



Batwoman, Vol. 1: Hydrology

J.H. Williams III (Writer, Illustrator) , W. Haden Blackman (Writer) , Amy Reeder (Illustrator) , Richard Friend (Illustrator) , Dave Stewart (Colourist)

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A *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLER

As a part of the acclaimed DC Comics—The New 52 event of September 2011, Batwoman's new series finally begins! The creative team of J.H. Williams III and W. Haden Blackman launch the ongoing *Batwoman* series, as Batwoman (a.k.a. Kate Kane) faces deadly new challenges in her war against Gotham City's underworld—and new trials in her personal life. Who or what is stealing children from the barrio, and for what vile purpose? Will Kate train her cousin, Bette Kane (a.k.a. Flamebird), as her new sidekick? How will she handle unsettling revelations about her father, Colonel Jacob Kane? And why is a certain government agency suddenly taking an interest in her? These are some of the questions that will be answered in this long-awaited series!

This deluxe hardcover collect issues 0-5 of *Batwoman*, part of the DC Comics—The New 52 event.

Batwoman, Vol. 1: Hydrology Details

Date : Published June 19th 2012 by DC Comics (first published January 1st 2012)

ISBN : 9781401234652

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Format : Hardcover 160 pages

Genre : Sequential Art, Comics, Graphic Novels, Superheroes, Dc Comics, Lgbt, Graphic Novels Comics

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From Reader Review Batwoman, Vol. 1: Hydrology for online ebook

William Thomas says

I hate when I'm not in the proper mood to write the kind of review a book deserves. It just doesn't seem fair to the book, or the reader of the review, because it just can't get across all of the lovely things I want it to. I'm very distracted right now. Lethargic. But I'll do my best.

JH Williams has written the best book of the Nu52. No bones about it. Everything about this book is phenomenal. What makes it brilliant is that it stands completely on its own, unlike other Bat-books, it doesn't use Batman as a crutch or borrow his villains just to see higher sales figures. Batman does appear in the book, briefly, and his appearance is of little consequence. Instead, the focus is purely on Kate Kane and her alter ego Batwoman. What we get in this book is a relatively new hero building her own mythos. JH Williams interweaves so many different strands here that act not as cliffhangers, but as lures. It's a brilliant mix of personal life and superheroine life clashing with one another in a mad battle with one another for rights to Kane's life. The best part is her personal life moments are filled with drama, but we don't get the feeling of a soap opera or the stilted dialogue other writers sometimes fall into. Everything seems sincere.

The injection of a new villain and the incorporation of the old continuity is great. We aren't seeing the same arch-enemy from the previous books, even though there are some haunting scenes using Kate's twin. An eerie, supernatural storyline is a great backdrop and a nice change of pace for a superhero book with a military-trained superhero.

Honestly, the book could have been a brilliant creator-owned title elsewhere and probably fantastically, even in this saturated marketplace. Williams and Blackman are a perfect writing duo and I hope we see this creative team and this book last for years to come. With the way DC is clear-cutting a lot of the titles and replacing them, it may not.

The art chores are done by Williams as well and are definitely right on the money. The color and paneling are highlights of the art, although sometimes the composition makes me scratch my head. Stylistically, Williams really can't be compared to any other artist in the field right now. The fact that the style changes, or shifts, when the book is focused on Kate's personal life, is brilliant. Like glass separation in a film. There are clearly defined lines in her life, and the styles aren't drastically different, but just enough. Thicker lines and more bold colors in the Batwoman pages, and thinner, more detailed lines for the day-to-day.

Ok, maybe I did do it justice. I don't know.

Grade: A's all around.

Aaron says

It's incredibly rare to find a comic book artist who can pull off both writing *and* art, and unfortunately, if this book is any indication, J.H. Williams III is another casualty in that search. Truly, this book is *beautiful*. Genuinely some of the finest comic artwork I've seen in a mainstream book in a very long time. Probably the

last time I felt this drawn in by the art of a comic was *Sandman: Overture*, which was *also* Williams. His flare for creative design, for upending traditional panel flow, his intentional mixture of styles to shift tonally between Batwoman's civilian life and her life as a crime fighter, his deep attention to detail and even lettering; all of this is unparalleled by most other modern artists.

But it can't make up for a bad script. This is a book that feels written specifically to get us to these big moments, so that Williams can show off his artistic flare. There's very little development of Batwoman or her allies, whose names I can't even remember thanks to how little they're attended to. The main villain is never really explained or investigated, she just kind of shows up here and there to be weird and spooky. The introduction of extra villains and characters is done with blunt force, just injecting them into the proceedings out of nowhere and without a clear reason for their arrival. The writing is just, unfortunately, sloppy.

