



# BookMarks

*You've Got to Read This!*

Volume 5, Issue 1

May 14, 2010

## Quick Picks

### BookMarks Check List

*Pride and Prejudice and  
Zombies*

*Stitches*

*Flight, Volume 6*

*Power Up*

*Watchmen*

*Aya*

*The Complete Maus: A  
Survivor's Tale and Here  
My Troubles Begin*

*The Arrival*

*Cancer Vixen*

*Cairo*

## BookMarks Gets Graphic!

Over the years, BookMarks has explored a wide variety of topics, from classics to politics to summer reads. This month, we will be turning our focus to a particular *type* of book that covers all of these subjects and more – the graphic novel.

Many people instantly think of superheroes and children's comics when they hear the term "graphic novel". And while superheroes most definitely have their place in the world of graphic novels, graphic novels encompass a wide variety of narratives—as illustrated by the reviews in this edition of the BookMarks newsletter.

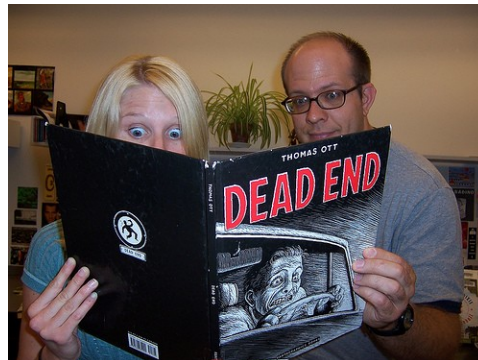


Image: Graphic novels grab the imagination by [Newton Free Library](#)

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review?

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## BookMarks: The Graphic Novel Event

Join us to share your love of reading at CPCC Libraries' BookMarks event from 1:00 – 2:00 p.m., Friday, May 14 in the Learning Commons area of the LRC, 4th floor.

Michael Fan, owner of Spandex City Comics, will be a guest speaker. He will be leading a discussion about graphic novels, including what some of his favorites are.

BookMarks isn't a book club, but rather an easy and fun way to get lots of book recommendations from your fellow booklovers.

Enjoy an atmosphere of fun and get some great book reviews. Drinks and snacks will be provided.

# *Pride and Prejudice* and Zombies

by Jane Austen and Seth Grahame-Smith.

Adapted by Tony Lee

As someone who adores Jane Austen's novels (any of them) and also likes zombie movies (most of them), the original book was a perfect blend of two enjoyable subject matters. You probably can't do much better than a Regency era mother fretting over marrying off her daughters while they struggle to master the dark arts under a ninja master so they can defend their village against zombie attacks. And, of course, your potential husband needs to also possess the necessary killing skills you share. If not, what good is he? As much as the book provided description and detail to aid in envisioning the goo and gore of the zombie attacks (and I really can't wait for the movie), I think the graphic novel adds an element to this story that just reading the book may not do for many readers. Being able to see the sisters in action as they sever limbs and watching the zombies bite into vexed Regency brains pulled me into the story even more and brought excitement to many of the scenes that could have seemed rather dry otherwise. The whole scenario of Mr. Collins and Charlotte and her "situation" take on new life when you get a visual insight to their lives. It was a nice step and up and great fun to read! —Gena Craig, Library Services

# Stitches

by David Small

*Stitches* is the visually haunting memoir of author David Small's terrifying childhood. Small was operated on for what he was told by his parents was just a cyst, but he woke up missing both a vocal cord and his thyroid. Small later, and accidentally, discovers that what was actually removed was a cancerous tumor that developed as a result of the massive amount of x-rays his radiologist father exposed him to in a misguided (at best) attempt to cure his respiratory problems. Small's parents had a troubled marriage which, combined with his health issues, created a lot of confusion and distress throughout his childhood, which comes across quite strongly in the graphic novel format. With the help of a therapist, Small eventually comes to terms with his childhood experiences and is able to move on - and write *Stitches*. —Jennifer Arnold, Library Services

# Flight Volume 6

by Kazu Kibuishi

The sixth installment in the *Flight* series is just as entertaining as all its predecessors. Once again the reader is given an anthology filled with a diverse group of fluid and eye catching artistic styles and a variety of stories. Stories such as "Dead Bunny" the unexpectedly sweet love story focused on a zombie rabbit's search for love, "Cooking Duel" the humorous story of a couple competing against each other to find out who is the better cook and "Kidnapped" which is one of the stories in this volume which uses wordless storytelling. Though many of the stories involve love and sentimentality in some way coupled with interesting and satisfying endings, there are some stories such as "The Excitingly Mundane Life of Kenneth Shuri" that focus more on comedy. "The Excitingly Mundane Life of Kenneth Shuri" is about a Ninja named Ken who is trying to find a job. He sees one of his long time friends now working in an unfulfilling job at an electronics store, still wearing his ninja hood. Later, when he finally gets an interview, he finds himself near the end of a long line of ninjas. Despite the seriousness of its subject matter the author does a good job of injecting comedic moments. This volume is brimming with creativity and vividness in both its art and storytelling. Older teenagers and adult readers may find this volume especially enjoyable.

