



The X-MEN: BACKGROUND & CHARACTERS

A Look Into the Marvel Comics Universe

← The X-Men

“Born with extraordinary powers and abilities, these mutants were gathered by Charles Xavier to protect a world that fears and hates them. Ever expanding their ranks, the Children of the Atom combat the evils threatening mutants and humans alike” (Essential X-Men Vol. 2, cover). Mutants are a new step in genetic evolution, but humanity has always reacted to them with fear that mutants are here to enslave “normal” humans and to take over as a super race of *homo superior*.

Prof. Charles Xavier →

Though Professor X



is physically disabled and wheelchair-bound, he is the most powerful mutant among the group he gathers and teaches at his School for Gifted Youngsters in Westchester County, New York. Professor X calls his students X-Men, and he leads them to wield their powers for the advancement of mutants and protection of all humans. Professor X can manipulate mind and matter telepathically.



← **Magneto** (also known as Erik Lehnsherr) is typically cast as a villain and the most powerful nemesis of the X-Men, but he basically represents a major philosophical difference and competing ideology to Charles Xavier’s mutant school. Where Professor X believes that mutants can protect and thus be an important part of humanity, Magneto rejects *homo sapiens* and sees mutants as true superiors. He also believes that “normal” humans will never accept mutants and will only seek to destroy or limit them. (Magneto is also a Holocaust survivor who witnessed the death of his family at the hands of the Nazis.)

Magneto has the telepathic power of magnetism.

Cyclops →

One of the original X-Men and

captain of the mutant team, Cyclops (a.k.a. Scott Summers) has the power to shoot destructive optic beams from his eyes. He sometimes is at odds with Wolverine (*see below*) to put his



teammate’s rage in check and to direct the X-Men as an organized and functional team.



← **Colossus** (a.k.a. Peter Rasputin) is Siberian, originally a member of the Soviet Union when he was recruited to the X-Men, and he can turn his body into tough, living steel.

Wolverine → (also known as James Logan) has a dark past and an intense temper. He

was recruited to the X-Men while working as a secret agent for Canada. His body is composed of indestructible material that he can direct through his fists into scalpel-sharp claws.



← **Nightcrawler** (a.k.a. Kurt Wagner) is a devout Catholic of German origin. Before joining the X-Men, he was in a circus freak-show and barely escaped an angry crowd that wanted to burn him as a monster. He has acrobatic skill and the power to teleport from place to place in a flash of smoke.

Storm → (a.k.a. Ororo Monroe) descends from “an ancient line of African priestesses, all of whom have white hair, blue eyes, and the potential to wield magic” (“Marvel Universe”). She can control the weather.



↓ **Kitty Pryde** (a.k.a. Sprite/Ariel/Shadowcat), a Jewish-American teenager, can pass through solid matter and walk on air.



The Reverend William Stryker → runs a global Christian evangelical crusade while secretly leading the Purifiers, a group of religious fanatics dedicated to the destruction of all mutants. In the 2003 intro to God Loves, writer Chris Claremont says, “For me, this story grew out of a time where voices of casual intolerance were very much abroad in the land, where espousing views that stood apart from what was considered the ‘mainstream’ could have serious and lasting consequences. ... Mutants in the Marvel Universe have always stood as a metaphor for the underclass, the outsiders; they represent the ultimate minority. ... In the X-Men are people of many cultures and different faiths ... yet that aspect of their lives is completely overshadowed by what is for Stryker the seminal reality of their existence: They are mutants.”



Works Cited

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