



# The Park Bench

*Christophe Chabouté*

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## **The Park Bench** Christophe Chabouté

Chabouté's enchanting story of a park bench was first published to critical acclaim in France in 2012. Faber now brings his work to the English-speaking world for the first time.

Through Chabouté's elegant graphic style, we watch people pass, stop, meet, return, wait and play out the strange and funny choreography of life. Fans of *The Fox and the Star*, *The Man Who Planted Trees* and Richard Linklater's *Boyhood* will find this intimate graphic novel about a simple park bench - and the people who walk by or linger - poignant, life-affirming and brilliantly original.

## **The Park Bench Details**

Date : Published July 6th 2017 by Faber Faber (first published 2012)

ISBN : 9780571332304

Author : Christophe Chabouté

Format : Paperback 336 pages

Genre : Sequential Art, Graphic Novels, Comics, Fiction, Graphic Novels Comics, Cultural, France

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## From Reader Review The Park Bench for online ebook

### Diane S ? says

I have fallen in love with the talents of this amazing artist. Yes, a picture can tell a thousand words, and using a park bench, the author does just that. We have many benches in my town, along the river walk, benches that have probably seen it all. Once again using black and white pictures, we see the many things that this bench has seen. The same people walk past every day, a dog uses it as his favorite toilet, and other people and glimpses of their lives play out on this park bench. Some are sad, some are beautiful and some are rather hopeless. We see the changing seasons, the snow, leaves falling, the rain, bright sunny days. But it is the beginning scene that will resonate and have a place in the framing of the story. An amazing and beautiful ending, filled with hope, love and joy.

Not sure if I can find any more of his work here in the states, but will definitely keep trying.

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### Jadranka says



### Jon(athan) Nakapalau says

Visual poetry - highest recommendation.

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### Nat says

**The Park Bench** is full of quiet, revealing, and intimate glances into everyday moments, capturing clever little details in the background. Including romantic couples both young and old, gossiping, people watching, and so much more. This silent graphic novel speaks volumes.

Marketing his English-language debut, **The Park Bench** is Chabouté's beautiful and acclaimed story of a park bench and the lives it witnesses. At once intimate and universal, it is one of the most moving books you could hope to come across.

From its creation to its witness to the fresh ardor of lovers, the drudgery of businessmen, the various hopes of the many who enter its orbit, the park bench weathers all seasons. Strangers meet at it for the first time. Paramours carve their initials into it. Old friends sit and chat upon it for hours. Others ignore the bench, or (attempt to) sleep on it at night, or simply anchor themselves on it and absorb the ebb and flow of the area and its people.

I've had my eyes on this particular graphic novel for ages, so when it finally arrived in the mail I took my sweet time perusing the book. Letting the story sit with me for a while was certainly a wise way to go about Chabouté's work. Though, I do have to say that for that second half I couldn't help but read through it in a whirlwind. For anyone who loves to be deeply involved in their own thoughts, **The Park Bench** (both the

book and the object) is a must.

The above is a prime example of tiny details coming together to create a bigger picture.

No words need to describe how the above page is utterly heartbreaking.

*ARC kindly provided by the publisher in exchange for an honest review.*

**Publication Date: July 6th, 2017**

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## **David Schaafsma says**

As is his graphic novel *Alone*, *The Park Bench*, another graphic novel, is silent, like a Charlie Chaplin silent black and white film. Oh, there are words on shirts in the book, you see the titles of books, but this tome of a book wordlessly tells the story of a cultural site for a kind of loosely constructed community: A wooden park bench. The focus, over some time, is on a collection of people who live in the area and who use the bench: A woman reader, a runner, lovers. A guy who paints it from time to time. Most often there are solo users of the bench, but sometimes the solo use creates a response: A homeless guy can't drink or sleep there, a cop insists. Another cop agrees; that is, until he retires! There's not much real narrative here, or the narrative is really loose, except this tale of the "bum" and a couple other bare bones anecdotes that emerge, giving one a sense of the mundanity of life, and its humanity, and kindness, at its best.

Compared to *Alone*, about a man who lives his life alone on a tiny, bare lighthouse island, who creates his own entertaining stories for himself out of words in a dictionary, there is less narrative. And neither of them have the grand drama of his *Moby Dick*, (also using as few words as possible) of course. But this is sweet and powerful, in its own minimalist way. Again, it's a study in the power of images to affect.

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## destiny ? [howling libraries] says

I mean... from an artistic point of view, I *get it*, but this was not for me at all.

*The Park Bench* is literally 300-something pages of focusing on a park bench while people of all walks of life come and go - some sitting on it, some walking past it, some interacting with one another. When interactions do occur, there is no text dialogue whatsoever, so we have no idea what is happening or why.

I felt like this is one of those graphic novels that was built just for the ~artistic aesthetic~, and while that is great for a certain audience, I'm not part of that group, sadly.

*Thank you to NetGalley and Faber Faber for the ARC in exchange for an honest review!*

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## Vivek Tejuja says

The first read of the year – I love the sound of this sentence. 2018 couldn't have started off better. Yes, it is a graphic novel. Yes, it is a book with only images and no words, but who said, images can't be read? Who said that this doesn't count as a book? No one really and even if they did, then well, to each his own. To me, it is a read and a satisfying one at that.

