

[Main Page](#)



November, 1961

### Did you know...

- Lee originally wanted to call the book *The Fabulous Four*, but his publisher, Martin Goodman, overrode him.
- The team operated without costumes for the first two issues, but reader complaints put them in their familiar blue uniforms.
- Richards's original reason for rushing his untested craft into space was to beat "the Commies" in the race to be the first in orbit. That small point was conveniently forgotten in subsequent updates.

## Fantastic Four #1

BY 1961, STAN LEE AND JACK KIRBY had done more for the comic-book industry than just about anyone else in the business. Little did anyone know they were just warming up.

*Fantastic Four #1* is nothing less than the comic book that put Marvel on the map. Before Spider-Man, the Hulk, the X-Men, or anything else emerged from the self-styled "House of Ideas," there was the Fantastic Four, breaking all the superhero rules and taking comic-book adventure -- not to mention comic-book sales -- to a new level.

Legend has it that Marvel publisher Martin Goodman had seen the phenomenal success that DC was enjoying with its newly revived heroes, and the [Justice League of America](#) -- a team-up book that featured all the heroes fighting together -- was one of its biggest bestsellers. He gave Lee and Kirby the task of creating a new super-team book that could measure up to the Distinguished Competition's book.

They did it by taking every superhero cliché and throwing them out the window. Their team had no secret identities to hide, and they were a family more than a team -- literally, in the case of Sue and Johnny Storm (Sue and Reed would eventually get married -- another comics first). Reed Richards was a scientist who more often than not used his brains, not his elastic fist, to win a battle. Johnny was a teenager who was a hero in his own right, and not the sidekick of someone else (and he was a clever way to bring back the name, if not the character, of the Human Torch). And Ben Grimm, the rocky-faced Thing, was a reluctant hero whose gruff demeanor masked the self-pity he felt inside, knowing his great strength and fame came at a great price.

They fought each other, they made mistakes, and they always looked out for each other. At times, the book was more of a soap opera than an action-packed comic, with the relationships between the four often coming close to overshadowing the action packed into every issue by Kirby's bold artwork. The book would soon do better than Goodman could ever have hoped for -- it would quickly become the flagship title of an entirely new line-up that would completely change the face of the comic industry.

After a few issues, the not-too-modest tag "The World's Greatest Comic Magazine!" was added to the front cover of *Fantastic Four* by a not-too-modest Stan Lee. And for the 100 or so issues over which he and Kirby presided, he was right.

[Previous](#)

[Next](#)

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