—Darlene White, Library Services

# Power Up

by Doug Tennapel

*Power Up* is a light-hearted graphic novel that tells the story of Hugh, an aspiring video game designer, copy shop clerk, husband, and father. Hugh purchases an experimental video game console from an estate sale and comes to find that the power ups in the game apply in real life. Extra-lives create extra Hughs to help get the chores done, shields save him in an armed robbery, and gold coins from the game make him and his family rich. The video game console acts as modern day genie, fulfilling Hugh's wishes. Of course, the console can't solve all his problems and manages to create some new ones too.

As an adult that grew up playing video games, I thoroughly enjoyed this book, but I don't think you have to love video games to appreciate *Power Up*. The dialog is snappy and the artwork supports it perfectly. Often, Tennapel's drawings on their own were enough to make me laugh. Physical comedy abounds in this title. Also, the characters are comically exaggerated, but not so much that you can't relate to them. Recommended. —Steve Osler, Library Services

# WATCHMEN

by Alan Moore

Considering that *Watchmen* is the only graphic novel on Time's 100 Best Books of the 20th century list, I couldn't pass up the opportunity to check it out (that, and the fact that I almost always read a book before the movie comes out).

Verdict? It was quite good. A little over-rated, but good. It aggravates me a little that Alan Moore gets sole billing on the cover, which originally led me to think he both wrote AND drew it, when in fact he just wrote it. Show some love to the graphic artist--it's hard work! (His name is Dave Gibbons, by the way.) Oh, and the colorist, because the colors pop so visibly on every page (thanks, John Higgins). As one who is unfamiliar with graphic novels, I have a lot of respect for the difficulty in writing for a graphic novel medium--you only have a certain amount of space to lay out what you're trying to say. Moore did that incredibly well while keeping the narrative tension going.

There were a lot of characters to cover (as well as a lot of plot to unfold, in two time periods) and I wished Moore had given a little more back story to some of the secondary characters. Twelve chapters isn't much to work with. But the back story he gave I enjoyed--especially Rorschach and Dr. Manhattan. I got the impression that Moore finds women to be somewhat pointless, pretty playthings to be used and discarded. Silk Spectre (both I and II) didn't seem all that necessary except as foils to keep the story moving and to wear skimpy outfits. They didn't seem like three dimensional characters in their own right. However I LOVED the joyful nihilism of the Comedian. He was just so refreshing and different—and gleefully violent. And Rorschach is as haunting, sad and damaged a character as you'll ever read. He's the cornerstone that holds it all together.

Basically I wanted more from Moore, but he's obviously talented and he knows how to write intricate plots and characters. *Watchmen* didn't make me a graphic novel convert, but I definitely have a new appreciation for the medium and I'm considering picking up some of his other works (*V for Vendetta*, *From Hell*). I thought Zach Snyder's film was as good as you could make such a complex story and still keep the meaning and feel of the source material. It was a good compliment to the book. The book itself is completely unique and well-told, and one that is worth revisiting.—Erin Payton, Library Services

## Aya

by Marguerite Abouet and Clement Oubrerie

*Aya* is the first of three graphic novels in an award-winning series, originally published in France. It's a comical story about a working class community in the late 1970's Ivory Coast town of Abidjan. The story is told by Aya, a hardworking, studious and responsible nineteen year old with dreams of attending a university. Aya is often accompanied by her less responsible, party-loving friend, Bintou and her easy-going, friendly neighbor Adjoua. Bintou and Adjoua sneak out one night to attend a party where they meet and flirt with some of the local boys. This becomes the beginning of a series of funny situations, connected love stories and a few unexpected and sometimes unpleasant adventures for the characters and their families. Overall, *Aya*, is a fun and funny read that will especially appeal to older teenagers or young adults. Its comedy is based on the situations the characters encounter. Its colorful and vivid artwork does a good job of reflecting the character's emotions, as well as the feel and culture of this community. The story also includes a surprising ending that will leave many readers anxious to read the sequel.

