

# Rorschach: the true victim



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

In the graphic novel *Watchmen* by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons, the theme of morality comes into question through the actions of the various vigilante heroes. This is most clearly seen through the character Rorschach. From the very beginning of the story, it is clear that Rorschach has a very hostile way of solving issues. From his intrusive and physical interrogation techniques to committing murder as a form of retribution, Rorschach seems wicked rather than ethical. Although this rash style of crime fighting never fades during the events of the graphic novel, Rorschach's intentions tell a different story about his character. Analyzing his motives reveal that he acts in the name of justice and does whatever necessary to ensure fairness, even if that requires hurting others. Therefore, he is often labeled an aggressor. When attempting to solve the murder of a fellow vigilante and reveal Veidt's wrongdoings, however, Rorschach faces adversity and eventually death. Despite his immoral actions as a crime fighter, the consequences Rorschach faces due to his commitment to justice against Veidt make him the main victim of *Watchmen*.

Throughout the story of *Watchmen*, the shocking acts committed by Rorschach are revealed making it hard for anyone to consider him a victim. After learning about the murder of the Comedian, Rorschach begins to investigate by questioning people at a bar. Hoping to coerce a man into giving information, Rorschach breaks one of his fingers. He soon realizes that the man knows nothing about the murder and breaks a second finger before simply walking away (Ch. 1, p. 15-16). Likewise, Rorschach interrogates Moloch, a now retired super villain, by thrashing the elderly man around his kitchen. Once again, the examination is fruitless and Rorschach leaves with

no second thoughts about his actions (Ch. 2, p. 20-24). However, the most appalling action committed by Rorschach by far is the way he deals with the kidnapper and murderer of a little girl. After finding the kidnapper's residence, Rorschach handcuffs him to a chair in a room filled with kerosene and tosses him a hacksaw saying, " shouldn't bother trying to saw through handcuffs, never make it in time" (Ch. 6, p. 25), before dropping a match insinuating that he should cut off his own hands if he wants to survive. These atrocious actions place Rorschach in very negative light and set the tone for his character. Rorschach seems to only fit the role of a perpetrator.

On the other hand, Rorschach begins to face consequences through his pursuit of justice which place him in the position of a victim. While still attempting to solve the murder of the Comedian, Rorschach pays another visit to Moloch after receiving a tip. It turns out the meeting is a setup and the police are waiting outside for him. Although he attempts to escape, Rorschach is unsuccessful. His true identity is revealed and he is incarcerated, blamed for the murder of Moloch and his previous crimes (Ch. 5, p. 23-28). Rorschach has no negative intentions and simply wants to figure out who has killed the Comedian. He wants the murderer to face justice. Although some of his actions are questionable while attempting to solve this case, his ultimate goal is to ensure equality. Unfortunately, he becomes a victim when he is hindered from achieving this justice and forced to go to prison for doing what is right. Rorschach becomes a victim for attempting to uphold the legal system.

Likewise, Rorschach is a victim when he is killed for trying to uphold the idea of justice after learning about Veidt's plan. Adrian Veidt plans to stop a world

war by unleashing an alien monster on New York City and hoping the world will work together to vanquish it. However through this plan's execution, millions of civilians are killed. Dr. Manhattan realizes that this plot is successful in stopping a potential war and all of the heroes present at Veidt's Arctic facility agree that this must be kept a secret or peace will collapse. Rorschach on the other hand cannot. He believes that " people must be told" and that " evil must be punished" (Ch. 12, p. 23). Rorschach cannot stand idle when justice is not upheld. To him, preventing a world war does not justify murdering three million people. As a result, he tries to leave the facility so he can tell the world the truth. Unfortunately, Dr. Manhattan will not let him jeopardize this plan and ends up killing him (Ch. 12, p. 24). Rorschach pays the ultimate price for fighting for his beliefs. Everyone else simply accepts the situation while Rorschach feels that Veidt needs to answer for his crimes. Rorschach is a victim for trying to expose wrongdoing.

Although Rorschach's crime fighting techniques label him negatively, they do not make him any less of a victim. Watchmen reveals two main issues where Rorschach's character comes into question as mentioned before: his interrogations and the kidnapping case. For both points, he commits acts which make him look like anything but a victim. However, Rorschach is not doing it simply for enjoyment. As seen through his attempt to reveal the truth about Veidt, Rorschach acts in the name of justice and does whatever necessary to achieve justice. As a result, he is somewhat justified in his actions. In order to gain answers from individuals who do not normally comply, Rorschach uses physical coercion techniques to hasten his pursuit of the truth. Likewise, to teach a man who brutally murdered a six year old girl

the significance of life and pain, Rorschach places him in a situation where his life is at risk and pain can save him. His tactics are crude and somewhat immoral but his main goal is to be fair and create balance. Rorschach is not solely defined by his actions. Instead, his intentions reveal that he is deserving of sympathy.

Some may argue that the civilians killed from Veidt's plan are the true victims of the graphic novel because they are murdered without reason. However, they are far from being the main victim. The civilians who are killed are not particularly hindered from achieving acts of goodness. They are normal people: some completely average and some succumb to war hysteria. As a result, they are victims of an unfortunate end, but they are not worthy of complete compassion because they lack the backstory. Rorschach is the main victim for losing his life fighting for justice. The civilians are simply victims for losing their lives. Likewise, it can be argued that the other heroes in the graphic novel could be the main victims. However, this claim is drastically inaccurate. Throughout the events of the graphic novel, the rest of the heroes, excluding Rorschach, lay idle for the most part. They do not attempt to search for answers and instead let the events play out. Only after Rorschach's arrest do the Night Owl and the Silk Spectre begin to intervene. Likewise at the end of the graphic novel, no one besides Rorschach tries to punish Veidt for his actions. They all let the atrocious murder of three million people go unanswered just because Dr. Manhattan says it is fine. Because of their unconcerned reaction to the main events of the novel, the other heroes are far from victims. They simply watch others being afflicted from a distance.

Through the various characters presented in Watchmen, it is clear that Rorschach is the main victim of the story. Although characters such as the civilians murdered in New York City and the other heroes are somewhat deserving of sympathy, their lack of empathetic circumstances simply make them victims to a lesser extent. Rorschach, on the other hand, loses his life while fighting for justice, a very noble cause. Rorschach may not seem like the best hero due to his aggressive strategy, but his intention of justice serves to somewhat justify his actions. As a result, the negative aspects of his character do not outweigh the compassion he rightfully attains. As a character, Rorschach is hard for a reader to like. He is cold, reckless, and misunderstood. It is only at the end of the novel, seconds before death, do readers finally understand his true nature. Face covered in tears, Rorschach draws the reader's sympathy as a symbol of goodness, rather facing death than living a lie.