

(Free) On the Graphic Novel

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Santiago Garca

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Santiago Garca : On the Graphic Novel before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised On the Graphic Novel:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. On the Graphic Novel by Santiago GarciaBy CustomerIn middle school, I loved reading Classics Illustrated. Seeing the pictures along with the words helped me to visualize the story, making it come alive for me. But what does reading Classics Illustrated as a child have to do with Santiago Garcia's beautiful book, "On the Graphic Novel"? The connection is one most children have: the reading of comics.And, though I read Classics Illustrated, I never had the same life-like experiences that daydreamer Walter Mitty had.

Nonetheless, the Classics Illustrated stories did help me to create a kind of "reality" where the stories could live. When I was ten, my parents sent me to Children's Hospital in San Francisco while the rest of my family stayed home, some three and one-half hours away--too far to drive every day to see me. I had my operation and skin graft (to my foot), and began a slow recovery--the one day visits on the weekend stretched out to one day every two weeks. Aching with loneliness day after day for many weeks, I turned to my Classics Illustrated, to occupy my mind and to keep my spirits up. I gratefully accepted the titles my folks would bring when they visited me.[2] I loved many of those Classics Illustrated titles. Some of my favorites: *The Three Musketeers* by Alexandre Dumas; *The Last Days of Pompeii* by Edward Bulwer-Lytton; *The Invisible Man* by H.G. Wells; *Swiss Family Robinson* by Jonathan Wyss; and *The Prince and the Pauper* by Mark Twain. My absolute favorite of them all, though, was *Ivanhoe* by Sir Walter Scott. Looking at the book cover, on the right, here, note that the cover indicates the title as being a "Full-Color Graphic Novel Adaptation." Of course, back then, as a kid, I did not know what a "graphic novel" was. As an adult, I learned that my assumptions about what a graphic novel was were patently wrong. I sought a clear definition on-line for "graphic novel." I found that I had to glean bits and pieces of the definition from many sources to finally put together (what I thought was) a great definition. If you look back on some of my other posts, you can find that definition (of multiple parts), there. Let's take a look at Santiago Garcia's book, *On the Graphic Novel*, translated by Bruce Campbell, to see if we can resolve the question about the definition of graphic novel. To begin, let's examine a short synopsis of the book.

SHORT SYNOPSIS: Santiago Garcia is a renowned comics artist. In this publication, Garcia traces the history of comics and the graphic novel back from its infancy and development in nineteenth-century European "sequential art." He takes us through the early beginnings of newspaper strips (in the US) all the way through the early twentieth-century evolution of the "comic book" and to its inevitable upheaval. Garcia examines both the "aesthetic" as well as the "metamorphosis" aspects that made for "the rise of the graphic novel." He lays out the "formal" elements and then takes us through the influences of the "cultural" aspects of comics and the graphic novel. He continues his exploration of this subject and shows the reader the many "formats" of the comic as a "popular medium." Garcia states that comics are most often associated with children; even so, comics were condemned as a bad moral influence to children. Comics, at best, were seen as "unedifying" to the reading public. The material found in comics was such that no intelligent, educated, or public personage would want to pick them up to read. To show just how far the world of comics has come, Garcia provides illustrations from all over the world: Spain, France, Germany, and even Japan. Garcia uses these examples to clarify how the graphic novel has developed into its increased international profile. He also points to the graphic novel's increasingly sophisticated silhouette and how it evolved into a new type of "graphic narrative production." Moreover, the "graphic novel," is a new way of "empowering" authors. One of the very big things Garcia points out is that this new model challenges the prejudices that attached to "comics," and shows what they have yet to achieve.

CELEBRATE THE FREEDOM TO READ! With all that has come before in the evolution of comics and graphic novels, the comic has been condemned as unfit for children to read because it contains nothing of worth. Indeed, it has been decried as encouraging low life and moral values. Since Santiago Garcia speaks extensively throughout his book about the perception of comics and graphic novels, his book ties in perfectly with this week as **BANNED BOOKS WEEK, 09-27-15 THROUGH 10-03-15**. I want to take part in a great opportunity to help make the point that books in all genres, formats, philosophies, ideologies, etc. should not be banned. In one sense it is quite simple because "no one," as Lisa McMann, author of the *Wake Trilogy*, has said, "should have the power to decide what other people's kids may or may not read." In one form or another all of us have felt the impact of books that have been the target for removal from libraries and school bookshelves across this vast nation. Take part this week and join in spreading the word about Banned Books Week (09/27-10/03/15). Please start by simply taking a moment to enjoy and share this enlightening promo from YouTube about the week ahead.

