

# **SUPERMAN READING ORDER: CITY OF TOMORROW ERA (JEPH LOEB/JOE KELLY; 1999-2005)**



## **Guide by Rize**

This reading guide covers the era of Superman comics that was written primarily by Jeph Loeb and Joe Kelly, with significant contributions from Joe Casey, Mark Schultz, and a few others. The run is very distinct in that it rebuilt Metropolis as a true futuristic city of tomorrow, revamped the tone to feel optimistic and fun, put Superman into the heart of modern day political issues, and populated Clark's supporting cast and rogues gallery with plenty of new faces. It's an underrated run that is inconsistently collected due to the complicated nature of the reading order, and the sheer size of the run as a whole. Not ALL stories are written by Loeb/Kelly, but all stories are working within Loeb/Kelly's editorial framework.

Since there are several concurrent Superman series that weave together to form one story, the previous era (primarily by Dan Jurgens) used "triangle" numbers to tell the reader the order to read the issues in. Unlike that era however, the triangle numbers no longer indicate chronological reading order. So why have them at all? Because fuck you, that's why. (Actually, they dropped the triangle numbers altogether in 2002). Not only that, but the books didn't even follow any set pattern of chronology, which is to say, you can't always simply alternate between the four main books to get the right order. It's absolute chaos. **Even some official trades have some of these stories printed out of order!** Reading everything in the right order is very difficult. Hence, the existence of this guide. So as long as you follow this, you won't need to worry about any of that. Just enjoy the comics!

### **Prerequisite Reading:**

- None is required, as this run is fairly self-contained, and pretty good about getting you up to speed when it isn't. However, if you are very unfamiliar with Superman and his history, you may want to read about his origin ("Superman: Birthright" by Waid or "Man of Steel" by Byrne), as well as the Death & Return saga by Jurgens ("Death of Superman", "Funeral for a Friend", "Reign of the Supermen", "Return of Superman").

### **What this guide does NOT include:**

- **Filler issues.** These issues are excluded for both quality reasons and for being irrelevant to the run as a whole. This even includes a few issues by Loeb/Kelly themselves, but I tried to avoid that. I know it sounds paradoxical, but trust me, by removing certain issues, the story is MORE complete, and certainly more enjoyable. I only consider it filler if it is both irrelevant AND bad. If an irrelevant issue is particularly good, or a bad issue is important, I will not consider it filler and include it.
- **Stories from other Superman eras.** This means anything from the previous era (Dan Jurgens era) or the following era (Infinite Crisis era). There are other guides you can find for both of those eras that will serve you very well.

- **Supergirl (1996).** I highly recommend reading Peter David's Supergirl, but there's no way to easily weave it into the main Superman narrative without harming the stories of BOTH series. David's Supergirl started several years before this era began, making it a kind of relic of the Jurgens era, and it remained very independent of the other Super-books. She is consistently sidelined in this era, and is actually eventually replaced with a brand new Supergirl (or two) towards the end, who IS integrated into the main line. So, definitely check out David's Supergirl (here's my guide: [Supergirl Reading Order: "Fallen Angel" Era](#)), but don't try to read it concurrently with this Superman era. If you're gonna read both, then read the entirety of David's Supergirl before City of Tomorrow, and try to ignore any tiny "spoilers" you might come across in the later issues (there aren't any big ones).
- **Most issues of Superboy (1993).** This series is another relic of the Jurgens era. For the most part, it's just not worth reading, and it has no relevance to the main Superman books except where noted. Joe Kelly did have a short stint on Superboy, some issues of which are included.
- **Most issues of Supergirl (2005).** Only the initial Jeph Loeb run of this series is included for both quality and relevance purposes. The rest of the series is complicated by Infinite Crisis and other shenanigans, and is sadly not really worth reading. The Joe Kelly issues are admittedly fun though, so you can check those out if you want, but don't expect a satisfying ending.
- **Other minor Superman appearances/spinoffs.** This means many appearances of Superman in JLA and other books of the time that have nothing to do with this story, as well as very tangential spinoffs like "Doomsday Wars" or "Metropolis".

I am a completionist, so I like seeing as much as possible, but only if it doesn't actively harm the story as a whole. So if I exclude something, please be assured that it was for a good reason. If you really feel that I have missed something vital, feel free to comment or email me at [daxiafarren@gmail.com](mailto:daxiafarren@gmail.com) and I'll take a look.

