When the last son of Krypton was sent to Earth, one of the greatest legends of all time was born. This book collects some of the earliest tales of Superman as they were first published. Written and drawn by his creators, Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, included here are the original first appearances of Lois Lane and Superman's alter ego Clark Kent, as well as the Man of Steels first use of his x-ray vision.

My Personal Review:
Superman has flown through American culture for nearly seventy years. He has appeared in almost every twentieth century entertainment medium: comics, television, and movies. With such ubiquity and staying power, it's probably fair to say that Superman stands as the Zeus of modern American mythology. Not only that, as Comic historian Mark Waid says in this book's introduction, Superman vicariously fulfills nearly every person's hidden dream of invincibility. Nothing can touch this guy. Not crooks with guns, not the law (who also have guns), not corrupt politicians (who might have guns), not even larger than life supervillans. In short, Superman embodies the American principle that "in America you can do what you want." If you're Superman, this is definitely true. How many people wouldn't want to shed their vulnerable human skins for that kind of power?

Superman has become an all-out good guy in his later years. Now he works with the law, and dishes out justice by the book. For those familiar with only this late Superman, the stories in this volume will produce gaping, eye-widening shock. In these early stories Superman takes the law into his own hands and metes out justice on his own eye-for-an-eye terms. In the first story, Superman drags a corrupt Senator on a terrifying trip from building to building and live power line to live power line. "I wonder if we
can jump all the way to that building?" he asks. "NO DON'T" his captive pleads. He jumps and says "Missed -- doggone it!" while the politician writhes in agony. Over a series of live wires Superman man says "Oops! Almost touched that pole!" The Senator gives out a "Ye-eow!" By the hands of Superman, criminals receive the same treatment they dish out to their victims. A man involved in rigging a circus gets tossed into the air until he confesses. A wisecracking office mate gets his clothes torn off as retribution. Many get hit hard, one gets dropped into tar, a governor gets abducted from his bed to hear the confession of a corrupt workhouse superintendent that Superman has locked in the "hot box". Superman faces a man sneaking out to gamble, crushes his watch and tells him, "See how easily I crush your watch in my palm? If you don't quit gambling I'll look you up and give your neck the same treatment." The early Superman was a bully for justice. He used brute force to clean up crime. Even against the police and the army (see issue 8). Nothing stops him.

The first half dozen stories feature Superman cleaning up human corruption. Evil businessmen and organized crime mafiosos get what's coming to them (usually in the form of Superman's fists). He helps out everything from a failing circus and a deceived oil company to a cab company victimized by protection money hoodlums. Most of the stories hail him as "friend of the helpless and oppressed." But he doesn't really receive any real challenges until the "Ultra-Humanite" (a proto Lex Luthor) appears. This arch-villain delivers some memorable but quaint lines such as "I am known as 'The Ultra-Humanite'. Why? Because a scientific experiment resulted in my possessing the most agile and learned brain on earth! Unfortunately for mankind, I prefer to use this great intellect for crime. My goal? Domination of the world!!" Superman's new enemy basks in his depravity. He knows he's evil and he loves it. From this point on most of the corrupt rackets broken up by Superman have the "Ultra-Humanite" behind them. And the not so subtle social commentary of the early issues morphs into a battle of good (Superman) over evil (Ultra). Ultra represents Superman's evil alter-ego. Every time Superman destroys him, he returns. He even gets his "mighty brain" transplanted into a female Hollywood celebrity's "young vital" body (a rather amusing scene). Superman changes forever in this volume. The last stories point to the future of the comic: larger than life villains who also have superpowers and flailing egos. Gone forever are the days when Superman merely "cleaned up" towns of human crime by taking the law into his own hands. A huge metamorphosis.

Not only that, Superman's powers would later increase. Here he doesn't fly, but only leaps. His x-ray vision hasn't yet evolved into laser penetrating retinas. At this time the Superman of today remains slightly unrecognizable. Lois Lane doesn't even appear all that often. And there's absolutely no mention of Krypton or Kryptonite (but the reworked first story in "Superman Archive Volume 1" does). Superman has not yet obtained his famous Achilles' heel.
This volume reprints the original Action Comics, including Superman's very first appearance, but with a hitch: issues two through six appeared in the "Superman" comic that appeared in 1939. DC reprinted these in "Superman Archives Volume One" and only summarize the stories here. So a gap appears after the first issue. Regardless, this volume still remains a lot of fun to read. It shows how one of the most ubiquitous and recognizable figures in modern American culture got his start. And though Superman's creators, Jerry Siegel and Joel Shuster, both died in the 1990s their creation still lives inexorably on with no signs of stopping.

For More 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price:
Superman The Action Comics Archives, Vol. 1 (DC Archive Editions) (Archive Editions (Graphic Novels)) by DC Comics - 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price!