[4][6] I bring up the issue of banned books because, as author Santiago Garcia points out in his book, *On the Graphic Novel*, modern graphic novels have received recognition and are viewed by some as legitimate books, containing legitimate topics and stories. Jason Heller of *Entertainment Weekly*, tells us that that "attention cuts both ways." He continues to explain that "[w]hile comics are now being taken seriously as literature, they're also being challenged and banned along with literature" by both private and public organizations, citizen groups, and religious communities. [5][7] In Heller's article of 09-21-14, Heller listed a top group of important graphic novels and comics that have taken hits and have been banned by various organizations. Those top ten are as follows: (1) *The Color of Earth* by Dong Hwa Kim; (2) *Fun Home* by Alison Bechdel; (3) *Bone* by Jeff Smith; (4) *Batman: The Killing Joke* by Alan Moore and Brian Bolland; (5) *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi; (6) *SideScrollers* by Matthew Loux; (7) *Ice Haven* by Daniel Clowes; (8) *Stuck Rubber Baby* by Howard Cruse; (9) *Maus* by Art Spiegelman; and (10) *Blankets* by Craig Thompson. [5] The importance of how books, comics, and graphic novels are received by the public speaks to our very right to be able to choose to read whatever we wish to read. It is all about maintaining an essential freedom. Now, to continue on with that in mind, let's get on to what I think about Santiago Garcia's book, *On the Graphic Novel*.

WHAT I THINK ABOUT SANTIAGO GARCIA'S BOOK, ON THE GRAPHIC NOVEL: At first I had assumed that Mr. Garcia would be providing a definitive definition of a "graphic novel." It wasn't long until I was disabused of that notion. In the very first pages of the Preface to the American Edition, Garcia tells the reader that he is "not interested in a regular 'definition' of comics...or...the graphic

novel. "Wondering what the book was all about confused me; after all, the title of Garcia's work is, "On the Graphic Novel." Just a little later I read what Garcia had intended for us. Garcia explained that he intended to show us all what the "meaning" of comics was to us in the past, what it means to us in the present and what it will mean to us in the future. The second part of all this is that Garcia also intended to show us how the graphic novel is connected to it all. Delving into the pages of the e-book (an advance reading copy from NetGalley) I began to look at comics and graphic novels in a different light. Bringing the history of the telling of stories graphically from instances like Egyptian pictograms and Trajan's Column up to the earliest "comics" (like The Yellow Kid) provided a sound basis for my understanding to grow. I am too young to have lived through the horrors of the "McCarthy Era" in which anyone could be accused of being a communist and be blacklisted or even called before a committee with the sole purpose of ferreting out communists. Anyone could be accused, and once accused, even if innocent, you could not live down the accusation. Many people lost their jobs and could no longer work in their chosen profession, of course, had heard about the terrors of "McCarthyism," and the many awful repercussions. What I didn't know was that something very similar happened in the publishing world to comics and graphic novels. Through a complex series of events including an attempt to blame comics for a rise in juvenile crime and "low living," the "Blame Campaign," and the rise of the "Comics Code" brought the demise of publishers and changed the way the comics industry would be from then on. Garcia proposed a number of reasons for the dramatic change in the industry. The first, already mentioned above, was the comic industry's attempt to force "self-censorship" on publishers of comics. Another reason seemed to be that with the market saturated, and the rise of television as a competitor, the market was sorely injured. Perhaps the killing blow came when comics primary national distributor, American News Company, had to face an anti-monopoly suit by the Department of Justice. Garcia tells us that in David Hajdu's book, *The Ten-Cent Plague: The Great Comic-Book Scare and How It Changed America*, Hajdu lists fifteen pages of writers and artists (over 450 names) who were never able to work in the industry again. Another huge effect of the "purge" was comics would not be able to "toy with themes" for adult readers any more. Very few comics survived, for example Mad comics reorganized and became a magazine, Mad Magazine. Illustrated Classics survived because of their continuing insistence that their adaptations of classics were not comic books. This "Graphic Novel" collects under one cover the following: X-Men: Messiah Complex One-Shot; Uncanny X-Men (1963) #492-494; New X-Men (2004) #44-46; X-Men (2004) #205-207; and X-Factor (2005) #25-27. One point Garcia makes in his book is this: Does gathering comics from different years, different comic series, and story lines under one cover really make this a graphic novel? [10] Another repercussion was not only the loss of adult themes (eg. crime or detective stories, horror comics and murder mysteries), but also the resurgence of the old "superheroes" making a comeback--this time with humans as superheroes (Fantastic Four, Spider-Man, etc.). D.C and Marvel flourished; and many old comic books were packaged together under one cover and called a "graphic novel," just to grab the coat tails of true graphic novels to both improve their status and to make more money. It was also during this time that the comic underground began growing. What I have described, here, is nothing more than a very abbreviated, nutshell version of a very small section of Garcia's work. He demonstrates how the evolution of comics shaped and perhaps even readied the way for graphic novels. Just reading Garcia's book helped me to appreciate how the history of drawing stories has influenced the modern comic and graphic novel and to keep an eye open as to where influences may take the graphic novel in the future. I not only loved reading this book in which I was able to explore more about topics like "underground comic", a subject of which I knew very little. Also, reading this book has made a great change in the way I think about not only comics, and graphic novels, it has changed the way I see influences in society--everywhere. Repercussions. Impacts. Stimuli. I no longer think, for example, that businesses fail just because of their poor fiscal management, alone. [11] *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi, is one of my graphic novels that I keep at arms reach right by my desk. This book is a wonderful example of an adult graphic novel. In spite of the seeming negativity, above, of which I have written, actually Santiago Garcia's book, *On the Graphic Novel*, is hopeful and uplifting. I look at this book as something like a person working to improve their physical condition through training, struggling everyday, wanting to give up, but nonetheless, continuing to push forward through the pain and doubt. And in the end, he or she finds success and a healthier life. So, yes, Garcia honestly and realistically portrays the struggles and triumphs of graphic art communication. It is just so, the graphic novel, growing in "strength," and developing an adult audience looking for mature material, with adult themes. As Garcia pronounces, this growing community of adult graphic art readers will not be satisfied with antiquated themes and stereotypes from their childhood, or those perhaps which have been relegated to "low culture," and will search out more creative topics and sophisticated adult themes. Garcia believes that because of all that has come before and shaped and formed the current aesthetic in graphic communications, on a global level, that we should "behold" that something very "good" has happened in serious comics studies. Since I read and review graphic novels from time to time, I found my knowledge vastly improved by reading Santiago Garcia's book. I am more interested than ever in reviewing some of the really good titles, perhaps like, *Maus* by the wonderful Art Spiegelman, *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi, or one of the other books listed in the banned book section, above. Topics about genocide, war, sexual abuse, and repression are just a few topics adults might be looking forward to reading. So, it is important that we sound out on the issue of banning books (in all forms), and make our voices heard that we do not accept the banning of books. One thing you can do is to choose a

