

Dare to know

Detective and Mystery Comics

Comics where the nature of a crime, usually a murder, remains unknown until the end of the story. A genre in which the commission or investigation of a crime is central to the narrative and a cast of characters are each suspect. All have a strong motive for committing the crime, and possibly a unique situation or quirky personality that makes the story more interesting. The clever detective, either a professional or an amateur, must interview them to determine which is the guilty party. The perpetrator is eventually discovered to be one of the least likely suspects. These plot-driven stories are often complex, allowing the audience the opportunity to engage in the same process of deduction as the protagonist throughout the investigation of a crime. Detective and mystery comics have experienced a cyclical measure of popularity. The "Platinum Age" of comics (ca. 1897-1937) introduced the genre to the medium. Drawing on the pulp magazines and hard-boiled novels of the 1920s and 1930s, detective comics of the "Golden Age" (1938-1956) replaced superheroes after World War II as the prevalent graphic genre. This trend lasted for about for a decade until the comics industry adopted the Comics Code Authority's system of self-regulation. Chester Gould's *Dick Tracy* (1931-ongoing), Comics Magazine Company's *Detective Picture Stories* (1936-1937), Ultem's *Star Ranger* (1937), National Allied Publications/DC Comic's *More Fun Comics* (1935-1947) and *Detective Comics* (1937-ongoing), Alex Raymond and Ward Greene's *Rip Kirby* (1946-1999), and Quality Comics' *Police Comics* (1950-1953) are classic examples.

Common Elements

Strong opening
Atmospheric setting
A crime
Detective protagonist
Ineffectual constabulary
Large number of suspects
A culprit

Narrative momentum
Trail of clues
Motive
Foreshadowing
False clues ("red herrings")
A final twist
Big reveal

Investigators for hire as modern-day paladins
Detective agencies
Clients
Surveillance
Sardonic humor
Mistrust of or conflict with authority

Graphic Novel Examples

<i>Black Road: The Holy North</i> (2018) by Brian Wood and Garry Brown	<i>The Maze Agency Volume 1</i> (2006) by Mike W. Barr
<i>The Complete Chester Gould's Dick Tracy Volume 1</i> (2006) by Chester Gould	<i>Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer: The Night I Died</i> (2018) by Mickey Spillane and Max Allan Collins
<i>Crosswind</i> (2018) by Gail Simone and Cat Staggs	<i>Midnight of the Soul</i> (2016) by Howard Chaykin
<i>Dakota North: Design for Dying</i> (2018) by Martha Thomases and Tony Salmons	<i>Powers Volume One</i> (2022) by Brian Michael Bendis and Michael Avon Oeming
<i>Dark Corridor</i> (2016) by Rich Tommaso	<i>The Rattler</i> (2016) by Jason McNamara and Greg Hinkle
<i>Dept. H Omnibus</i> (2019) by Matt Kindt	<i>Rivers of London: Body Work</i> (2021) by Ben Aaronovitch, Andrew Cartmel, and Lee Sullivan
<i>Detectives Inc.</i> (1980) by Don McGregor and Marshall Rogers	<i>Road to Perdition</i> (1998) by Max Allan Collins with Richard Piers Rayner
<i>Dry Country</i> (2018) by Rich Tommaso	<i>The Trouble with Girls: Volume 1</i> (2006) by Will Jacobs and Gerard Jones
<i>Eight Million Ways to Die</i> (2018) by John K. Snyder III	<i>Tumor</i> (2016) by Joshua Hale Fialkov and Noel Tuazon
<i>Eleanor and the Egret</i> (2018) by John Layman	<i>Violent Love Volume 1: Stay Dangerous</i> (2017) by Frank J. Barbiere and Victor Santos
<i>From Hell</i> (1989) by Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell	<i>Watson and Holmes</i> (2013) by Karl Bollers and Rick Leonardi
<i>Goldie Vance Volume 1</i> (2018) by Hope Larson and Brittany Williams	
<i>The Hard Place</i> (2018) by Doug Warner and Nic Rummel	
<i>Kill or Be Killed</i> (2019) by Ed Brubaker and Sean Phillips	