

GUIDEBOOK TO THE MARVEL CINEMATIC UNIVERSE



MARVEL STUDIOS PRESENTS IN ASSOCIATION WITH PARAMOUNT PICTURES A MARVEL STUDIOS PRODUCTION A JOSS WHEDON FILM ROBERT DOWNEY JR. "MARVEL'S THE AVENGERS" CHRIS EVANS
MARK RUFFALO CHRIS HEMSWORTH SCARLETT JOHANSSON JEREMY RENNER TOM HIDDLESTON CLARK GREGG CUBIE SMULDERS WITH STELLAN SKARSGARD AND SAMUEL L. JACKSON AS WICK FURY
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DOLBY DIGITAL
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MARVEL

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Marvel's The Avengers: Black Widow Strikes #1-3 (2012), and *Marvel's The Avengers Prelude: Fury's Big Week #1-4* (2012).

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THE AVENGERS CREATED BY STAN LEE AND JACK KIRBY



AVENGERS

FIRST APPEARANCE:

[concept] Iron Man (2008); [actual] Marvel's The Avengers (2012)

The Avengers were originally conceptualized as the world peacekeeping agency S.H.I.E.L.D.'s Avengers Initiative, but the overseeing World Security Council shut the program down before it could be realized. Later, a number of the Initiative's potential candidates were gathered together when the Asgardian trickster Loki stole the extremely powerful Tesseract from S.H.I.E.L.D. Once gathered on S.H.I.E.L.D.'s Helicarrier base, these candidates — the armored genius Iron Man; World War II Super-Soldier Captain America; scientist Bruce Banner, who could become the monstrous Hulk; the Asgardian thunder god Thor; and super-spy S.H.I.E.L.D. Agent Natasha Romanoff (Black Widow) — were unknowingly influenced by Loki's mind-controlling scepter into mistrusting and arguing with one another. However, when Loki's troops and

the mind-controlled S.H.I.E.L.D. Agent Clint "Hawkeye" Barton attacked the Helicarrier, Loki's hopes that the Hulk would destroy his potential enemies were derailed when the heroes instead focused on battling the attackers. When S.H.I.E.L.D. Agent Phil Coulson was killed by Loki, the heroes were left demoralized, but S.H.I.E.L.D. Director Nick Fury used Coulson's death to manipulate them into unifying to defeat Loki.

In New York City, Loki directed the mind-controlled Dr. Erik Selvig to set up Tesseract-powered equipment to open a portal in space, allowing biomechanical Chitauri aliens to invade and begin mass destruction. The former Initiative candidates and the freed Hawkeye, now calling themselves the Avengers, arrived and began battling the invaders. The powerful Chitauri brought with them an army of flying Leviathan monsters; needing tactical leadership, the team immediately deferred to Captain America. Under Cap's orders, the group quickly became a unified fighting unit.

Despite the Avengers' increasing success in one-on-one battles, Black Widow realized that the fight could not end until the portal was closed, so she commandeered an enemy vessel and returned to Selvig's machinery. Simultaneously, the Council






BLACK WIDOW, CAPTAIN AMERICA, HAWKEYE, HULK, IRON MAN, THOR *Active: Marvel's The Avengers (2012)*

ordered a nuclear strike against Manhattan, despite Fury's protests, and the Hulk gave Loki a severe beating, leaving the Asgardian incapacitated. Dr. Selvig revealed to Widow that he had programmed a safeguard into the equipment: Loki's scepter could destroy the machinery. When Fury warned Iron Man that the nuclear missile was en route, Iron Man steered it through the portal and redirected it into the massive Chitauri mothership in deep space, destroying it and deactivating the Chitauri forces on Earth. Widow destroyed Selvig's equipment, closing the portal just as Iron Man returned through it.

As he regained his senses, Loki

was confronted by the assembled Avengers and promptly surrendered. Afterward, at Iron Man's suggestion, the team took a well-deserved break at a local eatery where, quiet and exhausted, they ate shawarma. Earth's newscasts widely reported the events in New York City, making the Avengers a household name.

Some time later, Thor used the Tesseract's power to take it and Loki back to Asgard, and the teammates went their separate ways. While being debriefed by the Council, Fury confidently stated that all worlds now knew that the Earth was protected by a higher power, and later claimed the team would reassemble whenever they were needed. 

FACT SHEET

- ▶ S.H.I.E.L.D. DIRECTOR NICK FURY ASSEMBLED THE AVENGERS INITIATIVE CANDIDATES WITHOUT THE COUNCIL'S KNOWLEDGE OR APPROVAL BECAUSE THE COUNCIL DEEMED THE PROGRAM TOO VOLATILE A CONCEPT.
- ▶ THE TEAM WAS FIRST IDENTIFIED BY NAME WHEN TONY STARK THREATENED LOKI PRIOR TO THE CHITAUURI INVASION. STARK ALSO REFERRED TO THE GROUP AS "EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES."
- ▶ FOLLOWING THE ATTACK ON NEW YORK, THE WORLD EXPRESSED ITS GRATITUDE TO THE AVENGERS IN A NUMBER OF WAYS — INCLUDING GRAFFITI MURALS, AND HAIRCUTS AND BEARDS MIMICKING TONY STARK'S. ONE WOMAN, IDENTIFIED AS BETH, GAVE A SIMPLE BUT PLAINTIVE THANK YOU DURING A TV INTERVIEW AFTER BEING SAVED BY CAPTAIN AMERICA.