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## THE GUIDE

The guide is divided into story arcs. There are several stretches where the issues become more standalone. These sections are noted, and formatted as if they were story arcs. Do not disregard these issues, as they are still important to the overall narrative and subplots. The following abbreviations will be used:

AOS = Adventures of Superman

MOS = Superman: The Man of Steel

AC = Action Comics

### Superman for All Seasons

**Note:** *This was Loeb's first Superman story. Unlike the rest of the run, this takes place in the early days of Superman's career. Despite that, there are some themes introduced here that continue to recur throughout. It is technically optional, but it's quite good so I recommend it.*

- Superman for All Seasons 1-4 (miniseries)

### Standalone Issues 1

**Note:** *The Encantadora short is a prelude to AC 760.*

- Superman 151-152
- AOS 573
- MOS 95

- Secret Origins of Supervillains 80pg Giant (**Note:** *ONLY the Encantadora short story*)
- AC 760
- AOS 574
- MOS 96
- AC 761
- Superman 153
- AOS 575
- MOS 97
- AC 762

#### **Superman: Y2K**

- Superman Y2K (*one-shot*)
- Superman 154
- AOS 576
- MOS 98
- AC 763

#### **Standalone Issues 2**

- Superman 155
- AOS 577
- MOS 99
- AC 764
- Superman 156
- AOS 578
- MOS 100
- AC 765

#### **Superman: Critical Condition**

- Superman 157
- Metropolis Secret Files & Origins 2000 (*one-shot*)
- AOS 579
- MOS 101
- AC 766
- Superman 158
- AOS 580
- MOS 102
- AC 767

#### **Standalone Issues 3**

- Superman 159
- AOS 581
- MOS 103
- AC 768

#### **Superman: Emperor Joker**

- Superman 160
- AOS 582
- MOS 104

- AC 769
- Superman: Emperor Joker (*one-shot*)
- Superman 161
- AOS 583
- MOS 105
- AC 770

### **Superman: President Luthor**

**Note:** *This is where the reading order gets nasty. This arc is notoriously complicated for having several interconnected stories going on at the same time that could not possibly be happening at the same time. The writers began to completely disregard the triangle numbers. J.M. DeMatteis's AOS issues, a storyline about Lord Satanus, are particularly problematic, as they have almost nothing to do with the President Luthor story, yet directly reference it a few times in ways which simply aren't possible. Not only that, but the magical and apocalyptic nature of the story is completely at odds with the tone and themes of the President Luthor story. But the silver lining is that the Satanus story is not very good, meaning there's actually no reason to force it in (DeMatteis didn't even finish writing it, so why should we read it?). Because of this, I have chosen to remove the unnecessary issues. However, there are a few pages in a couple of said issues which are nice additions to the Luthor story if you want, and they have been marked. Said pages are not 100% necessary though.*

**Note:** *Luthor Secret Files contains entirely flashbacks, but do not make the mistake of reading it first. It will spoil some reveals and kill the drama. It is meant to be read after the Lex 2000 one-shot.*

- Superman 162-163
- MOS 106
- AOS 584
- AOS 585 (**Note:** *pg.15-16 only [Pete Ross, Luthor]*)
- MOS 107
- AC 772-773
- Superman 164
- Superman: Lex 2000 (*one-shot*)
- President Luthor Secret Files (*one-shot; several short flashback stories*)
- AOS 586 (**Note:** *pg.1-4 only [Superman, Luthor]*)
- MOS 108
- AOS 587 (**Note:** *pg.6-7,13,16 only [Lucy, Luthor]*)
- Superman 165
- MOS 109
- AC 774
- MOS 110

### **What's So Funny About Truth, Justice, and the American Way?**

**Note:** *This is the beginning of a sort of "Season 2" of the City of Tomorrow era, after all the President Luthor drama.*

- AC 775

### **Superman: Return to Krypton**

- Superman 166-167
- AOS 589
- MOS 111

- AC 776

### **Superman/Detective Comics: Lord of the Ring**

**Note:** *The Detective Comics issue is part of Greg Rucka's run over there (and also part of the larger "New Gotham" storyline, a dark mirror of Superman's "City of Tomorrow" running concurrently over in the Bat-Family books). However, this particular issue does continue from Superman 168, forming a short crossover. You don't need to know anything going in.*

