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Sommario/riassunto

Using a broad array of historical and literary sources, this book presents an unprecedented detailed history of the superhero and its development across the course of human history. How has the concept of the superhero developed over time? How has humanity's idealization of heroes with superhuman powers changed across millennia-and what superhero themes remain constant? Why does the idea of a superhero remain so powerful and relevant in the modern context, when our real-life technological capabilities arguably surpass the imagined superpowers of superheroes of the past? The Evolution of the Costumed Avenger: The 4,000-Year History of the Superhero is the first complete history of superheroes that thoroughly traces the development of superheroes, from their beginning in 2100 B.C.E. with the Epic of Gilgamesh to their fully entrenched status in modern pop culture and the comic book and graphic novel worlds. The book documents how the two modern superhero archetypes-the Costumed Avengers and the superhuman Supermen-can be traced back more than two centuries; turns a critical, evaluative eye upon the post-Superman history of the superhero; and shows how modern superheroes were created and influenced by sources as various as Egyptian poems, biblical heroes, medieval epics, Elizabethan urban legends, Jacobean masques, Gothic novels, dime novels, the Molly Maguires, the Ku Klux Klan, and pulp magazines. This work serves undergraduate or graduate students writing papers, professors or independent scholars, and anyone interested in learning about superheroes.
