

# BARTON

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*Dare to know*

### True Crime Comics

*Comics that focus on real-life crimes, usually violent in nature, and the people involved in them.* A genre which features graphic depictions of actual crime and violence. Following a similar and earlier craze in true detective pulp magazines and Hollywood gangster films, true crime comics were one of the most popular genres of the Golden Age during the 1940s and 1950s. These comics focus on gangsters, killers, armed robbers, petty thieves, and grifters, as well as police officers, detectives, and prosecutors. Stories are supposedly “ripped from the headlines” of newspapers or taken from official police reports. The realism of these accounts varies, and publishers once ran the risk of glorifying criminal activity in their competition to present lurid details and bizarre villains. Following the implementation of the Comic Code Authority, publishers were compelled to limit the sensationalism. Readers lost interest in these tamer stories, and true crime comics largely disappeared for nearly two decades. Lev Gleason Publications’ *Crime Does Not Pay* (1942-1955); Alval Publishers’ *True Crime Comics* (1947-1949); Prize Comics’ *Headline Comics* (1947-1956) and *Justice Traps the Guilty* (1947-1958); Hillman Comics’ *Real Clue Crime Stories* (1947-1953); EC Comics’ *Crime Suspense Stories* (1950-1955); Fox Feature Syndicates’ *Murder Incorporated* (1948-1950); and Avon Comics’ *All True Detective Cases* (1952-1954) are classic examples.

### Common Elements

“Real-life” accounts	Shocking events	Murder cases
Melodramatic narratives	Gruesome details	Criminal trials

### Graphic Novel Examples

<i>Becoming Unbecoming</i> (2015) by Una	<i>Hunting Accident: A True Story of Crime and Poetry</i> (2017) by David L. Carlson and Landis Blair
<i>The Butcher of Paris</i> (2020) by Stephanie Phillips and Dean Kotz	<i>The Lindbergh Child</i> (2008) by Rick Geary
<i>Grand Theft Horse</i> (2016) by G. Neri and Corban Wilkin	<i>Maids</i> (2020) by Katie Skelly
<i>Green River Killer: A True Detective Story</i> (2011) by Jeff Jensen and Jonathan Case	<i>Torso</i> (2000) by Brian Michael Bendis and Marc Andreyko
	<i>The True Death of Billy the Kid</i> (2018) by Rick Geary