of each writer taking Batman in their own direction, it can be said that there are multiple "Batmen;" Frank Miller's Batman in *The Dark Knight Returns* is different than Grant Morrison's Batman in *Arkham Asylum: A Serious House on Serious Earth*, both of whom are different than Christopher Nolan's Batman in *The Dark Knight Trilogy*. Each of these incarnations of Batman are equally psychologically complex, but in different ways and for different reasons. So, while in one sense, performing a psychological evaluation of Batman is enabled by the sheer volume of fiction about him, in another way, the fact that nearly every story features its own nuanced take on the character complicates drawing definitive conclusions about him. That said, it is these complications and the resulting debates that make psychoanalyzing Batman so rewarding and fun.

In performing a psychological analysis of Batman, one must direct their attention in four areas. Normal psychological phenomena, or psychological processes that humans are "supposed to" exhibit, explain Bruce's mission as Batman over his lifespan. In particular, the study of human development explains Bruce's vision and mission for Batman, while the study of psychodynamics rationalizes the many sides of Bruce's personality. Beyond normal psychological phenomena, Batman is clearly also defined by abnormal psychology, or mental disorders and illnesses, and by analyzing his behaviors, he can be clinically diagnosed. Just as appropriately, Batman's foes can be diagnosed. Although they differ from Batman in their moral inclinations, Batman's enemies, such as the Riddler, Harley Quinn, and the Joker, are similar to him in their atypicality and their aptness for clinical diagnosis. For all the psychological features, both normal and abnormal, applied appropriately in *Batman* stories, *Batman* fiction is also riddled with psychology applied incorrectly, including faults in psychological language, Gotham's legal system, and the psychiatric hospital Arkham Asylum, that cause disruptions in *Batman*'s psychological value. To best analyze the role of psychology in *Batman*, then, one must

pose and answer the question: *How are psychological phenomena, both normal and abnormal, applied and misapplied in Batman?*