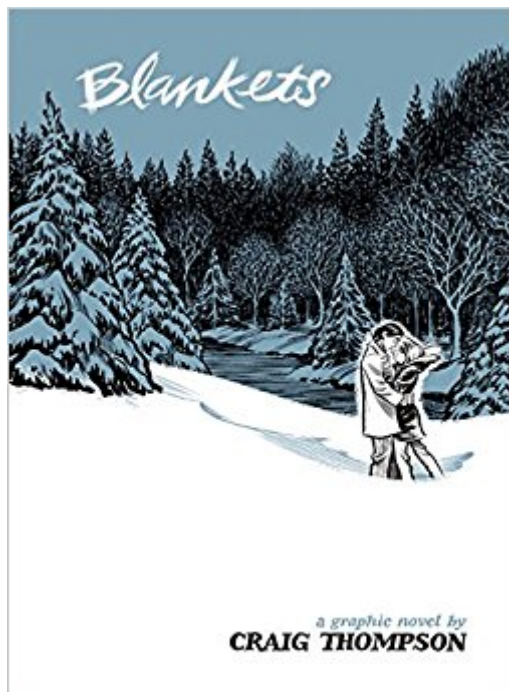


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Blankets



Synopsis

"Quaint, meditative and sometimes dreamy, *Blankets* will take you straight back to your first kiss."
--The Guardian
Blankets is the story of a young man coming of age and finding the confidence to express his creative voice. Craig Thompson's poignant graphic memoir plays out against the backdrop of a Midwestern winterscape: finely-hewn linework draws together a portrait of small town life, a rigorously fundamentalist Christian childhood, and a lonely, emotionally mixed-up adolescence. Under an engulfing blanket of snow, Craig and Raina fall in love at winter church camp, revealing to one another their struggles with faith and their dreams of escape. Over time though, their personal demons resurface and their relationship falls apart. It's a universal story, and Thompson's vibrant brushstrokes and unique page designs make the familiar heartbreaking all over again. This groundbreaking graphic novel, winner of two Eisner and three Harvey Awards, is an eloquent portrait of adolescent yearning; first love (and first heartache); faith in crisis; and the process of moving beyond all of that. Beautifully rendered in pen and ink, Thompson has created a love story that lasts.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Revisiting the themes of deep friendship and separation Thompson surveyed in *Goodbye Chunky Rice*, his acclaimed and touching debut, this sensitive memoir recreates the confusion, emotional pain and isolation of the author's rigidly fundamentalist Christian upbringing, along with the trepidation of growing into maturity. Skinny, naive and spiritually vulnerable, Thompson and his younger brother manage to survive their parents' overbearing discipline (the brothers are sometimes

forced to sleep in "the cubby-hole," a forbidding and claustrophobic storage chamber) through flights of childhood fancy and a mutual love of drawing. But escapist reveries can't protect them from the cruel schoolmates who make their lives miserable. Thompson's grimly pious parents and religious community dismiss his budding talent for drawing; they view his creative efforts as sinful and relentlessly hector the boys about scripture. By high school, Thompson's a lost, socially battered and confused soul-until he meets Raina and her clique of amiable misfits at a religious camp. Beautiful, open, flexibly spiritual and even popular (something incomprehensible to young Thompson), Raina introduces him to her own less-than-perfect family; to a new teen community and to a broader sense of himself and his future. The two eventually fall in love and the experience ushers Thompson into the beginnings of an adult, independent life. Thompson manages to explore adolescent social yearnings, the power of young love and the complexities of sexual attraction with a rare combination of sincerity, pictorial lyricism and taste. His exceptional b&w drawings balance representational precision with a bold and wonderfully expressive line for pages of ingenious, inventively composed and poignant imagery. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Adult/High School-Thompson's Good-bye, Chunkie Rice (Top Shelf, 1999) offered readers well-realized but fantastic characters in a tale that nicely combined sentiment with adventure. This second, much longer work shares the acuity for character development and dynamic sensitivity that makes the author so compulsively readable. In Blankets, however, realism reigns supreme in both the story arc and in the humanity of its characters. Thompson himself is the protagonist, and this is his tale of growing up, falling in love (and realizing the physical and moral complications that can imply), discovering the texture and limits of his faith, and arriving at a point from which he can look back at those experiences. The snowy Midwest, peopled by overweight parents, hairy youths, and lovingly depicted younger siblings-including a respectfully and realistically treated minor character with Down syndrome-is energetically realized in Thompson's expressive lines and inking. Much of the story occurs when Craig and his brother Phil are young boys and includes images of such boyish pranks as peeing on one another. Older high school students who have reached an age when nostalgia is possible will warm to Thompson's own wistfulness. This is a big graphic novel, in concept and successful execution.-Francisca Goldsmith, Berkeley Public Library, CA Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

I bought this for someone for Christmas. They are reading it right now and I'm watching them via messenger. She is crying. Weeping sad tears. Talking about high school and life and meaning. Keeps praising the artist for such a masterpiece. She already owned this book and I replaced it with a newer copy because she's read the old one so often it's spine has disintegrated. She's still crying. I don't know what to do. This may have been a mistake. Would recommend.