IN THE COMICS

THE ORIGINAL AVENGERS WERE INITIALLY gathered when Asgardian trickster Loki tried to manipulate a battle between his hated adoptive brother Thor Odinson and the Hulk (Bruce Banner). Iron Man (Tony Stark), the Wasp (Janet Van Dyne), and Ant-Man (Hank Pym) were also drawn into the conflict, but quickly joined forces to defeat Loki, then stayed together as the Avengers. Soon after forming, the team discovered World War II hero Captain America (Steve Rogers) in suspended animation and recruited him as a retroactive founding member and team leader. Over the years, the team has welcomed over 200 superhumans in their ranks. Through victories and tragedies, deaths and triumphs, the Avengers remained the Earth's mightiest heroes and protectors, assembling whenever humankind was in danger.



FIRST APPEARANCE: AVENGERS #1 (1963)

BLACK WIDOW UPDATE

FIRST APPEARANCE: *Iron Man 2* (2010)



Following her mission to evaluate Tony Stark (Iron Man) for the Avengers Initiative, the highly trained combatant, gymnast, and S.H.I.E.L.D. Agent Natasha Romanoff, a.k.a. Black Widow, was tasked to surveil fugitive physicist Bruce Banner, who could transform into the super-strong Hulk when in an emotional state. During her surveillance, she captured Banner's erstwhile colleague Samuel Sterns for S.H.I.E.L.D. study after his own gamma radiation-induced mutation. Widow's next mission, to shadow Russian arms dealer Mikhail Fjodorov, was complicated by Ten Rings assassin Sofia, a twisted admirer of the Widow's Russian espionage career. Widow pursued Sofia across Russia and stopped the Rings' plan to launch a replica Stark Industries' Jericho missile at a Korean demilitarized zone.

When the Asgardian Loki stole the Tesseract power source from S.H.I.E.L.D., Agent Phil Coulson called in Agent Romanoff to assist in the search. She was reluctant to abort her ongoing mission to interrogate arms dealer Georgi Luchkov, having allowed herself to be captured in order to reach Luchkov, but she changed her mind





BLACK WIDOW (NATASHA

Romanoff) initially worked with the Avengers as an unofficial ally after Hawkeye (Clint Barton) helped her overcome KGB brainwashing, but only officially joined the team for short stints. She led the team during one such tenure, but when her team seemingly died in battle with the psionic entity Onslaught, she regretted taking leadership. Even after her team was found to have survived, Widow was reluctant to rejoin the team. Eventually, she served again with both the team's primary roster and their covert-ops teams.

FIRST ACTIVE WITH THE AVENGERS:
AVENGERS #111 (1973)



and quickly subdued her captors when Coulson mentioned that her longtime colleague Agent Clint “Hawkeye” Barton had been mind-controlled by Loki. She located gamma-radiation expert Bruce Banner in Kolkata, India, and enlisted his aid in the search despite her fear of his gamma-powered Hulk alter ego. After transporting Banner to a S.H.I.E.L.D. Helicarrier, Romanoff and World War II hero Captain America flew to Stuttgart, Germany, to capture Loki; they succeeded with Iron Man’s aid.

Agent Romanoff interviewed Loki aboard the Helicarrier and tricked him into revealing he had manipulated events to amass his potential enemies aboard the Helicarrier, where he intended to force Banner into a Hulk transformation and eliminate the heroes and S.H.I.E.L.D. by proxy. When the Loki-controlled Hawkeye disabled the Helicarrier with an exploding arrow, he triggered Banner’s transformation; Romanoff barely escaped the rampaging Hulk. Despite being shaken by the encounter with the Hulk, Romanoff broke Loki’s control with a blow to Hawkeye’s head while the two friends battled.

Upon the arrival of Loki’s extra-terrestrial Chitauri invasion force in New York City, Romanoff,

alongside Hawkeye and Captain America, journeyed there to battle the invaders and were joined by the Asgardian thunder god Thor (Loki’s adoptive brother), the Hulk, and Iron Man. During the ensuing hostilities, Black Widow commandeered a Chitauri aircraft and flew to the device atop Stark Tower, where Loki was generating the deep-space portal for the Chitauri invasion. Using Loki’s scepter, which doubled as the device’s failsafe, Widow force-closed the portal after Iron Man steered an inbound nuclear missile into it, devastating the Chitauri armada and ending the invasion. Following Loki’s capture, the six heroes enjoyed a shawarma meal before watching Thor return to Asgard with the captive Loki. ⚡

FACT SHEET

- ▶ BLACK WIDOW WAS BORN IN STALINGRAD (NOW VOLGOGRAD).
- ▶ WIDOW REFERS TO HER PAST AMORAL ACTIVITIES AS A RUSSIAN AGENT AS HAVING “RED IN HER LEDGER.”
- ▶ HAWKEYE DEFIED ORDERS TO KILL BLACK WIDOW AND INSTEAD RECRUITED HER INTO S.H.I.E.L.D.
- ▶ ONE OF BLACK WIDOW’S INTERROGATION TECHNIQUES IS FEIGNING SUBMISSIVENESS TO INSTILL OVERCONFIDENCE IN A SUBJECT SO THAT THEY INADVERTENTLY VOLUNTEER INFORMATION.
- ▶ BLACK WIDOW LIKENED THE AVENGERS’ BATTLE WITH THE CHITAUURI TO A MISSION SHE AND HAWKEYE WORKED IN BUDAPEST, HUNGARY; HAWKEYE DISAGREED WITH HER ANALOGY, OBSERVING THAT THEY REMEMBERED EVENTS VERY DIFFERENTLY.
- ▶ BLACK WIDOW’S “WIDOW’S BITE” BRACELETS DELIVER POWERFUL ELECTRICAL SHOCKS TO OPPONENTS.