

COMIC BOOK CO.

The Key Issues Watchlist

2026 Edition

The first appearances, grails, and sleeper picks smart collectors are watching — and why each one matters.

A free collector's guide from **comicbookco.com**

How to use this watchlist

Comic collecting rewards the people who know what to watch *before* the crowd does. This guide is our running shortlist of key issues — organized from the untouchable grails down to affordable sleepers — with a plain-English note on why each one matters and a rough value range to orient you.

A few ground rules:

- **Grade is everything.** A CGC 9.8 can be worth many times a raw copy of the same book. The ranges here span low to high grade.
- **Prices move.** These are approximate ranges, not quotes. Always check recent sold listings before buying.
- **This isn't financial advice.** Collect what you love first; treat any upside as a bonus.

BLUE-CHIP GRAILS

The untouchable classics. Aspirational, but the anchors every collection is measured against.

Action Comics #1 (1938)

The first appearance of Superman and the book that launched the superhero genre. The most valuable comic in existence.

\$3M-\$6M+

Detective Comics #27 (1939)

First appearance of Batman. A true grail; even mid-grade copies are seven figures.

\$1.5M-\$3M+

Marvel Comics #1 (1939)

The very first Marvel (Timely) comic, featuring the original Human Torch and Namor.

\$500k-\$1.5M+

Amazing Fantasy #15 (1962)

First Spider-Man. The definitive Silver Age key; value swings enormously with grade.

\$40k-\$3.6M

Incredible Hulk #181 (1974)

First full Wolverine. The most sought-after Bronze Age key of them all.

\$4k-\$50k+

MODERN KEYS ON THE RISE

First appearances from the last ~30 years with real momentum and adaptation potential.

Ultimate Fallout #4 (2011)

First Miles Morales. One of the most-traded modern keys; watch the 1:25 and 1:29 variants.

\$150-\$1,500+

New Mutants #98 (1990)

First Deadpool. A Copper Age cornerstone that keeps climbing with every Deadpool project.

\$300-\$2k

Batman Adventures #12 (1993)

First Harley Quinn in comics. Demand rises with every Harley appearance on screen.

\$400-\$3k

The Walking Dead #1 (2003)

First Rick Grimes. A modern blue-chip key with a small first print run.

\$1k-\$4k+

Ms. Marvel #1 (2014)

First Kamala Khan. An affordable modern key with long-term MCU staying power.

\$60-\$500

GRADING TIP — Before you buy a pricey key, learn the difference between a **raw** (ungraded) copy and a **slabbed** one from CGC or CBCS. Slabbing authenticates and protects the book, and the grade drives the price — the jump from a 9.6 to a 9.8 can double a book's value. For expensive or record-chasing books, buy slabbed.

SLEEPER PICKS

Our take on undervalued books we think are due. Opinion, not financial advice - always do your own research.

Silver Surfer #1 (1968)

A gorgeous, historically important Silver Age #1 that trades at a discount to its peers.

\$300-\$3k

Runaways #1 (2003)

A cheap, beloved modern first with a devoted fanbase and adaptation history.

\$40-\$300

Nova (Man Called Nova) #1 (1976)

A Bronze Age first appearance that stays cheap despite cosmic-Marvel momentum.

\$50-\$400

Moon Knight (Werewolf by Night #32, 1975)

First Moon Knight. Already risen, but a character with room to run on screen.

\$800-\$6k

Eternals #1 (1976)

Kirby's cosmic epic - an affordable Bronze Age #1 tied to a growing corner of Marvel.

\$40-\$250

WATCH THE CATALYST

The market's #1 rule: a first appearance spikes when a movie or show is announced. Buy the character before the news.

Giant-Size X-Men #1 (1975)

First modern X-Men team. An MCU X-Men reboot would send this soaring.

\$300-\$4k+

House of M #1 (2005)

Cheap now; any Scarlet Witch/mutant-heavy project puts it in play.

\$20-\$150

The Sandman (1989) keys

Neil Gaiman's saga - keys move with each new season and adaptation wave.

\$30-\$1k

First appearances of cast characters

When casting is announced, that character's first appearance is the play. Watch the trades.

Varies

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