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Abstract:

When trying to come up with a topic to write this paper on I thought back to the first comic books I ever read. When I was a little girl a refused to read anything at all. My parents tried everything, they would even bribe me to read. In a final attempt to get me to read something my father went out and bought at "Betty and Veronica" comic book. At first I was hesitant to read it but I decided to give it a chance. After the first three pages I was hooked. I immediately related to both characters on different levels. I felt like Betty because she looked like me and she was a very down to earth girl. While I also wanted to be like Veronica because she was beautiful and had everything she could ever want. As a young girl I felt like these two best friends were the most empowering role models that I could look up to. They were both smart, attractive, successful teenage girls. Never once did I stop and think about the one issue that in reality undercut their empowering roles; Archie. In almost every issue of "Betty and Veronica" the two girls are participating in the various day-to-day lives, usually enjoying one another's company or improving themselves in some way. Then like clock work, the two would turn against each other in the pursuit of their boyfriend Archie. First off I could never understand why they liked Archie so much, they were both much smarter and successful than him. He was constantly portrayed as a bumbling fool that tried very hard to make both of his girlfriends happy. Looking back on this issue now I am awestruck by Archie's undercutting of Betty and Veronica's success as young women. It is as if the writers of the comic wanted to empower young girls, but they couldn't help leave in a little of the 'old school' sexism.

 After thinking this "Betty and Veronica" issue through I have decided to write my essay about the portrayal of women in comics. Although I haven't nailed down my exact thesis yet I have a relatively strong idea of what I want to say. I want to discuss the portrayal of women in comics that are geared towards young girls and explore the issues that come up in this genre ("Betty and Veronica"). From there I want to compare those portrayals to more empowering portrayals of woman such as in "Fun House" and "Persepolis". In a more detailed aspect I want to discuss not only how these two comics portray women in a more realistic light but also relate back to the fact that these comics were written by women. Going a long with the theme of women in mature comics I wanted to discuss Laurie's portrayal in "Watchmen", the lack of women portrayed in "Jimmy Corrigan" and the sexual symbols that women are in "Concrete".

Overall I want to explore the use of women in comics as both positive and negative symbols, objects and characters. Women in comic books are used as tools to convey various issues and messages, I would like to explore how there are manipulated into portraying these various ideas. I have done some preliminary research to help me further develop my thesis and support my ideas. These sources include:

The Archie Code: A Study in Sexual Stereotyping as Reflective of as Basic Dilemma in American Society. By Ronald Glasberg Breaking the Mold with Humor: Images of Women in the Visual Media. By Sheri Klein Women in Comic Books. By Michael R. Lavin