

On The Punisher  
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The material in this thought is drawn from Peter Sanderson, *Marvel Universe* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1996).

Comic book superheroes tend to abide by the law and stay away from killing. One of Marvel comics' characters, however, created in the 1970s, The Punisher, had a very different outlook.

One day, Frank Castle was picnicking with his wife and two children in New York's Central Park. Suddenly, thugs gunned down his family, leaving Frank the lone survivor.

Castle identified the killers to authorities, but they were not brought to justice.

The deaths in his family and the pain and loss he suffered unleashed in Castle a murderous and inextinguishable rage. He became The Punisher, a vigilante in a bulletproof costume bearing a death's head symbol, and set out to hunt down and destroy those responsible for what happened to his family and him.

The Punisher viciously annihilated the killers. But he didn't stop there. Sane but obsessed, he embarked on a vendetta against all those he considered beyond the reach of official justice.

The Punisher disregarded the boundaries of conventional morality and the law. He had no interests, no emotional attachments to anyone, no impulses beyond rage and revenge. His life was limited to eliminating those he despised until he himself was eliminated.

The Punisher's rampage was both disturbing and fascinating. Depending on one's outlook, it exemplified Frank Castle's derangement and spiritual damnation or, in contrast, his personal freedom and rejuvenation.