

Classics as Graphic Novels



Interested in revisiting an old favorite classic in a new way? Consider the graphic novel version of your old familiar favorite novel. I recently read *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, reimagined as a graphic novel by Ian Edginton and was pleasantly surprised. This is the famous story of Sir Charles Baskerville who has suddenly died and Henry Baskerville, his nephew and the heir to his estate. Henry is being warned of danger that might befall him as he takes ownership of the manor on the moor. Sherlock Holmes and Watson travel with Henry to the moor to investigate the threat, made complicated by an escaped murderer, jealousy, mysterious family dynamics, and a possible hell hound. The characters were visually well represented including Watson, Dr. Mortimer and Mrs. Stapleton. Their mystery, though well known, has enough twists and turns to keep any reader going. The visual look and use of color does well to represent the haunting and atmospheric feeling of the moor and the danger lurking everywhere. For fans of dense novels, there is still quite a bit of dialogue which is slowed down further (for a modern reader!) by the original style. I really loved the look of this graphic novel edition which often reminded me of an animated movie.

Typically graphic novel versions of classic works have less text, but what text or dialogue is there is (mostly) original. And when done well can be breathtaking to reread and absorb visually as well. Some other excellent examples include Peter Kuper's adaption of *The Jungle* by Sinclair Lewis. The bold visual style of this is reminiscent of a propaganda poster, with similar shocking effects. On a different note, Nancy Butler's adaptations of Jane Austen's classics like *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* are much sweeter and evoke the characters in a unique and yet familiar way. These are in no way meant to replace the originals, and super-fans aren't always thrilled with the representations but I am really drawn to the creative energy behind these classics.

Posted by sbowman on March 20, 2013

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[Classics](#)

[Graphic Novels](#)

Reviews Titles:

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Links

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- [7] <https://mcpl.info/category/blogs/information-answers-reviews>
- [8] <https://mcpl.info/category/reviews-subjects/classics>
- [9] <https://mcpl.info/category/reviews-subjects/graphic-novels>
- [10] <https://mcpl.info/reviews-882a/1640>