It's a shame, especially since this is essentially a sequel to the incredible *Batwoman: Elegy*, which Williams provided pencils for (though it was written by the more seasoned Greg Rucka). That book was beautiful and haunting and new, and promised us a fresh addition to the Bat Family. This entry, however, feels like a step in the wrong direction, while simultaneously relying heavily on *Elegy* as a lead-in.

In fact, I'd go so far as to say if you haven't read *Elegy*, you're going to be very confused by a lot of this. Williams visually references characters from that story quite a bit here, without ever reminding the reader who they are. Batwoman's father and the villain from *Elegy* are shown with little context, and considering that *Elegy* ended a full year before this new series started, a refresher would've been nice.

So, honestly, this book is worth flipping through for the art alone. It's that good. But I'm afraid its lack of narrative momentum and clarity drag it down too much to make it truly shine.

Sesana says

Batwoman is missing just one element to become a truly dynamic superhero: a compelling villain. She is herself a strong, compelling character with realistic motivations and voice, surrounded by a cast as interesting as she is. I especially love how she and Batman deal with each other. He recognizes her abilities, skills, and motivations and wants to work with her. Score. Except that she has her own agenda, and isn't willing to be his employee. I love her for this, even if I might not make the same choice myself.

The artwork is simply stunning. Just take a look at the cover. This isn't one of those books where the cover is the best art in the book by far. That's representative of all of the interior art. You'd be hard pressed to find a single ugly panel. Kate is, somewhat oddly, given chalk-white skin. I'm not exactly sure why, but it does make her stand out and give her an iconic look on her own. And it probably does make sense that somebody who rarely sees the sun and gets little sleep would be ghostly pale with dark circles around her eyes.

But she's still lacking a great villain. Sure, the story is good, but we're left without a truly compelling adversary for her. The Religion of Crime ongoing arc is ok, but it needs a great figurehead to oppose her. This is about the one thing that Batwoman needs to be a truly fantastic comic.

Jeff says

[ghosts, I hate ghosts (hide spoiler)]

Jayson says

(B+) 76% | Good

Notes: It effuses poetry in luscious, evocative art, yet loses lucidity and form in the ethereal gloom of its smoky dreamscape.

Steve says

Solid 3 stars.

Not much to say about this one, except "Meh".

The artwork was fantastic, and I really like the contrasts with the red/black color scheme Ms. Kane chose for her costume. I'm not sure about the whole ghostly white skin, though. Wouldn't that give her secret identity away?

The story was okay, but I have one question. When did the Bat-family of books start moving to outright mystical/paranormal mysteries? the main storyline in this volume dealt with trying to find a couple of children abducted by a ghost. It was all very "out there", and well beyond what I remember the "World's Greatest Detective" handling.

I'm not sure I'll continue this series, unless it's on sale or on a deep discount.

Jedi JC Daquis says

The Batwoman run of JH Williams III in the New52 is hugely unappreciated, taking a back seat behind powerhouse series like Snyder's Batman, Azzarello's Wonder Woman and even John's Aquaman and Green Lantern. But once you get to read this Kate Kane Batwoman, you cannot get enough of it.

Hydrology starts the four-volume series written and drawn by Williams. And this I am very serious about: these four volumes is as good as it gets. Batwoman is awesome, powerful, broken and again, awesome. Damn cool Kate Kane is.

J.H. Williams III's panels are beautifully constructed!

The first thing that you will notice here is the artwork. Williams sure has the talent to draw unconventional panels that perfectly complements the occult-supernatural story of this arc. The way he draws Batwoman, she's super sexy, yet not objectified. There is grace and sensuality in all her movements, a stark (yet equally effective) contrast to Batman's sharpness.

Kate Kane's lesbian sex aspect is seen here, yet it is not overemphasized that I saw it as a natural and

grounded part of the story, instead of being pretentious and preachy. I don't know really if her personality is gender-accurate but all I can say is she's a damn strong woman.

I recommend Batwoman Hydrology if you want to a good story with some great artwork.

Marpapad says

[3.5]

StoryTellerShannon says

Tale opens with Batman watching a new superhero of Gotham named Batwoman and it's a good narrative flow because all the Gotham veterans have some familiarity with the structure. Not surprisingly, Batman figures little into this and we focus on Katherine Kane and why she became a crimefighter.

Kane deals with her somewhat lame sidekick (Flamebird), a ghost like woman stealing children and whether to join Batman's organization or stay solo.

