



## Graphic Classics, Volume 22: African-American Classics

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*African-American Classics* presents great stories and poems from America's earliest Black writers, illustrated by contemporary African-American artists. Featured are "Two Americans" by Florence Lewis Bentley, "The Goophered Grapevine" by Charles W. Chesnutt, "Becky" by Jean Toomer, two short plays by Zora Neale Hurston, and six more tales of humor and tragedy. Also featured are eleven poems, including Langston Hughes' "Danse Africaine" and "The Negro," plus Paul Laurence Dunbar's "Sympathy" (I know why the caged bird sings...')

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## From Reader Review Graphic Classics, Volume 22: African-American Classics for online ebook

### Jim says

wow. wow. wow.

6 star book

most of these stories i didn't know, now i've got a lot of authors to chase down.

three favorites; "on being crazy" by w.e.b. dubois and illoed by kyle baker, "the goophered grapevine" by charles chesnutt and "buyers of dreams" by ethel m. caution and beautifully illoed by leilani hickerson.

not a page is wasted and every page is art.

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### Akilah says

Solid collection, my fave is the WEB DuBois story. The first Zora Neale Hurston is a close second. There were only two stories I couldn't get with, and it was honestly because I didn't like the art enough.

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### Charles says

While some of the authors were names I recognized, the rest were unfamiliar to me, pointing out one of the two main points of value to this graphic novel. The first is that it is a way to introduce people to the writings of the well known African-American writers at the earliest point when it began to be a genre. The writings are superb and their legacy needs to be maintained for their historical and cultural value.

The second point is that the work of the lesser known writers needs to be elevated into the public consciousness. All of them had a significant influence on the development of African-American literature at a time of great struggle to be heard.

The authors featured in this collection are:

- \*) Langston Hughes
- \*) Zora Neale Hurston
- \*) W. E. B. Dubois
- \*) Paul Laurence Dunbar
- \*) Alice Dunbar Nelson
- \*) Jean Toomer
- \*) Claude McKay
- \*) Frances E. W. Harper
- \*) Charles W. Chesnutt

Graphic novels often serve as a gateway for people, particularly the young, to be introduced to the act of engaging their mind as well as being exposed to new forms of literature. This one does both very well. I

strongly recommend it for middle and high school literature classes where the instructor is looking for new ways to stimulate young readers. Short biographies of the authors are included at the end.

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### **Lulu says**

Stories and poems that have been illustrated and some have been adapted all from African Americans. I liked more of the poems than the stories but an interesting read. There is also more information on the writers, adapters and illustrators at the end.

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### **Kienie says**

The Reward: Beautiful.

Two Americans: OK art, but a good, touching story.

On Being Crazy: Nice art, and made me want to read the whole story.

The Negro: Like the poem and like the art, but they don't quite go together.

Danse Africaine: Gorgeous.

A Carnival Jangle: I don't like the art, and I feel like too many parts of the story were cut out.

The Castaways: Love it, but could've worked better as several panels.

America: Great poem and great art.

Lawing and Jawing: Very nice art, but I don't like the story, partially because I feel that I don't get it. Is it some sort of satire?

Lex Talionis: Messed up. but in the best way. Good at building and keeping the tension.

Becky: Sad. The art is OK.

In the Matter of Two Men: Great art. I like how it tells the story.

Sympathy: I wish they had made it into an actual comic.

We Wear the Mask: Good.

Buyers of Dreams: Too preachy for my tastes.

The Bronze Legacy: Both art and poem are excellent.

The Goophered Grapevine: Excellent fun story with decent art.

Sanctum 777 NSDCOU Meets Cleopatra: I don't really get the whole setup, so I feel like I'm missing out the cultural significance of the story.

De Cunjah Man: Hate the art, but the rest is fun.

Filling Station: A slice of life story. Very dynamic art.

The Ghost of Deacon Brown: Good art.

Aunt Chloe's Politics: Boring art.

Shalmanezer: I love the art.

Overall I lied the art, but many of the stories felt a bit gutted, and often the art didn't really complement the story as it should.

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### **Peacegal says**

Poetry, humor, social commentary and advocacy all find a place in this inventive graphic novel. I must say,

however, that the moral of "Buyers of Dreams" made me squirm with discomfort, even if it was written in 1921.

