

# THE ONLY WAY TO MAKE CANON IS TO BREAK CANON

The film's conflict between Miguel O'Hara and Miles Morales stems from this concept of canon. Spider-Man 2099 reveals how he tried to manipulate his own destiny, assuming a role that was denied to him on another Earth. The failed attempt leads him to the conclusion that trying to affect a world's key events ultimately destroys it. All Spider-Persons are united within the Spider-Verse, but it is these Canon Events that uphold its structure. In a way, what we're discussing here is something akin to *Doctor Who's* Fixed Points in Time

For Miguel, preserving canon is sacred, especially after everything he's been through. He points to Event ASM-90 as an example. This is when a police captain close to Spider-Man is crushed by falling debris during a fight between the hero and his Nemesis. That's what's going to happen to Miles in two days when his father dies after being promoted to captain. Miguel wants to keep Miles from toying with the very fabric of reality in an attempt to prevent this, something Miles has already done on Pavitr Prabhakar's Earth. But

Miles will, of course, do anything within his power to save his father. Is he in the right, wanting to save a single life when he might endanger all of existence?

Of course he is.

The way I read the film, we have to consider that Miguel is wrong. His own experiences caused him to create the Spider-Society that we see protecting the multiverse. What we know about canon and its consequences come from Miguel. But let's ask the question: If someone had read *Amazing Fantasy* #15 and then *Amazing Spider-Man* #1-89, would they consider the death of a police captain who's close to Spider-Man to be an essential plot point in the character's story? Let's shorten the list and say that this same person had only read up through #38. Would they consider it essential and canonical for one of Spider-Man's greatest enemies to secretly be his best friend's father? Let's zoom out; imagine that person had read up through *Amazing Spider-Man* #120.

Is Gwen Stacy's death essential to this canon?

The very conception of Spidey as a teenager rather than an adult made him into an icon by deviating from standard superhero canon. From there, every step he's taken has helped him to forge his own myth, but each and every one of these moments that we now consider essential to his story are all the result of a break with convention. Because the only way to grow, evolve, and move forward is to go against the current. We need canon because it defines

characters, but the only way to make canon is to break canon.

Still, there exists this obsession with the finite list of traits that truly define a character and with a certain stagnation in storytelling that only serves to cage characters in. If you can only ever tell the same story as before, you add nothing new to the character. You're just going around in circles until you spin out. Regular readers of Spider-Man will have already come across one or two different eras – or at least one arc – that stands out precisely for its lack of development. For inviting regression.

In *Across the Spider-Verse*, Miguel represents stagnation. Not just because of the events he's lived through in his own story, but also because of his meta-significance. After all, who is Miguel O'Hara if not a failed attempt at a legacy Spider-Man character? Not failed as in disliked or bad, but he is someone who's been given several chances over the decades and yet has never managed to become a firm fixture in the Marvel Comics editorial landscape.

It's logical, as well, that as an older character, he would have been through this more than once. This notion is a part of the film's explicit text. Any defining event starts out as a break from what's been established. And younger characters like Miles and Gwen are a better mouthpiece for that than older characters like Peter and Miguel.