My teenage son checked this out at our library because he was excited to see a graphic novel that would take him more than an hour to read. As he put it, he wasn't ready for the "feels" he got from a graphic novel. He ended up loving this book for the beautiful illustrations and he related to the "feels" the author went through during his teenage years. He let me borrow it and even in my 40's I connected with this book; it's been a while since I remember the heartbreak of 1st love but his struggle with religion got me good as I still struggle with it to this day although I'm more at peace with it now. When my son and his 1st girlfriend broke up; I immediately went to and bought the hardback version for my son. Owning the book and rereading the book was very therapeutic for him. I highly recommend this book!

Little did I know I would finish this in one night, let alone 3 hours. After about 30 minutes in, I knew I wouldn't put it down till the bittersweet end. Craig Thompson had me immersed into his wonderful world of teen angst and I was forlorn to leave it. Many tears were had. Every teenager and adult alike should read this brilliant graphic novel. His words are alluring. His art is whimsical and enchanting. So many parts resonated with me. Most will not be intimidated by the length, as it goes by quicker than you ever fathomed. A very poignant and introspective look at young love, feeling like an outcast and grappling with religion.

Blankets has changed the way I look at graphic novels. This isn't so much a graphic novel as it is an experience. There is so much raw beauty to be found in this book. The inescapable memories of first love, the ever-personal struggle with religion, and the importance of family are just some things touched upon. It's also very well written and delicately and tastefully drawn, especially Craig, the main character's, thoughts. There's this one part where Craig says goodbye to his girlfriend, with whom he has a long-distance relationship. The next panels show her driving away. When her car is out of sight, the final panel is of her car driving off a nonexistent cliff. I don't know about you, but when I see somebody that I love leaving, that's exactly how I feel. This is one of the most beautiful things I have read. Craig Thompson is a genius.

You've probably read stories like these. Hell, you've probably read, watched, heard tons of them during the course of your lifetime. I know I did. Some of them were more than excellent, some of them were boring piece of crap without an intelligent thought, some of them were just 'meh' - random genre-writing without a real effort - and some of them were something more than a story. Something more like an experience imprisoned on paper. Thompson's "Blankets" is one such story and no matter how many times you heard something just like it this one will manage to kick you in the gut. Or wherever it hurts the most. Premise is simple enough. You have a young boy and his brother living in rural Wisconsin. You have religious parents with no lack of authority, and a community full of "jerks". You have bullies in high-school and you have religion as an escape mechanism from plights of this world. You have a winter-camp, pretty girl and falling in love. You have a road trip, or something very similar to it and you have emotional growth connected to it. You have a disillusion and maturing, you have fears, hopes and longing. In other words, you have elements of everyone's life - rearranged a bit to suit a purpose of a story - laid out on close to a 600 pages. It could've gone to blatant cliché or it could've been boring as hell. Fortunately, it wasn't neither. Though elements are familiar, their representation isn't. Thompson is skillful artist (which becomes more obvious in the "Habibi") and the way in which he manages to construct panels to show, indicate and cause emotions is something to behold. His line can be either simple or endlessly complex (reminiscent of arabesque or techniques of expressionism), extremely manipulative or perfectly innocent and much of the power that lies in this book does come from the Art itself, words merely supplement the picture. And "Blankets" is powerful, have no doubt about it. It takes you back to a place and events you never quite forgot, it makes you wonder what if, it makes you pick up a phone and make a call (though You know it would be a wrong move and nothing good could come out of it), it gives you this feeling that, despite everything, world really is a wonderful place. Thompson is very careful about it, more careful than many an author out there. He never idolizes the past (though sometimes he does 'preach' about it from an older perspective), nor does he dwell in it. He uses it as a fuelling ground, using his art to represent a moment (or few) that made him what he is today (moment we all, in some part, share with each other). At the same time, this is a book about personal experience and a book about 'being human'. Do you recall most famous blanket in the history of comics? If you recalled Linus's security blanket from "Peanuts" you recalled right. What Charles Schulz did in a series of cartoons, Thompson did on a more complex level. "Blankets" is a story about insecurities and various mechanisms that we use to overcome them. World is dark and full of terror (or so the saying goes), and sometimes you need a blanket under

which you can devise your own world, with its own rules. Eventually, you'll have to get out (Thompson uses the famous dialogue from Plato's "Republic" to indicate this). World will not change, but you'll be more prepared.

A lyrical autobiographical novel, *Blankets* is part spiritual autobiography, part trauma narrative, and part *Kunstlerroman*. I am less taken than most by its love story, though it is poignant and beautifully rendered. More important to me is Thompson's sophisticated engagement with issues of gender, sex, faith, and art, all of which are well complemented by his visual choices. Thompson has learned well from Will Eisner how to capture a sense of how time passes and, sometimes, almost stands still. Destined to be a classic, if it is not already, this book is a must-read for any serious student of graphic novels.

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