banned book and read it--and then pass it on to a friend. This year the focus is on young adult literature, so choose a good title from the banned books list and expand your knowledge of our young adults. FINAL WORDS AND RATING: I found the incredible knowledge and background material given to the reader absolutely dumbfounding. Garcia presents his concepts in a clear and very understanding manner, and yet is able to steer through a mountain of information to get the reader to the destination. I am very impressed with Santiago Garcia's articulate presentation of material. And, as I mentioned, above, the information that I take away from this book will, undoubtedly, aid me in my analysis and review of future graphic novels (and those that say they are graphic novels, but are not). I am genuinely excited to dive into a graphic novel and start writing.[13] Given all the information I have given, above, I am very pleased to award *On the Graphic Novel* by Santiago Garcia a rating of 4.0 stars out of 5. This book deservedly has achieved this very good rating. Thank you for joining me today as we got to look at this exciting and wonderful book covering the world of comics, graphic novels, the history of these art/literature forms, and the influences that happened to form the current events in these industries. Please join me next time as we take up a new book and learn more from the world of reading. Also, Thank you for taking your time to read and consider my viewpoints in this blog post. I have truly enjoyed being with you, here, today. I look forward to the next time we meet. Until next time many happy pages of reading. This flower is a white Rose of Sharon with a red center. [**] Best wishes, Sharon

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an extensive bibliography at the end of the book. As a fan of comics and graphic novels, I thoroughly enjoyed this wonderful non-fiction look at their history and place in history. I received a review copy of this ebook from University Press of Mississippi and NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. Thank you for allowing me to review this graphic novel.

A noted comics artist himself, Santiago Garca follows the history of the graphic novel from early nineteenth-century European sequential art, through the development of newspaper strips in the United States, to the development of the twentieth-century comic book and its subsequent crisis. He considers the aesthetic and entrepreneurial innovations that established the conditions for the rise of the graphic novel all over the world. Garca not only treats the formal components of the art, but also examines the cultural position of comics in various formats as a popular medium. Typically associated with children, often viewed as unedifying and even at times as a threat to moral character, comics art has come a long way. With such examples from around the world as Spain, France, Germany, and Japan, Garca illustrates how the graphic novel, with its increasingly global and aesthetically sophisticated profile, represents a new model for graphic narrative production that empowers authors and challenges longstanding social prejudices against comics and what they can achieve.

Santiago Garca opens an excellent and necessary dialogue with adulthood and the inspiring possibilities of the graphic novel. This book is a journey through the critical spaces of comics and the historical genealogies, bringing new and refreshing debates between the past and the present. Ana Merino, author of *El Cmic Hispnic* About the Author Originally from Spain, Santiago Garca, Baltimore, Maryland, is a writer, critic, and translator of American comics into Spanish. Bruce Campbell, Minneapolis, Minnesota, is professor of Hispanic studies at St. Johns University/College of St. Benedict. He is the author of *Viva la historieta! Mexican Comics, NAFTA, and the Politics of Globalization*, published by University Press of Mississippi.