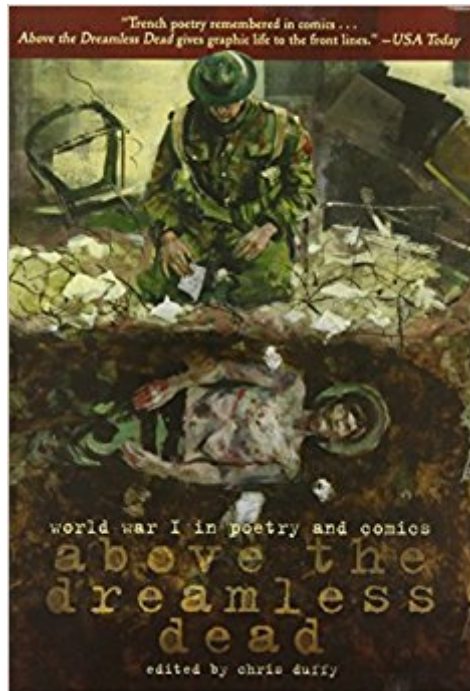




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# Above The Dreamless Dead: World War I In Poetry And Comics



## 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

"The real strength of the anthology comes both from the poems selected for it and the variety of visual approaches--ranging from the cartoonish to the phantasmagoric-- that prevents it from relying simply on the visual carnage of the "war to end all wars." - "Publisher's Weekly"**STARRED REVIEW**"Original and evocative . . . This isn't the first and won't be the last WWI poetry anthology issued during the war's centennial, but it may prove to be the most accessible and striking." -

"Booklist," STARRED REVIEW\*"The real strength of the anthology comes both from the poems selected for it and the variety of visual approaches--ranging from the cartoonish to the phantasmagoric-- that prevents it from relying simply on the visual carnage of the "war to end all wars." - "Publisher's Weekly"STARRED REVIEW"This wonderful book - beautiful, tragic, funny, and heartbreaking - is perfect to introduce the Trench Poets to high school students." - "VOYA"\*\*\*Original and evocative . . . This isn't the first and won't be the last WWI poetry anthology issued during the war's centennial, but it may prove to be the most accessible and striking." - "Booklist," STARRED REVIEW\*"The real strength of the anthology comes both from the poems selected for it and the variety of visual approaches--ranging from the cartoonish to the phantasmagoric-- that prevents it from relying simply on the visual carnage of the "war to end all wars." - "Publisher's Weekly"STARRED REVIEW\*"This should encourage high school English and history teachers to supplement or even toss the textbook guide and, more importantly, impel young adults to reflect on war with poetry in one hand and a newspaper in the other." - "BCCB," STARRED REVIEW"This wonderful book - beautiful, tragic, funny, and heartbreaking - is perfect to introduce the Trench Poets to high school students." - "VOYA"\*\*\*Original and evocative . . . This isn't the first and won't be the last WWI poetry anthology issued during the war's centennial, but it may prove to be the most accessible and striking." - "Booklist," STARRED REVIEW\*"The real strength of the anthology comes both from the poems selected for it and the variety of visual approaches--ranging from the cartoonish to the phantasmagoric-- that prevents it from relying simply on the visual carnage of the "war to end all wars." - "Publisher's Weekly"STARRED REVIEW\*"This should encourage high school English and history teachers to supplement or even toss the textbook guide and, more importantly, impel young adults to reflect on war with poetry in one hand and a newspaper in the other." - "BCCB," STARRED REVIEW"This wonderful book - beautiful, tragic, funny, and heartbreaking - is perfect to introduce the Trench Poets to high school students." - "VOYA"\*\*\*Original and evocative . . . This isn't the first and won't be the last WWI poetry anthology issued during the war's centennial, but it may prove to be the most accessible and striking." - "Booklist," STARRED REVIEW

Contributors to Above the Dreamless Dead include: Hannah Berry, Stephen R. Bissette, Eddie Campbell, Lilli CarrÃ©, Liesbeth De Stercke, Hunt Emerson, Garth Ennis, Simon Gane, Sarah Glidden, Isabel Greenberg, Sammy Harkham, David Hitchcock, Kevin Huizenga, Kathryn Immonen, Stuart Immonen, Peter Kuper, James Lloyd, Pat Mills, Anders Nilsen, Danica Novgorodoff, Luke Pearson, George Pratt, Carol Tyler, and Phil Winslade. Edited by Chris Duffy.

The very premise of *Above the Dreamless Dead* is a chilling one: poems written during or after World War I by veterans illustrated by several authors. And the result is a at the same time beautiful and eerie testimony of the conflict that inaugurated modern warfare. Every conflict brings forth the same question: how can you explain the horror of war to civilians in time of peace? The simple answer is that you can't. All we can do here from our air-conditioned and belly-filled perspective is try to capture echoes and shadows of this past. And the words of the dead are the most definite echoes of the war. The authors of the "trench poems" in *Above the Dreamless Dead* are from different backgrounds, literature students to boys with no formal education who wrote as a way to try and escape from the war. The combination of these texts with the illustrations is striking, like a soldier that contemplates a decomposing body lit by the stars in no man's land in *The Great Push*, or the criticism of generals in *Dead man's Dump*. The book also has some laid-back moments, like the extremely funny melodies sung by the soldiers, with themes like "fornicating until death" or telling the Sergeant to shove the license pass up his ass. The illustration style varies a lot, but I found all of them beautiful in their own way, from the more realistic to the cartoony ones. You can notice how the artists really cared for the source material. *Above the Dreamless Dead* is an incredible book about war that should be read by everyone, in the hope that one day they may be gone for good.

Here is the best review I can offer for this book: My son, who has had ZERO interest in poetry, saw me reading this book and asked me about it. Later that evening, as I was walking past his room, I glanced in and saw him, sitting in his "gaming chair," reading "*Above the Dreamless Dead*." This would be an excellent tool for educators to use in the classroom for teaching about both poetry and World War I. I cannot recommend it enough. The illustrations make the poetry come alive for the reader. Five Stars!!!

beautiful

received as described and on time

Fantastic book, and the delivery was on time and well worth the wait.

Best for the Isaac Rosenberg

I've had an interest in fictional accounts of the Great War (or Word 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©f'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. I had two personal favorites among the twenty-eight entries. The first was Siegfried Sassoon's "The General" (adapted by Garth Ennis, Phil Winslade and Rob Steen), a straightforward reading and representation of the poem (which was quite damning on its own), and one of the longer pieces in the book. Second was Wilfred Owen's "Dream" (adapted by George Pratt), a really magnificent, haunting piece that I know I'll turn to again and again. Duffy has done a great job of uniting disparate comics styles within one volume. There are what I would call "traditional" panels familiar from years of newspaper reading, full-page abstract paintings, images that evoke movement and violence, and detailed pages that require close study. Add to this a variety of source material: poetry (obviously!), selections from soldiers' songs, and a portion of a book. It could have been a muddle. Instead,

it's a lovely, poignant, intense read. Was this meant as a tribute to the fallen? A reminder to all that war is costly? No matter what its provenance, Above the Dreamless Dead succeeds as an anthology of art, and it is both poetic and visually stunning. Recommended for: everyone (ages 10+), but especially fans of graphic novels and those interested in WWI.

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