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### **Kim Baccellia says**

Amazing stories!

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### **Corelle says**

Great stories and poetry! It is an awesome introduction to the early African American writers!

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### **Laura says**

This is a good book to introduce yourself to African American authors of the early 20th century. The art is pretty good, but it didn't always marry perfectly with the stories.

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### **Diana says**

This collection of graphic retellings of classic African-American literature was a little hit or miss for me. The art work and story style vary widely from story to story and some were less enjoyable than others. There are a few well known stories and several that I've never seen before. I enjoyed the majority of the short stories and the variety of subject collected.

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### **Alex Telander says**

Graphic Classics is known for publishing some truly great graphic novels, adapting and collecting graphic tales of works from such renowned authors as Edgar Allan Poe, Ambrose Bierce, Jack London, Mark Twain, H. G. Wells and H. P. Lovecraft to name a number of them . . . notice a certain characteristic in common with all these white men? In their latest volume, number twenty-two, they have published one of their most important yet: African-American classics.

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This illuminating collection features original works from Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, W. E. B. Du Bois, Claude McKay, James Weldon Johnson, and many more; adapted by various writers, and a number of different artists, bringing each individual tale to life and prominence. What makes this collection even more enjoyable is that it is comprised of not just short stories, but also lots of poetry, breaking up the feel of back to back stories with entertainingly illustrated poetry as interpreted by the artist.

Perhaps the most enjoyable aspect of African-American Classics is that it features in most cases an all-black cast of characters, which I can say I haven't seen before in any other graphic novel I've read. Seeing black characters at all in graphic novels can be rare, but hopefully this collection will help to change this sad

lacking in today's comic books.

Originally written on December 30, 2011 ©Alex C. Telander.

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### **Salsabarian says**

This book can be approached in two ways: as an introduction to early black writers, well-known and less so; or as a visual interpretation of their works, giving them a vibrancy that may intrigue readers to pursue more from these writers. The artists have impressive cred having worked for groups such as Marvel, DC Comics, various popular animation series and MTV, and their varying styles are compelling to behold.

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### **Monique says**

This is a collection of classics that were adapted to graphic stories. The adaptions have been simplified and detailed graphics have been added to provide emphasis. I think this is a way to introduce young people as they are short enough to capture their attention and make them want more. I recommend this book (short graphic novellas/poems) to everyone. It's an experience that young and old can appreciate.

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### **Dankwa Brooks says**

Not all of these stories were gems, but I enjoyed them for the most part. Some of these stories were rather grim for children, but I think high school students should be fine. The illustrations across the board were great and I think this book would be a good way to expose teenagers to black literature!

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### **Nicola Mansfield says**

Reason for Reading: I absolutely love this series of books and read each new one that comes out. I hope to get around to reading more of their backlist this year.

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Usually when I read one of these collections of themed books I am familiar with a majority of the works but this time everything was new for me. I do read Black authors but they are contemporary ones such as Toni Morrison, making this an introduction for me to these early Black authors. I should say I was familiar with one writer and that is the poet Langston Hughes. This book does contain more than the norm, for this series, of poetry which I thought would bug me (not a poetry person) but I rather enjoyed the poems especially "Danse Africaine" (which was new to me) by Langston Hughes.

Grouping together a collection of stories based on author's race rather than a literary theme makes for a wide selection of genres to be represented (though I would say they all expressed the Black experience) and as such a few were not exactly my thing, but I enjoyed the majority of them and found several of them to be excellent. My favourite story was "Lex Talionis" by Robert W. Bagnall, a creepy tale of revenge. I also

enjoyed "Two Americans" by Florence Lewis Bentley, "The Goophered Grapevine" by Charles W. Chestnutt. I found "Sanctum 777 N.S.D.C.O.U. Meets Cleopatra" by Leila Amos Pendleton to be a joy and was deeply touched with "Becky" by Jean Toomer.

The illustrations throughout the book are fantastic, presenting a wide range of styles and making for a visually stunning book. But then isn't every book in this series! It should be noted that the illustrators for this book are themselves all contemporary Black artists. A great book to treat yourself for Black History Month, or well, just anytime! I certainly appreciate the introduction to authors I've never read before.

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