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March: Book One



Synopsis

Congressman John Lewis (GA-5) is an American icon, one of the key figures of the civil rights movement. His commitment to justice and nonviolence has taken him from an Alabama sharecropper's farm to the halls of Congress, from a segregated schoolroom to the 1963 March on Washington, and from receiving beatings from state troopers to receiving the Medal of Freedom from the first African-American president. Now, to share his remarkable story with new generations, Lewis presents *March*, a graphic novel trilogy, in collaboration with co-writer Andrew Aydin and New York Times best-selling artist Nate Powell (winner of the Eisner Award and LA Times Book Prize finalist for *Swallow Me Whole*). *March* is a vivid first-hand account of John Lewis' lifelong struggle for civil and human rights, meditating in the modern age on the distance traveled since the days of Jim Crow and segregation. Rooted in Lewis' personal story, it also reflects on the highs and lows of the broader civil rights movement. Book One spans John Lewis' youth in rural Alabama, his life-changing meeting with Martin Luther King, Jr., the birth of the Nashville Student Movement, and their battle to tear down segregation through nonviolent lunch counter sit-ins, building to a stunning climax on the steps of City Hall. Many years ago, John Lewis and other student activists drew inspiration from the 1958 comic book "Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story." Now, his own comics bring those days to life for a new audience, testifying to a movement whose echoes will be heard for generations.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Every so often a book will come along that will challenge you, that will make you think, and that will hopefully leave you a bit better after you've read it. And this is just one such book. Yes that seems weird to say about a graphic novel, but trust me...this one deserves such praise. This is a book that everyone should read, and then reread again. And then pass on to others to read. This is a part of history that we should not let die, remember, and honor those that created it. Congressman John Lewis is an iconic figure within the Civil Rights movement, and the last surviving member of the "big six leadership." He rose from being the son of sharecropper, to marching with Martin Luther King, and to the halls of Congress. This first book in a planned trilogy covers John Lewis's youth in rural Alabama, his first meeting with Martin Luther King, the birth of the Nashville Student movement, and the battle for desegregation on the steps of City Hall. And it comes to an end all too quickly. I finished the book saying "but, but...I want more! I need the rest of the story now!" And that's such a great way to leave readers, clamoring for the next part of the story. It's a powerful and moving story to see a firsthand account of the triumphs and sorrows of being involved in this time period in history. Now I'm sure the first question many are asking is...why a graphic novel? Couldn't this be done in written form and come out just as well. And the answer would be...no. It's one thing to read about the horrors or having water tossed on you, or being beaten, all because of the color of your skin. It's a completely different matter to see it illustrated. The illustrations are masterful and you can imagine the smoke being blown in your face, someone standing over you and spitting upon you, and others throwing water or hot coffee in your face. It's a powerful image that you won't be able to shake. And one that you won't be able to forget. One of the problems that I normally see with autobiographical stories, is that they often try to give the reader too much information or even sometimes not enough information. They forget that we aren't all familiar with the history of an individual. But this book doesn't suffer any such problem. We move expertly between past and present, as John Lewis gives a tour to children from his district and explains his past. It's a great way to set up the story. And more importantly you don't ever feel like you're missing out on something. Nate Powell's artwork is absolutely gorgeous. It's done in his typical grace/style of capturing the human form oh so perfectly and it seems like this time he's gone even further in his use of shading to give us the beauty of all different types of skin tones, each character's is unique. His artwork is perfectly suited for this story capturing the range and intensity of emotions--the sorrow, the joy, and the fear that sends chills down your spine. That intensity, that feeling of life that he captures in their faces really makes them come alive. You can't help but feel moved by this story and you can't walk away unchanged. The combination of story and art works perfectly in capturing this event and this time period. I'm predicting this book will be one of the best graphic novels of the

year, perhaps even one of the best books of the year. I started recommending it to my faculty as soon as I heard about it. And one that I can't wait for them to teach from. I give the book 5 out of 5 stars.

The fantastic artwork by Nate Powell really stands out in this entertaining story about a critical chapter in the Civil Rights movement. I liked how the authors used President Obama's inauguration as a framing device to tell a story that happened more than 50 years ago. The switch back to modern times helps to remind us how far we have come, and how life was so much different before the Civil Rights movement. The story of how a group of young people using sit-in at lunch counters as peaceful protest is dramatic, and especially compelling was the part where the students would practice getting humiliated, in anticipation of what will be done to them. A very good read.

I am glad to add this book to my library. I teach art to high school students and cannot wait to share this book when we do graphic novels in class. In addition, we can use this book as we talk about public school funding inequities that are happening right now in our school and all over our country. Students can see that one person can make a difference. Because it is autobiographical and about the civil rights movement, it fits perfectly within the Common Core. The pictures are well done and the story moves. I learned about John Lewis, who as a young man, joined the non-violent movement and made a real difference in changes in our country. I literally could not put it down until it was finished. I look forward to the next books in the series.

March Book One is the graphic novel adaptation of the life of Congressman John Lewis, who was involved in the heart of the Civil Rights movement. The story starts with his participation in the Edmund Pettus bridge crossing, but this first book doesn't finish that story. That is saved for later works. The framing story is the inauguration of President Obama in 2009, which is so fitting for the story. A couple young boys meet the congressman and he tells them the beginnings of his story. His thirst for knowledge, life under segregation and how he came to meet Martin Luther King, Jr. A good chunk of the story is about the lunch counter sit-ins in Nashville. How John and others were trained to be non-violent and peacefully make their point. How they protested over and over again, and how they were able to change things. It's a powerful story, and the black and white art by Nate Powell serves the story well. John Lewis received a comic book called Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story which really impacted him, and he wanted his story to be told in this format to be accessible by new generations. Very well told.

John Lewis and his talented collaborators earn my admiration. Just days before we gather to remember the 1963 March for Jobs and Freedom, on the National Mall, on Sat., Aug. 24, 2013, they remind us that years of fear and suffering, as well as faithful leadership of a community, were at stake. The well-reported events are here, and the quiet dedication of mothers, sisters, uncles, and faith leaders, too. John Lewis transforms himself into an approachable - not a pedestal-standing icon - by revealing his Bible lessons for his sons, as well as his avoiding farm chores to sneak off to school. Framing this narrative as a story told on Jan. 20, 2009, as "We, The People" gathered on a bitterly cold Washington, D.C., day to write a new chapter, added perspective. I read this as a Kindle edition on my iPad.

As Americans continue to struggle with the issue of race in the year 2016, it is instructive to look back to the roots of the Civil Rights Movement. New York city has just included this book in its Middle School reading program. The story of John Lewis is an inspiring and sometimes frightening tale. However, it is a constant reminder of how much some people struggled for our modern rights and why we must not surrender them. One person can make a difference. March Book One documents the change that is possible when people like John Lewis take action.

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