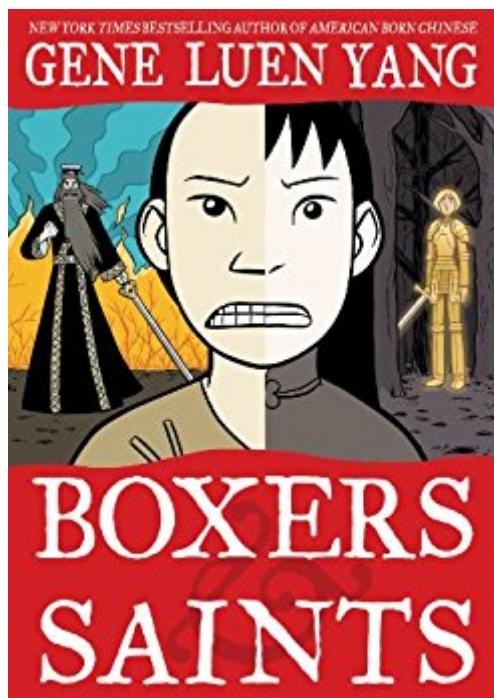


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Boxers & Saints



Synopsis

Boxers & Saints Boxed Set EditionOne of the greatest comics storytellers alive brings all his formidable talents to bear in this astonishing new work. In two volumes, Boxers & Saints tells two parallel stories. The first is of Little Bao, a Chinese peasant boy whose village is abused and plundered by Westerners claiming the role of missionaries. Little Bao, inspired by visions of the Chinese gods, joins a violent uprising against the Western interlopers. Against all odds, their grass-roots rebellion is successful. But in the second volume, Yang lays out the opposite side of the conflict. A girl whose village has no place for her is taken in by Christian missionaries and finds, for the first time, a home with them. As the Boxer Rebellion gains momentum, Vibiana must decide whether to abandon her Christian friends or to commit herself fully to Christianity. Boxers & Saints is one of the most ambitious graphic novels First Second has ever published. It offers a penetrating insight into not only one of the most controversial episodes of modern Chinese history, but into the very core of our human nature. Gene Luen Yang is rightly called a master of the comics form, and this book will cement that reputation. Winner of the Los Angeles Times Book Prize for Young Adult Literature One of Publishers Weekly's Best Comic Books and Best Children's Books of 2013 A New York Times Book Review Notable Children's Book of 2013 A Kirkus Reviews Best Teen Book of 2013 An NPR Best Book of 2013

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Customer Reviews

I finished the second book this morning and I am still an emotional wreck. Yang has officially passed into another plane of storytelling. Those who know his work well are used to Yang's subtle approach to difficult topics like radical forgiveness, cultural identity and cultural shame, and even social Darwinism, eugenics, and child abuse, all with a wry sense of humor and empathy. His work also often reflects the ways in which ordinary people grapple with and through faith in the midst of personal crisis. "Boxers" and "Saints" are no different in one sense, but this story has a fundamental difference: the stakes are so much higher, and the outcome, potentially so much more disastrous. The characters seem trapped by decisions and consequences which, once they start rolling, spin entirely out of their control. What Yang gives us in each book is a separate portrait of two young people from similar circumstances who take dramatically different paths to finding a coherent identity and a sense of justice. Through their interwoven stories, Yang takes each one through a series of extremely difficult questions about the origins of religious and political extremism, how even good people with noble ideas can cause unspeakable damage, the horrors of imperialism, and the ways in which the various Christian mission movements were problematically tied to the imperialists. Yang takes no sides and does not moralize about the events of the Boxer rebellion, just a profound sadness for their plight and his ever-present deep, deep empathy. And that is precisely what makes these novels so devastating. Yang explores in gut-wrenching detail the ways in which each person's unique experiences shape the ways in which they react to political and cultural upheaval. Little Bao, the protagonist of "Boxers," suddenly feels his mostly-idyllic way of life shattered by the arrival of foreign missionaries and British troops. Vibiana, the protagonist of "Saints," is an unwanted child who lacks even a proper name or a place in her grandfather's household, and so the arrival of the "foreign devils" provides something else entirely. Both Bao and Vibiana are given an opportunity for open rebellion, but in different ways, and they each follow those convictions down to their explosive conclusion. For those who love Yang's incorporation of folklore and imagination into a real-life landscape, these books are a feast. He uses a rich backdrop of both Chinese opera and Christian hagiography to create a multi-textured story, just as he did with the tales of the Monkey King in "American Born Chinese." Trust me-- just get both books. These are meant to be read as two different movements of the same work, and you will miss out on so much the counterpoint in each story if you don't. While they can probably be read in either order, definitely

save the "Epilogue" in "Saints" for last. That epilogue, however, is sure to cause what I hope will be some healthy, productive disagreement about the nature of justice and mercy, and I can't wait to see what others have to say about it.

This two-volume graphic narrative set against the historical events of the Boxer uprising in turn-of-the-century China tells the complementary tales of Little Bao, an adolescent Chinese boy who leads the Society of the Righteous and Harmonious Fist in defense of his homeland against British and European imperialists, and Vibiana, an adolescent Chinese girl who converts to Catholicism in an effort to seek a sense of belonging. Their stories intertwine in plausible and compelling ways that force us to examine the reasons why adolescents—“even in the most dire of circumstances”—value community and peer support. Without taking sides, Yang masterfully depicts his protagonists as flawed but sympathetic teens who earnestly attempt to grow, learn, and develop their principles amidst a backdrop of political and religious conflict. Both Little Bao and Vibiana experience mystical encounters with spiritual beings who guide them through their ordeals; the magical realism infuses their stories with metaphysical resonance and calls to mind the ancient Greek epic of the *Iliad*, during which the gods fought alongside mortals. Joan of Arc appears as Vibiana’s spiritual guide, foreshadowing Vibiana’s sad fate. In addition to the rich history covered in these two volumes, Yang addresses issues of gender through his depiction of the Red Lanterns (the distaff counterparts of the Society) and Vibiana herself, a strong-willed tragic heroine who stumbles upon her faith almost accidentally but ultimately comes to value it over all else. I highly recommend these narratives for their engaging depictions of complex adolescent protagonists as well as their value as historical texts that tell a story unfamiliar to most Western teens.

This is a great book to learn about the Boxer Rebellion from two great POVs. Yang does a fantastic job of weaving in Chinese historical mythology with history. I received the books last night, finished *Boxers* and now on *Saints*. *Boxers* show the POV of a young man in Shandong who lead the charge, and *Saints* is about a young woman who falls in with the Catholic groups. Both POVs are incredibly written, but the *Saints* book is incredible--Yang shows how many Chinese people fell in to the religion without truly understanding what it meant. He captures the pain and agony of life as a young woman in China at the time who simply is not of that time and who must turn to alternatives (Catholics) in order to achieve community. Highly recommended!!! The shipping for this product was fast (granted, I do have Prime).

If you take anything away from this review, let it be this: READ "BOXERS" FIRST. Okay, now to the meat. "Boxers" is the story of a young Chinese boy who becomes incensed at how Christians have invaded China and begun to despoil both Chinese culture and the Chinese people. So he learns how to invoke the gods of China to fight back. "Saints", on the other hand, is the story of a young Chinese girl, terribly abused by her family, who finds comfort in Christianity, converts, and -- spurred on by visions of Joan of Arc -- wishes to fight back against the Boxers. The stories are great counterpoints to each other, containing many humanizing touches that make you feel you are reading about real people, not archetypes. The artwork is very clean and readable, and sophisticated in its storytelling, proving against the modern wave of hyper-detailed comic book art that sometimes less is more.

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