Early Years and WWII

Steve Rogers was a scrawny fine arts student specializing in industrialization in the 1940's before America entered World War II. He attempted to enlist in the army only to be turned away due to his poor constitution. A U.S. officer offered Rogers an alternative way to serve his country by being a test subject in project, Operation: Rebirth, a top secret defense research project designed to create physically superior soldiers. Rogers accepted and after a rigorous physical and combat training and selection process was selected as the first test subject. He was given injections and oral ingestion of the formula dubbed the "Super Soldier Serum" developed by the scientist Dr. Abraham Erskine. Rogers was then exposed to a controlled burst of "Vita-Rays" that activated and stabilized the chemicals in his system. The process successfully altered his physiology from its frail state to the maximum of human efficiency, including greatly enhanced musculature and reflexes. After the assassination of Dr. Erskine, Rogers was re-imagined as a superhero who served both as a counter-intelligence agent and a propaganda symbol to counter Nazi Germany's head of terrorist operations, the Red Skull. Rogers was given a costume modeled after the American flag, a bulletproof shield, a personal sidearm and the codename Captain America.

The Golden Age of Comics

The Golden Age of Comic Books was a period in the history of American comic books, generally thought of as lasting from the late 1930s until the late 1940s. During this time, modern comic books were first published and enjoyed a surge of popularity; the archetype of the superhero was created and defined; and many of the most famous superheroes debuted, among them Superman, Batman, Captain America, and Wonder Woman.

The period saw the arrival of the comic book as a mainstream art form, and the defining of the medium's artistic vocabulary and creative conventions by its first generation of writers, artists, and editors.
Captain America is Dead! Who’s left to inspire the American Dream?

If, like me, you grew up loving comic books — and those published by Marvel Comics in particular — then you already know the name of Captain America. And even if you didn’t, the image of the red, white, and blue clad superhero should be a familiar one. From the time of the first Captain America book — published in 1941, just nine months before Pearl Harbor was attacked — Captain America has been an unmistakable part of America’s cultural landscape.

Like other comic book superheroes who emerged during the time of World War II — such as DC Comics’ Superman — Captain America symbolized patriotism, virtue, and everything that was supposed to be good about America. His character was both a reminder and a reassurance to an America struggling with its own place in a world that was spinning out of control, and into war.

But it was the theme of patriotism that was most central to this character. From his red, white, and blue costume and matching shield to the enemies he faced down in issue after issue — they included everyone from the evil Red Skull to Adolf Hitler himself, who was sometimes under a hooded mask as the villainous Hate Monger — Captain America was the original go-to guy.

Whether battling for the causes of truth and justice as a solo act, or with the group of superheroes he sometimes led called The Avengers, Captain America was a guy who had the entire country’s back. And he certainly never questioned the actions of his president or his government.

But that was then, and this is now. (http://blogcritics.org/books/article/rip-captain-america-1941-2007/)