Amazing artwork. I especially liked how a page or two had one panel with several smaller panels scattered over it. The x-ray version of attacks and the bones hit was a nice touch. Artwork by J.H. Williams and written by him as well as W. Haden Blackman.

A great start for the 52 reboot. I am not entirely certain why Kane is super pale with red hair. Is she just Goth or is this some indication of her having some similarities to the Joker? The vote is still out.

ARTWORK PRESENTATION: A minus to A; CHARACTERS/DIALOGUE: B plus; ACTION SEQUENCES: B plus to A minus; STORY/PLOTTING/PANELS: B plus to A minus; GOTHAM MYTHOLOGY: A minus; WHEN READ: early October 2013; OVERALL GRADE: B plus to A minus.

mercedes says

"She is many things: estranged daughter, grieving sister, proud lesbian, brave soldier, determined hero. She is BATWOMAN."

I'm torn between giving this 3.5 and 4, because I just cannot seem to make up my mind between whether this arc was cool and exciting or messy and confusing. I'm going to go with a mix of both, and at the very least it has me so intrigued I definitely want to read more.

The art in this is just stunning, although, like many others, I was startled by Kate Kane's skin being...well, basically grey. It's a cool design element I guess, but I'm not sure why they decided to do it and it makes her

look very odd in comparison to everyone else. I'm also not a fan of her haircut, which shouldn't be a factor in whether I like this comic or not but for some reason it just really bugged me.

Shallow reasons aside, this was enjoyable and I love seeing lesbian characters who are confident in their lesbianism. Right from the get-go Kate's lesbianism was declared, and her relationship with a certain Maggie Sawyer was not treated any differently than if it had been a man she was dating, it wasn't trying too hard, or cringeworthy, and even the sex scene didn't feel like it was there solely to entertain men.

One other small thing I disliked was how Kate treated Bette. It just seemed really unnecessarily mean, and I know she was probably just trying to stop what happened from happening, but she seems to have triggered it instead. Bette was so sweet and it was off-putting to see the main hero belittling her and making nasty comments almost constantly.

Mike says

As an artist, Williams does an amazing job - composition, choreography, line work, panel design,

As a writer, I think Williams needs a little practice. "Crime fighter's notebook"? Not exactly subtle. Doesn't give the reader enough credit to notice the little things in panel, like putting money in the bum's cup - so he adds it to the narrator's notes.

In issue 2 the action art gets muddled, confusing. It looks dreamy, sure, and maybe dreams aren't supposed to make linear sense - but is that really the best use of page real estate?

JH, how many costume changes are you going to indulge in for a superfluous flash of partial nudity? Is that really the kind of book we set out to make here? And what was the point of the x-ray gimmick in issue 3? If it didn't inform any deeper understanding of the damage done in the fight, was it just cheap distraction from a lack of real ideas? Y'see, this is why it's troubling to let the artist also write their book - no one to call out dumb bullshit that detracts from any storytelling momentum.

I'm glad Williams and his co-writer got their shit together by issue 4 and carried the book forward. Emotional believability and dimension with the girlfriend definitely helps. I wish it was enough to elevate the book - maybe it was for this stretch, I dunno.

Crystal Starr Light says

I'm on a graphic novel winning streak!! Yippee!

My knowledge of anything DC is admittedly almost nonexistent. I know there's a superhero named Superman and one named Batman and that's almost it. But when I was poking around in my local comic store, the artwork and story stood out - along with featuring an adult superheroine not called "girl" (not saying Batgirl and Supergirl are automatically bad because of their names). I honestly didn't know what to expect; I didn't really bother to get my hopes up, knowing my horrible luck with comics.

This was a most pleasant surprise! A strong female character, independent, a mentor to a young female

protege. Kate Kane aka "Batwoman" knows when to be tough as nails but also isn't an a-hole to everyone she meets (unlike Anita Blake...).

And the artwork! Gorgeous! I love the focus on red, black, white and turquoise. About the only thing I found weird was Kate's vampire white skin. Kinda creepy.

I'll definitely keep my eyes open for more in this series!

Danielle The Book Huntress (Back to the Books) says

I have mixed feelings about this. It was different and really artistic, but I wasn't that enamored with the story and Kate as a main character. I'm not familiar with Batwoman, so this is a very new character for me. I think that people interested in GLBT characters will really appreciate it. It's a favorable profile of a strong, empowered lesbian woman. However, at the same time, Kate has some issues. She's got major survival guilt and an anger problem. She's dealing with her angst in some ways that aren't healthy.