- Superman 168
- Detective Comics 756

### **Standalone Issues 4**

**Note:** *As stated before, Superboy is mostly not worth reading, but Joe Kelly began a short Superboy run starting around here. I wish I could include it, however, the run was rendered unreadable due to crossover nonsense with Young Justice that I won't get into. Thankfully, the first issue of the run, which establishes a new status quo for Superboy, is a good standalone story and can be included. It technically takes place sometime around President Luthor, but it's easier to read it here.*

- Superboy 83
- AOS 590
- MOS 112
- AC 777
- Superman 170
- AOS 592
- MOS 114
- AC 779

### **OUR WORLDS AT WAR**

**Note:** *This is a beast of a crossover, and several irrelevant tie-ins have been excluded for the best reading experience. It's not perfect, but it's the best you're gonna get.*

- Superman 171
- AOS 593
- Batman: Our Worlds at War (*one-shot*)
- MOS 115
- AC 780
- Superman 172
- JLA: Our Worlds at War (*one-shot*)
- Superman: Our Worlds at War Secret Files (*one-shot; flashback stories*)
- AOS 594
- MOS 116
- AC 781
- Superman 173
- AOS 595
- MOS 117
- AC 782
- World's Finest: Our Worlds at War (*one-shot*)

### **OUR WORLDS AT WAR Aftermath**

- Superman 174
- AOS 596

- MOS 118
- AC 783

### **Joker: Last Laugh tie-ins**

***Note:** These are tie-ins to the Last Laugh mini-"event", but they stand alone completely. You can read the Last Laugh mini if you want but it's not very relevant, nor worth the time. These are fun stories by themselves.*

- Superman 175
- AOS 597
- MOS 119
- AC 784
- Superboy 93

### **Superman: A Little Help**

- Superman 176

### **JLA by Joe Kelly (Part 1/3)**

***Note:** This is the start of Joe Kelly's JLA run. It is totally optional for the larger City of Tomorrow guide, but it does intermingle a bit. Obviously it is not solely focused on Superman, but it enhances the overall experience since Kelly was able to tie them together with certain themes and subplots. But again, all JLA stories going forward are totally optional.*

- JLA 61-64 (Golden Perfect)
- JLA 65 (standalone issue)
- JLA 66-76 (Obsidian Age)

### **Standalone Issues 5**

- AOS 598
- AC 785
- Superman 177
- MOS 121
- AC 786
- Superman 178
- AOS 600
- Superman 179-181

### **Superman: Man & Beast**

- AC 789-790

### **Superman: Mirror, Mirror**

- AOS 603-605

### **Superman: The Secret**

- Superman 182-183

### **Standalone Issues 6**

- AC 792
- Superman 185
- MOS 129

### **Superman: Return to Krypton II**

- Superman 184
- AOS 606

- MOS 128
- AC 793

### **Superman: Ending Battle**

- Superman 186
- AOS 608
- MOS 130
- AC 795
- Superman 187
- AOS 609
- MOS 131
- AC 796

### **Superman: Lost Hearts**

- Superman 189
- AOS 611
- MOS 133
- AC 798

### **Superman VS Darkseid: Apokolips Now!**

*Note: The final issue of MOS and the final Mark Schultz issues.*

- MOS 134
- Superman VS Darkseid: Apokolips Now! (one-shot)

### **JLA by Joe Kelly (Part 2/3)**

- JLA 78-79 (Rules of Engagement)
- JLA 80-82 (White Rage)
- JLA 83 (standalone issue)

### **Superman: The Harvest**

*Note: This is the start of a sort of "Season 3" for this era. From this point onward, the three remaining core series stop interconnecting as much, and each writer focuses on their own storylines. It's possible that some of these storylines are taking place at the same time, but it would ruin each story to read them concurrently. Thus, they should be read consecutively. Individual story arcs will be maintained for maximum enjoyment, just keep the timeline in mind.*

- AC 797
- AC 800-805

### **JLA by Joe Kelly (Part 3/3)**

*Note: This is the end of Kelly's JLA run, but it had a followup, more on that later.*

