

## 6 WAYS RIVERDALE COULD BRING IN THE LEVITY OF THE ARCHIE COMICS

By Christopher Hart and Alane Lim · November 18, 2017 9:00 am



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As strong as *Riverdale* can be, fans of the *Archie* comics often come away from the show feeling like it's missing one very vital component. When you read the comics (both classic and modern), you get a real sense of levity in the narrative – Archie Andrews and his friends find themselves in a lot of trouble, true, but it's always laced with a great deal of fun.

The classic *Archie* comics can be quite hammy at times (a sign of their age) and it makes perfect sense for The CW writers to update the show for modern audiences. However, all you have to do is glance at the modern *Archie* comics and that argument falls flat. These retain the levity and fun that's synonymous with *Archie*, while at the same time updating the story (and the art) wonderfully, for the modern reader.

There's no reason that *Riverdale* shouldn't be able to achieve the same. As odd as a change like that might feel at this stage, we still think there's time to turn the show around. Other The CW shows do it all the time – The CW spent a lot of time telling fans that Season 4 of *The Flash* was going to be far more fun, for example, and he wasn't wrong. *Riverdale* could easily change tracks.

We've listed 6 keys changes that the show could make to bring the narrative closer to the feel of the comics, to this great show ever better.

Expect a few **spoilers** for the comics.

### EASE UP ON THE SECRETS



What could it all mean?

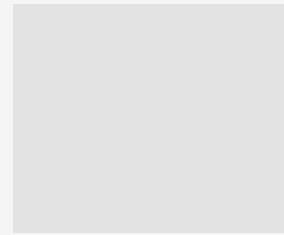
Possibly everyone in the *Riverdale* universe has a full-blown, if-only-they-knew major secret. The Coopers. The Andrews. The Lodges. The Joneses. The Blossoms. As *Riverdale*'s Jughead says, *Riverdale* isn't the "safe, decent, innocent" town it's made out to be. If you look closely, "you start seeing the shadows underneath." Nobody, it seems, is safe from those shadows.

Sure, everyone has secrets, but do they all have to be so deep and dark? And what's so wrong with having a few people that are at least happy enough to balance out the mood of the series, secrets or not? That could help cut through that web of tension and mystery that shrouds *Riverdale*, and bring back some cheer without compromising suspense.

Another strategy is to shift the tone of those hidden gems. Instead of secrets that could kill a poor Blossom boy, the series could include secrets that might get someone in trouble, but certainly aren't (at least in the context of the comics) life-threatening. Most of all, they could be more relevant to our own lives. After all, *Archie* was created to be a relatable comic book character.

In the older *Archie* comics, a lot of secrets involved accidents, like unintentionally booking different dates for the same time, or hiding from someone. For example, Archie might hide from Betty and Veronica if he's accidentally scheduled dates with both of them simultaneously, or hide from Principal Weatherbee after he's accidentally broken something in his office. Perhaps some of those extended family secrets could be translated to these less serious every day secrets that won't have serious implications in a murder mystery.

### LOSE THE MURDER MYSTERIES



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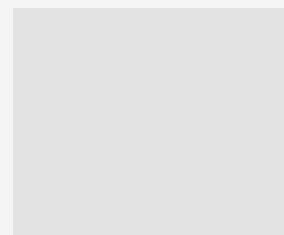
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Archie dies in the comics, taking a bullet to protect Kevin Keller.

The show leans far too heavily on murder mysteries. Season 1 hinged its entire narrative upon one and ultimately, the choice for the murderer was terrible. As Season 1 ended, it was the perfect opportunity to gently push the murder mysteries to the side, but instead The Black Hood shot Fred Andrews.

After that, the whodunit aspect of the show escalated. We're now at the point where The Black Hood murders someone almost every episode and it's simply too much. Apart from Archie dying in one late-game *Archie* run (*Life with Archie* and he only died in an alternate reality), which was meant to be a comment on gun control, the comics aren't about murders and mystery.

They're about friendship and mishaps, and romantic entanglements. While I appreciate the show's attempts to raise the stakes – using murder as a way to add weight to the drama – I think it detracts from the qualities that make the comics great.

#### STICK TO THE KIDS



Because the kids are the real heroes!

Parents play a much bigger role in *Riverdale* than in the *Archie* comics. Betty's mom is a prime example. She's much more overbearing than she ever was in the comics, and she likes to stick her nose in everyone's business as a reporter. Veronica's mom and now dad are also featured onscreen quite often, playing pivotal roles in the economy and infrastructure of Riverdale. And let's not forget Cheryl and Jason's parents, who do all that and more if they can help it. As for Mr. Andrews and Mr. Keller? They're the good guys, the ones you can turn to.

The *Archie* comics draw their strength from the kids – just take a look at the titles of all the comics, which have only featured characters from the teenage gang: *Betty*, *Veronica*, *Betty and Veronica*, *Jughead*, *Kevin Keller*, *Archie*. Even if the parents constitute the main conflict of the story (a few plots involving Mr. Lodge and his riches or Little Archie getting into trouble come to mind), the comics don't make them the main focus. Rather, it's usually about how someone learns the lessons of growing up, or how the kids have changed the mind of their older, more calloused parents with their fresh attitude towards the world. Or even how the parents have pranked their rambunctious kids to show that they shouldn't be treated as older and more calloused.

