# How LGBTQ+ representation in comics: a 30-year evolution



Over the past three decades, the landscape of comic books has undergone significant transformation, particularly in the representation of LGBTQ+ characters, from sparse or hidden representation to a more pronounced and celebrated presence.

In the 1990s, LGBTQ+ characters were almost non-existent in mainstream comic books. When they did appear, their sexuality or gender identity was usually implied rather than openly acknowledged. Despite this, comics and their characters have had a far-reaching influence on various markets, including the niche distribution of branded poppers in the UK, marketed under monikers such as Super Rush Cosmic Power and Twisted Beast, appealing to comic book enthusiasts.

Today, the visibility and acceptance of LGBT characters are on a markedly different plane. These characters are no longer confined to the peripheries but often occupy main roles with fully fleshed-out narratives. Here are some of our favourites.

**Northstar (Jean-Paul Beaubier):**  
One of the pioneering openly gay characters in Marvel Comics, Northstar, first appeared in 1979 in the X-Men series. His coming-out moment occurred in Alpha Flight #106 in 1992, a noteworthy event in the comic world. In 2012, Northstar further broke new ground by marrying his boyfriend, Kyle, in Astonishing X-Men #51, marking the first same-sex wedding in mainstream comics.

**Mystique (Raven Darkhölme):**  
Mystique, introduced in Marvel Comics in 1978, is distinguished by her shapeshifting abilities. She is bisexual and has had significant relationships with both men and women. The most notable of these is with a woman named Destiny, a relationship alluded to over decades before being openly confirmed.

**Iceman (Bobby Drake):**  
A member of the original X-Men team since 1963, Iceman's revelation as a gay character came in 2015 in All-New X-Men #40. Initially, a younger version of Iceman from the past identifies his sexuality, followed by the contemporary, adult version acknowledging it later. This development was unexpected for many, given his past relationships with women, portraying the evolving understanding of one's identity over time.

**Batwoman (Kate Kane):**  
Appearing in DC Comics in 2006, Batwoman (Kate Kane) quickly became one of the most prominent lesbian characters in the DC Universe. Her sexual orientation is intrinsic to her character but doesn't overshadow her narrative. Kane has had several significant relationships, including with police detective Renee Montoya and vampire Nocturna.

**Wiccan (Billy Kaplan):**  
Debuting in 2005, Wiccan is a magic-wielding member of the Young Avengers. He is openly gay and in a long-term relationship with his teammate, Hulkling. Their relationship has been central to various story arcs, offering a positive portrayal of same-sex relationships in comics.

The increasing presence of LGBT characters in comics is crucial as it makes for a broader representation, allowing readers of diverse identities to see themselves reflected in the narratives. It also fosters greater empathy and understanding among all readers.