“The Park Bench” by Chabouté is about a park bench (obviously in a park) and the people it watches pass, stop, meet, return, wait, sleep, thrown out, and all of this happens in a strangely intertwined manner that is life. The bench in all of this is the central character – stable, stationary and yet witness to all of it. Imagine if the bench could talk, the stories it could tell, isn't it? The book is just like that.

There is so much hope contained in this book that it will make you see the world differently, even if it is for a short while. The use of space, lines, art that conveys so many emotions and yet there is something hidden that makes you want to know more and above all the recurring characters that become so familiar – the ache when the book ends and you know what you have experienced is something so profound.

“The Park Bench” makes you mull over? things and people other than yourself (which is a very good thing, given the times we live in). It might also make you want to speak with a stranger, nod at someone in understanding, smile at someone or maybe just be. There have been so many times when I have wanted to reach out to someone and haven't. Maybe now I will.

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## Erica says

Because I enjoyed *Alone* so much last year, I put this on hold as soon as we ordered it for the library because I wanted to see if it would be as intriguing, melancholy yet hopeful, and endearing as the other. It is.

This actually reminded me strongly of *Here*, which I love dearly, with the unfolding of life around one specific area.

*Park Bench* is just that - a story about life surrounding a park bench.

Recurring characters pass or visit the bench and as the years go by, you see their stories unfold in tiny bits and little hints. Some are amusing, some are what you'd expect from an ordinary life, some are sad.

And this is all shown without words. Well, there's graffiti and there are book titles, but you know what I mean. It's all visual narration.

This is only the second Chaboute book I've looked at but it seems he's got a soft spot for full circles and lovely endings. I think I've got a soft spot for his simple but powerful black and white stories.

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### **Maxwell says**

A very sweet story about a park bench and all the people that interact with it over the years. I enjoyed this graphic novel because it was able to express so much without using any words; it's 100% illustrated.

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### **Tracey says**

Wow. Just ... wow.

Say you're a park bench. A nice, traditional, roomy seat – big enough for two, or three, or four if you're friendly, shaded by a tree in a park. Every day dozens of people go by – you see joggers taking a favorite route, or people on their way to work. Some pause to tie a shoe or take a call or catch their breath – and there's that one bloody dog ... And then there are the regulars, who come to enjoy the weather and maybe read or watch people go by – or stretch out on you to sleep, since they have nowhere else to go. Sun and rain and snow and starlight, through the four seasons, until ...

The saying about pictures and thousands of words is a cliché – but it's a cliché for a reason. As someone who has handled pencils, pens, and brushes, I know how tiny the difference is between a line that evokes an emotion or plays its part in a story, and a line that is ... just a line. Christophe Chabouté is French – but that's the other cliché about art, isn't it? It's universal. I didn't have to blow the dust off my high school language course, because without a word a very clear and achingly beautiful story is conveyed – a story with a beginning, a middle, and an end, a climax, a denouement – and an epilogue. Sometimes funny, occasionally heart-rending... the only small weakness I can think of in the book is that one of the threads of the story seemed far too predictable – I had a terrible feeling I knew what would happen. And I was right. And it hurt.

I love this book. In fact, I think I'll go and start it over again.

The usual disclaimer: I received this book via Netgalley for review.

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### **Negin says**

This is the second graphic novel that I have read by this author. If you can call it reading, that is. His books

are far more visual than anything. It wasn't as much of an emotional read as his first one, "Alone", but it's still a beautiful story nonetheless – the sort of book that makes you think and appreciate the world around you. It's a story is about a park bench and the various people who visit it at different times.

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## **Morris says**

With the only words in "Park Bench" being book titles and scribbles on the bench, it is the purest form of a graphic novel. I can't even begin to describe how beautiful this book is. No words could do it justice. I laughed and I cried and I felt despair for the human race and hope for the human race and etc. I can't recommend this enough. It is truly something you will never forget. If only there were 100 star ratings.

This unbiased review is based upon a complimentary copy provided by the publisher.

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## **♥ Sandi ♡ says**

5 stars

This is an author that can create in one picture what others take 300 pages to try to relate. He can tell a whole story in one page. And can do that without words. This mans talent is superb.

His emphasis is low key, his trajectory is off the chart. He is able to take the simplest of thing - such as a park bench - and create story after story of the life of that bench and the community that surrounds it. His graphic art, in black and white, is simplistic, but speaks volumes. His storytelling style qualifies Chaboute as a great graphic novelist.

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## **Diane says**

What a touching artistic work this is. Last year I read (and loved) "Alone" by Chabouté, so when I saw that "The Park Bench" had also been translated into English from French, I ran to the library to fetch it.

As the title suggests, it's the story of one park bench and of the people who use it over the years. Musicians, elderly couples, readers, skateboarders, parents with children, a homeless man, and even a dog. It's almost a wordless book, and I was entranced as I slowly turned through the pages, following the changing seasons. (The focus on one object and place reminded me of another engrossing graphic novel, "Here" by Richard McGuire, which I would also recommend.)

There is a sweet, unexpected ending to "The Park Bench", which gave me such a smile that I had to rate this four stars. Recommended.

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**BookishStitcher says**

Chabou   is brilliant! He does so much with so little.

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