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The 9/11 Report: A Graphic Adaptation



Synopsis

The 9/11 Report for Every American On December 5, 2005, the 9/11 Commission issued its final report card on the government's fulfillment of the recommendations issued in July 2004: one A, twelve Bs, nine Cs, twelve Ds, three Fs, and four incompletes. Here is stunning evidence that Sid Jacobson and Ernie Colón, with more than sixty years of experience in the comic-book industry between them, were right: far, far too few Americans have read, grasped, and demanded action on the Commission's investigation into the events of that tragic day and the lessons America must learn. Using every skill and storytelling method Jacobson and Colón have learned over the decades, they have produced the most accessible version of the 9/11 Report. Jacobson's text frequently follows word for word the original report, faithfully captures its investigative thoroughness, and covers its entire scope, even including the Commission's final report card. Colón's stunning artwork powerfully conveys the facts, insights, and urgency of the original. Published on the fifth anniversary of the terrorist attacks on the United States, an event that has left no aspect of American foreign or domestic policy untouched, The 9/11 Report puts at every American's fingertips the most defining event of the century.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Comics have come a long way, even since the sixties when intellectuals started taking Batman, Superman, and Spiderman seriously. Maus by Art Spiegelman, for instance, was the serious story of Spiegelman's father in the Holocaust, and Spiegelman's problematic relationship with him; it was a quietly magnificent history and memoir, and won a Pulitzer Prize in 1992. From Hell by

Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell was an examination of Jack the Ripper's story that was as dense as a novel, and with lots of reference notes to boot. If you have been watching comics climb in respectability, they have just mounted upon another rung. It is hard to class The 9/11 Report: A Graphic Adaptation (Hill and Wang) by Sid Jacobson and Ernie Colón as a comic book, for it certainly is deadly serious rather than comic, and it isn't a "graphic novel", the category by which the genre goes now. It is the famous Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States but told in the comic book form. The original prose work, widely praised and even nominated for a National Book Award, was a bestseller when it came out in July 2004. It had 600 pages, while the current one has 133. Yet this is a condensation of the report, not a dumbing-down of it. Most of the words in it (in the san-serif capitals traditional to comics) come directly from the original report, which is in the public domain. There are some pages that could not have been done better in any format. The book starts with a timeline, four rows extending for twelve pages, counting off the hours of that morning for each of the four flights.

A recent article in the literary blog The Millions, surveying 9/11 literature, concluded that we were still perhaps too close to the event to offer the perspective necessary for fiction. However, it pointed to the official 9/11 COMMISSION REPORT as an exceptionally well-written account (it is), and named this graphic adaptation of it as a surprisingly creative response that in no way diminished the seriousness of the original document. Far from being an indy spinoff, it comes with the endorsement of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Commission, hailing it as furthering their intent to write a report that was accessible to all, "not only to inform our fellow citizens about history but also to energize and engage them on behalf of reform and change." The original report runs to 600 closely printed pages; this graphic version, with 65 colorful and inviting spreads (130 pages), is certainly more accessible. Provided it does not trivialize or distort, it should serve the Commission's purpose admirably. The book exactly follows the chapter headings of the original, from "1 / We Have Some Planes" and "2 / The Foundation of the New Terrorism" to "12 / What to Do" and "13 / How to Do It." I have not read the original at all fully, but when I look into it to compare the two versions, I certainly see a lot of fascinating detail that I would like to pursue when I have more time, but I am also amazed by how faithful the Jacobson/Colón adaptation is to the original. Despite all the exposure to facts and analysis over the years, I learned a great deal about both the antecedents and the follow-up to the attacks. I now have a much clearer picture of the rise of Usama bin Ladin (as he is spelled here) and the earlier attacks in Africa, Aden, and the WTC itself.

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