- JLA 84-89 (Trial by Fire)
- JLA 90 (standalone issue)

### **Superman: The Hollow Men**

- AOS 612-616

### **Superman: The Mxy Twins**

- AOS 617-618

### **Superman: Prestidigitation Nation**

- AOS 619-620

### **Superman: The Minuteman**

- AOS 621-623

### **Standalone Issues 7**

- AC 810
- Superman/Batman Secret Files & Origins

### **Justice League Elite**

**Note:** By Joe Kelly. This is a spinoff of his JLA and Superman runs featuring The Elite, first introduced back in "What's So Funny About Truth, Justice, and the American Way?" It is completely optional, but if you included Kelly's JLA run in your reading, you should absolutely include this.

- JLA 100
- Justice League Elite 1-4
- JLA Secret Files & Origins 2004 (**Note:** Justice League Elite story only)
- Justice League Elite 5-12

### **Superman: Birthright**

**Note:** By Mark Waid. This is a retelling of Superman's origin. It is completely optional, but as of right here, it becomes the canon origin, and is referenced as such in the next story arcs.

- Superman: Birthright 1-12

### **Superman: The Futuresmiths**

**Note:** By Steven T. Seagle.

**Note:** There are two versions of Superman 190. The normal one, and the "Double Feature" which includes "The 10 Cent Adventure". The 10 Cent Adventure can also be found as a solo issue. Whichever versions you use, just make sure you have both stories.

- Superman: The 10 Cent Adventure (one-shot)
- Superman 190-200

### **Superman: Strange New Visitor**

**Note:** By Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning. This story features a character from the Wildstorm universe, Mr. Majestic, arriving in the DCU. If you want to know more about him, read the 1999 "Majestic" ongoing by Joe Casey.

- AC 811
- AOS 624
- Superman 201

### **Superman: Godfall**

**Note:** Superman is missing in "Strange New Visitor". Godfall explains where he has been. The two arcs take place concurrently, but you are meant to read Godfall second.

**Note:** These issues all have backup stories that should be skipped. They are prologues to the Infinite Crisis era of Superman, and have no relevance to the Loeb/Kelly era. They especially have nothing to do with the Godfall storyline.

- AC 812
- AOS 625
- Superman 202
- AC 813
- AOS 626
- Superman 203

### **Majestic: Strange New Visitor**

- Majestic 1-4 (2004 miniseries)



**Note:** If you want to continue Majestic's adventures after he returns to the Wildstorm universe, read the Majestic (2005) ongoing series, which is 17 issues. It has nothing to do with Superman or DC at all, however.

### **Superman/Batman: Public Enemies**

**Note:** Takes place during the Futuresmiths story, but trust me, it's so much simpler to read it here. Just keep the timeline in mind.

- Superman/Batman Secret Files 2003
- Superman/Batman 1-6

### **Superman/Batman: The Supergirl from Krypton**

**Note:** Introduction of the Kara Zor-El Supergirl into the post-Crisis universe. If you swear you already saw Supergirl in stories before this, don't worry about it. Different character. Not worth explaining. Blame John Byrne.

- Superman/Batman 8-13

### **Superman/Batman: Absolute Power**

- Superman/Batman 14-18

### **Supergirl: Power**

- Superman/Batman 19 (**Note:** Also resold as "Supergirl #0", either version is fine)
- Supergirl 1-5

### **Superman/Batman: Vengeance**

**Note:** The big finale!

- Superman/Batman 20-25

### **It's a Bird...**

**Note:** This isn't really part of the main run, but it's a good cap on the whole saga. It's a non-fiction story by Steven T. Seagle, writer of the "Futuresmiths" arc, about how he struggled to write the character of Superman.

- It's a Bird... (graphic novel)

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And that's it! That's over 200 issues across 5 years, with a distinct beginning, middle, and end. It's a wild ride with ups and downs like any other, but I hope you enjoy it. It took a lot of effort to put this together, but someone had to do it.

If you see any errors, please let me know by leaving a comment or contacting me at [daxiafarren@gmail.com](mailto:daxiafarren@gmail.com) and I'll try to fix the issue. Also, if you use this guide to make custom binds, please send me photos, I'd love to see!

-Rize

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