I picked this up because I saw the La Llorona storyline. As a folklore enthusiast, I'm familiar with the Latin urban legend of a woman who comes back as a ghost and haunts and lures men/sometimes children to their death due to her need for vengeance on a lover leaving her and her subsequent drowning of her children and suicide by drowning. It was an interesting take on the legend. There is a twist at the end that sets up a continued story. I'm not sure right now if I will continue this. I'm not that in love with Kate as a lead character.

The artwork is interesting and visually arresting. The characters are drawn in a very distinctive way. I liked that about it. It's a dark story, so you have to be in the mood for it. Pretty good. We'll see if I get back to this series.

Kurt says

My brother loaned me a few books to introduce me to The New 52, a massive relaunch of DC's titles that seemed crazy at the time but has actually, I've heard, led to some really good stories. After reading this collection of Batwoman stories, I do not feel in any way introduced to the new status quo of the DC Universe, but I love this book.

Even though The New 52 was supposed to create a great jumping-on point for new readers, this book is a direct continuation of the story in *Batwoman: Elegy* - the fate and secret identity of the villain of that story have huge impacts on the way this story goes and the emotional places it reaches. I don't recommend opening this book without devouring *Elegy* first. Once a reader has that experience with Batwoman, though, this book becomes terrific. There is.. a story.. kind of... But this book is about art and emotion, not so much about plot comprehensibility. Kate Kane is trying to forge her identity as Batwoman, pressured by multiple parties to join organizations when she's more of a loner, pestered by her overconfident cousin for sidekick training, navigating an intense new romance with a GCPD detective, and pursuing a lethal urban legend to find some missing kids and stop more from disappearing.

The art, though, is the real star of this book. Silky painted images, mindblowing panel layouts, distinct visual

styles for each subplot... The book is simply a joy to gaze upon as you flip the pages. Gorgeous. J.H. Williams also takes great advantage of his water-based villain to play around with panels that look like splashes of water, and his fire-based sidekick character to play around with panels that burn at the edges. In most cases, I like reading books that have stories I care about, but when the art is this phenomenal, I'm fine with the story just existing to give more emotional weight to the images. *Hydrology* is a visual triumph.

Keith says

Okay Messler, I finally got this one read and: uhgh. Whatever. I was like disappointed from page 1, when Batman's Spooky Inner Monologue does a totally unnecessary information dump on Batwoman's backstory, and the rest of the book doesn't do much better. Proof that yes, you actually *do* need writers who know how to write to make superhero stories unboring.

It's not that JH Williams III isn't a totally serviceable writer; it's just that the Greg Rucka-scribed Batwoman: Elegy was so *awesome*, with this really evasive, slippery story that jumped around in time, had a political charge AND was full of beast-monsters, to boot. And while *Hydrology* retains the monsters (and adds a new one, a water-ghost that makes for some amazing visuals), otherwise there's nothing that makes me feel like I'd read this again. The pages are still amazingly beautiful, but the plot and characters sort of baldfacedly explain themselves in no uncertain terms on every page -- there's nothing to chew on, and what plays out isn't quite clever enough to be all that engaging or fun.

I feel like I can justify owning *Hydrology* as a part of a collection of JH Williams III art, but it's not enhanced with a page-by-page reading. Further, all the sexual politics are gone, unless we've replaced "What It Means to Be a Gay Superheroine in a Hetero-Supermale World" with "Hey Look, Lesbians! Let's Draw Lots of Boobs."

I guess this continues to be a popular series and further volumes are already set to follow this one, but now Williams III isn't even on art duties. So farewell, Batwoman -- your queer-politics-meets-Scooby-Doo iteration of the familiar Batdrama has been one of my recent favorites, but that ship may have already sailed.

Diz says

This art in this is really imaginative, particularly in its use of panels. Batwoman is a character that I don't know that well, but I could get a sense of who she was from this volume. Having said that, this book focuses on the supernatural, and it gets really weird very quickly. I had to reread some pages to figure out what was going on. However, if you have the patience for that, it can be very rewarding.

Anne says

Batwoman (not to be confused with Batgirl) is a pretty interesting character. I love that she isn't affiliated with Batman...or at least not *yet*.

As much as I enjoyed the plot, what really made it stand out so much (to me) was the incredible artwork. Every page was absolutely beautiful in its own way. Truly.

I only have one complaint. Or maybe it's just a question?

Why the hell is Kate Kane so freakin' pale? No. *Pale* is not the right word here.

White.

And **not** like, "*Hey look at that white girl dance!*". No. As in, she looks like the Joker had an illegitimate daughter. White.

Everyone else in the book is a normal *human* color...and she looks like someone colored her in with a crayon.

WHY?!

