

Graphic Classics: Bram Stoker

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Eureka Productions (Oct 27, 2003)

\$9.95 (144pp)

978-0-9712464-7-8

Who has time to read the classics? Everyone, now that Eureka Productions has created the Graphic Classics series. Each title features the classic works of a well-known author adapted into comics and illustrated stories by an assortment of graphic artists. The series leans toward horror and the supernatural, with earlier volumes dedicated to Edgar Allan Poe and H.P. Lovecraft. Volume Seven, with an introduction by award-winning horror writer Mort Castle, highlights the work of Bram Stoker, creator of Dracula and a surprising assortment of equally frightening monsters.

Dracula has remained in print since its original publication in 1897 and is by far Stoker's most well-known work. This story collection does an excellent job of introducing the reader to the full spectrum of horrific creatures invented by Stoker. Two of the pieces are sure to send some readers searching out the original texts for further reading. "Lair of the White Worm," based on the novel of the same title, introduces the beautiful but deadly Lady Arabella who may be possessed by an ancient and evil white worm. "The Bridal of Death," excerpted from The Jewel of the Seven Stars, is the story of the mummy of Ancient Egyptian Queen Tera, who has laid the groundwork for her own reincarnation. Other stories feature a torture chamber and a vengeful cat, young boys who literally get away with murder, and a classic house-haunting ghost.

Three of the pieces are based on Dracula. "Dracula's Voyage" retells the story of the Count's arrival with darkly detailed illustrations in the traditional comic format. "Professor Abraham Van Helsing's Vampire Hunter's Guide" is a whimsically illustrated listing of the strengths and weaknesses of vampires. The best of the three is "The Dracula Gallery," in which twelve artists each contributed a full-page black-and-white illustration illuminating a short quote from the book. In addition to providing an amazing contrast of talented artistic styles, the panels actually convey a basic sense of the plot of the novel.

This collection based on Bram Stoker's writing succeeds on two levels. It provides an overview of his body of work that the average person will not encounter anywhere else, and it introduces its audience to the styles of close to thirty different graphic artists. While a bibliography of Stoker's works is not included, short biographies and contact information or websites are provided so that readers can seek out the artists who appeal to them. This volume, like the others in the Graphic Classics series, will be enjoyed by fans of horror and gothic fiction as well as those looking for an introduction to the graphic novel experience.

CAROLYN BAILEY (March / April 2004)

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