—Darlene White, Library Services

## The Complete Maus: A Survivor's Tale and Here My Troubles Begin

By Art Spiegelman

Art Spiegelman, cartoonist and comix advocate, uses cats and mice to tell the story of his father's experiences as a prisoner during the Holocaust. While it sounds like a silly concept, the book is a powerful recounting of both the life of a Jew in Nazi Germany and Spiegelman's father's reluctance to tell the story. Spiegelman uses his line work to great effect in capturing the mood of these intertwining stories. *The Complete Maus* is a combination of two volumes: *Maus: a Survivor's Tale* and *Maus: Here My Troubles Begin*. The book won the Pulitzer Prize in 1992, the first time the award was given to a "comic book". If you're interested, the Advertising + Graphic Design program offers a series of CCE courses on the creation of graphic novels. Contact me for more information.

—Kenn Compton, Advertising and Graphic Design

# The Arrival

by Shaun Tan

*The Arrival* is a powerful story and an amazing piece of art. This tale of a man who leaves his family and country behind for opportunity in another land is told entirely without words. Rather, artist Shaun Tan relies on amazingly well-drawn panels to draw the viewer into a world both familiar and strange. With each panel, we see the frustration that the nameless protagonist faces as he tries to make a new life in a place where he doesn't speak the language. We also witness the kindness paid upon him by strangers willing to help him out (including the strange little dog-like animal that lives in his new home with him).

Basing his story on anecdotal stories of immigrants from many places and time periods, Tan helps the reader to see what it must be like to be an immigrant to a new land. The absence of any readable words in the book reinforces this. In fact, the words that do appear in the book are unintelligible to both the protagonist and the reader.

Although it may take more than one viewing to get the full impact of this book (it did for me), I highly recommend it.—Doug Short, Library Services

## Cancer Vixen

by Marisa Acocella Marchetto

Since I learned to read, I have been a avid consumer of books, but I have not been drawn to graphic novels. Now, I liked comic books when I was young; Archie and Superman were two of my favorites. They were very colorful. Many graphic novels today are drawn in black and white which doesn't appeal as much to me. So, even though I started selecting graphic novels for the library collection, it was for our patrons—not for me.

Then, a few years ago, the library received *The Ride Together: A Brother and Sister's Memoir of Autism in the Family* by Paul Karasik and Judy Karasik. It is graphic novel lite, being a family's story told in alternating chapters of text and graphics. It pulled me in, and I could see the value of expression through the graphic format.

More recently the CPCC library has expanded its collection of graphic novels and this time I chose graphic novels in the area of health and medicine. Literally speaking they aren't novels (fiction) because they are based on true events. I guess they could be called graphic memoirs, but they are classified into the genre of the graphic novel. I chose one to read last weekend, and I must say I'm very glad I did.

The book is *Cancer Vixen* by Marisa Acocella Marchetto. This one is in color so it attracted me on that count, but the story was what kept me reading—not just glancing through it, but really *reading* it. The author is a cartoonist in NYC who receives a diagnosis of breast cancer. The parameters of the story are from before her diagnosis, through treatment, and life after. The time frame includes the events of 9/11 which is interestingly paralleled by the chaos and destruction in her life, by the very personal diagnosis of cancer.

The story was quicker to read than the same information would have been in a book written in text, but it did not lack for either information or emotion. I now plan to purchase a copy of the book for a friend dealing with the same, but different, experience.—Elaine Kushmaul, Library Services



by G. Willow Wilson

*Cairo* evokes the complexities of the lore, passions and rich history of this middle-eastern region for Western readers while at the same time portraying modern Middle Eastern themes and consciousness. This is a well-crafted and layered adventure story that chronicles events in the lives of characters that may be familiar and stereotypical to Westerners, as well as those who represent the less publicized but more genuine and dominant Middle Eastern demographic—along with their attitudes, beliefs and motivations.

The fantastical elements include a genie and a magic carpet, but the plot is grounded by distinctive and down-to-earth characters drawn in shadings and shadow that provide the uncertainty and doubt that plagues all civilizations as people jockey for recognition in the cultural and political hierarchies. G. Willow Wilson is a journalist who lived and worked in the area, and her writing demonstrates the Eastern cultural premium on good storytelling even when relating serious and even tragic circumstances and events.—Kimberley Balcos, Library Services