Callie Rose Tyler says

Wow, this comic had a very unique feel to it and the artwork alone makes it worth the read. The art is beautiful but also organized into creative panels that aid the story and set the tone and flow. The first issue is brilliant, we watch as Batman investigates Batwoman trying to decide if she is Kate Kane and if she is worthy of a Bat Inc invite, spoiler, she is. This was a fantastic way to introduce the reader by giving us a character we already know and love and letting us see this new character through his eyes.

As for the character of Kate Kane I am still undecided. I think that I like her but her back story felt a little murky with a twin sister, a dead mother, and a father she hates. There should have been more recap, this was the first I've read of Batwoman and I think it relies heavily on Elegy despite being VOL 1.

The big talking point is that Kane is a lesbian, that's what everyone focuses on which is kind of a shame because it makes it sound kind of gimmicky and it really isn't. You hear people go on and on about that aspect and it makes you think that maybe the comic is just a PC crap nugget, but it's not. It's actually got a lot going for it beyond the main character's sexual preference. Kane's sexuality was included in the story but not overdone or forced, however there was a scene in particular that made me uncomfortable.

I know I'm going to sound like a dork but I actually don't really like to see my superheroes in sex scenes, I feel like it degrades them some how. Of course I love to see Catwoman flirting with Batman, the back and forth is great, the sexual tension is all good.....but I don't want to see them get it on, it just makes me feel a little awkward.

So Kate Kane's prolonged sex scene was not my favorite. I liked the contrast between the sex scene and the violence happening elsewhere, I think it was symbolic and artistic and all that junk but it also felt like a bit much. I mean the moaning...

Too much for me.

Overall, I enjoyed this comic, it is definitely one of the better first volumes that I've read. However, the overarching plot with the ghost woman, while visually stunning, was a little boring. However, I was captivated by the characters and hypnotized by the beautiful artwork.

J says

This was not as good as I was expecting it to be, but still not bad.

I think it has some potential, especially with the characterization and plot. But the paneling needs some work. I feel like I couldn't appreciate the art fully because the paneling was so difficult to follow. And because the plot was a little dry for the most part.

The villains weren't cliche, which was reassuring. Even though they weren't awesome villains, at least they weren't the generic drug-traffickers that minor vigilantes are usually relegated to.

I think my favorite thing (probably one of the only things I genuinely liked about this) was the diversity in the comic. I mean, Kate Kane is a "proud lesbian." Mad props. But I wish the book had been better. I also liked the patches of Spanish dialogue and those really minor Latino characters throughout.

Overall, it was pretty good. I will probably continue this series unless the reviews are horrible.

P.S. Everything the reviews say about the disgusting pastiness of Kate's skin is absolutely true.

Sam Quixote says

Batwoman is Kate Kane, the wealthy daughter of a retired army general, discharged from West Point Military Academy because of her homosexuality under "Don't Ask, Don't Tell", and turned to a life of vigilantism after the untimely deaths of her mother and sister.

Artist JH Williams III turns his hand to writing with co-author W Haden Blackman and the results are pretty good. The book opens with an interesting introduction to Batwoman through the eyes of Batman before introducing the book's villains and plot. And here's where the book for me falls down.

Like the last Batwoman book I read, "Elegy", she is still chasing after a criminal organisation called the Religion of Crime and thrown into this mix are the were-animals where human and animal DNA are fused to create some strange looking creatures. New for this story arc is the main villain, a female murderer ghost avenging the deaths of her drowned kids and a talking skeleton called, imaginatively, Mr Bones.

The problem I have with Batwoman is not the extensive macabre and supernatural elements that go into her story but the lack of a strong nemesis. She doesn't have a Joker and the dull villains she fights aren't that well-constructed making for a weaker story overall. I mean, ghosts and talking skeletons – what is this, Scooby Doo?

As with other "New 52" titles, I take issue with DC claiming they have rebooted the franchise. It doesn't really introduce the character to a new audience so much as it assumes the reader has prior knowledge and goes from there. This book is best read after reading "Batwoman: Elegy" which explains her current relationship with her father in "Hydrology" as well as who the doll-like girl haunting her is. In fact, "Hydrology" could well be "Elegy"'s sequel.

JH Williams III's artwork is as always the highlight of the book. His imaginative layouts and stunning art

lifts this book up immeasurably and makes it stand out from other comics.

Superb artwork and serviceable story aside, I'm still waiting for Batwoman to become the series it has the potential to be, it's just missing some key elements like a strong main villain and defining storyline. As it is, "Hydrology" isn't bad but it's not the masterpiece some reviewers are making it out to be, nor is it particularly the best place to start with this character. Check out "Elegy" before coming to this.
