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Above The Dreamless Dead: World War I In Poetry And Comics



Synopsis

As the Great War dragged on and its catastrophic death toll mounted, a new artistic movement found its feet in the United Kingdom. The Trench Poets, as they came to be called, were soldier-poets dispatching their verse from the front lines. Known for its rejection of war as a romantic or noble enterprise, and its plainspoken condemnation of the senseless bloodshed of war, Trench Poetry soon became one of the most significant literary moments of its decade. The marriage of poetry and comics is a deeply fruitful combination, as evidenced by this collection. In stark black and white, the words of the Trench Poets find dramatic expression and reinterpretation through the minds and pens of some of the greatest cartoonists working today. With New York Times bestselling editor Chris Duffy (Nursery Rhyme Comics, Fairy Tale Comics) at the helm, *Above the Dreamless Dead* is a moving and illuminating tribute to those who fought and died in World War I. Twenty poems are interpreted in comics form by twenty of today's leading cartoonists, including Eddie Campbell, Kevin Huizenga, George Pratt, and many others.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I've had an interest in fictional accounts of the Great War (or World War I, as we call it now) for many years. I don't remember where it started, but books like Scott Westerfeld's *Leviathan* series and Suzanne Weyn's *Water Song* only stoked the fire. Shana AbÃ©'s *The Sweetest Dark* would have been another favorite, if only it hadn't had a love triangle. All that to say, when I heard that First Second was publishing a graphic novel anthology of WWI trench poetry to mark the

centennial of the beginning of the conflict, I perked up. I hadn't read poetry from the period, but it's something I've always meant to do. Editor Chris Duffy's *Above the Dreamless Dead* is a powerful little volume, and one I can't seem to stop talking about. Here's a strange idea: take a selection of trench poetry (so-called because the poets themselves often lived and wrote from the Front, which was basically a patchwork of trenches for the duration of the war), and put it in the hands of talented comics artists. See what sorts of collaborations (is that even the right word, if the writers are dead?) ensue. Watch readers cry. That last isn't a foregone conclusion – the poetry itself isn't maudlin. However, if you have a feeling bone in your body, and you read and view the art, and then go to the end of the volume and look through the biographies of the authors and realize that quite a few of them died TOO YOUNG (I expected it, but I was still shocked by the numbers – and when I thought about those great minds, silenced) – I dare you not to get a tiny bit teary. This book isn't all mournful remembrance, of course. It's got moments of humor, and there are a few instances of gently whimsical art paired with serious subject matter. And of course it's all quite beautiful.

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