It's not that *Riverdale* completely ignores its kids in favor of the parents. Most of the major plot points in S1 and S2, for instance, were catalyzed by Betty, Jughead, Archie, Cheryl, and/or Veronica. It's just that the *Archie* comics usually leave all (or at least most of) the sleuthing, bickering, and overall cooperation to the kids themselves. Adding adults into the equation adds maturity and seriousness that, while good for drama, removes a lot of that feel-good feeling of the original comics.

#### EMBRACE THE BIZARRE



The creepy imagery in *Afterlife with Archie*.

The comics are, quite frankly, very weird sometimes. This ranges from Hot Dog (Jughead's pet dog) narrating entire runs

(which happened in this *Betty & Veronica* run), to Jughead becoming a zombie (in *Afterlife with Archie*), to Cheryl Blossom possibly being incestuous with her twin brother (this one, the show hinted at already).

Sometimes, this bizarreness is a little too weird (see: Barack Obama and Sarah Palin sharing a milkshake in *Riverdale* in #616), but sometimes it really works and makes for some of the very best *Archie* comics (see Hot Dog's aforementioned narration skills).

The show tends to stick to the straight and narrow, with nothing too weird ever happening. This is because the writers strive very hard for realism (or, as real as you can get in a town where murderers spring up every five minutes).

There are other shows, though, which work both as great dramas and also as wild and wonderful comedies. The best example of this is *Red Oaks* – a great little Amazon show that plays its narrative straight (with a comedy lilt). Quite often, it isn't afraid to have wacky episodes. For example, the protagonist and his father magically body-swap in the episode titled (rather aptly): 'Body Swap.'

If other shows can pull this off, *Riverdale* can too. I'd really love it if the writers were confident and bold enough to create a show where they could have "out there" episodes now and then. It would allow for some of the seriousness to remain and I think fans would really look forward to the crazier episodes.

#### BRING BACK THE FRIENDLY RIVALRIES



Betty and Veronica duke it out.

The quintessential rivalry is Betty and Veronica. Who else should vouch for Archie's affections? And let's not forget sometimes when Cheryl or another female character is thrown into the mix. These squabbles over Archie have been alluded to in *Riverdale*, but they don't really fight over him at the same time. There's a big focus on Veronica, with some hints to Cheryl later on.

But the thing is, while Cheryl has a similar background to Veronica (before V lost everything, at least in *Riverdale*), Betty versus Veronica really worked because they were opposites. And without Betty, the girl-next-door, to fawn over Archie as she usually does, *Riverdale* really feels like it misses a central component of Archie's lightheartedness. I guess *Riverdale* has bigger problems to fry than a teenage love triangle.

There are other rivalries to consider, too, like Archie versus Reggie. This particular rivalry has been hinted at in a few episodes when they're both gunning for team captain in football, but wasn't really explored since Archie wasn't too interested in becoming better at football.

In the comics, Archie goes up against Reggie over Veronica, and music, and football. They play pranks on each other. They sorta hate each other but not really. Jughead sometimes helps Archie out. The thing about Archie versus Reggie in the comics is that their rivalry made them get better at something, whether it was guitar or football. At the same time, their constant fighting, like Betty and Veronica, laid the foundation for a running gag that never got boring.

#### (SECRETLY) UNITE BETTY AND VERONICA



If only Betty and Veronica were this close in the show.

Betty and Veronica might feud for real quite often, but sometimes – like in the aforementioned and glorious *Betty & Veronica* run – they secretly unite in an unbreakable and beautiful friendship. In that 2016 run, Betty and Veronica manage to convince everyone in *Riverdale* that they're having a thunderous, brutal feud.

Really, it's just a wonderfully believable ruse that they've constructed to achieve their end goal (saving Pop's). Even Archie and Jughead's jaws drop when they learn that the falling out was fabricated. It's a great reveal and it really makes you adore their steadfast friendship.

I'd love it if the show adopted the same approach. Betty and Veronica are far from best friends in the show – they never confide in each other or even spend much time together alone. They've certainly shared a few intense moments together (that swimming pool scene in Season 1), but their relationship is distant and tepid. Veronica even said in a recent episode: "Believe it or not, she's my best friend." Whatever Ronnie says, I don't really buy it.

I want to see a Betty and Veronica who are as thick as thieves. A duo who keeps the true degree of their friendship a secret for them and them alone, so that when one gets in trouble, the other will do anything for her. Remember the way Betty went out of her way to convince Cheryl to make a statement, so she could help Jughead and F.P.? If she applied that kind of devotion to helping Veronica, in a mutually protective relationship, they'd both be unstoppable.

**MORE: Why Riverdale Season 2 should pull from this Betty & Veronica run**

How do you feel about the show? Do you think it needs to be more like the comics? Or do you think it's great the way it is? Let us know in the comments section below.

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