

## The Stretcher Bearers

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A young man rescues wounded soldiers on a World War I battlefield in the graphic novel *The Stretcher Bearers*.

Maxwell has been assigned to a group of stretcher bearers, men who run across active combat zones to retrieve the injured and carry them back to safety for proper medical attention. It's a dangerous job through which sixteen-year-old Maxwell ends up in the middle of the 1918 Battle of the Meuse-Argonne, one of the final Allied offensives of World War I. He endures gunfire, artillery, gas, an enemy plane, and even wolves before the story's emotional and unexpected ending.

Though it's clear and horrific in depicting the carnage of battle, the book also shows how those conditions led to strong friendships, even family-like connections. Graham, a fellow soldier, older man, and a father, takes Maxwell under his wing, modelling duty and compassion.

The art conveys the action with brutal, graphic violence as men die from gunshots and gas. The limited but effective color palette makes the scenes at the front even more intense and surreal than a typical full-color rendering would. And the story's focus on medical personnel means that the book is centered on saving lives, rather than just defeating the enemy; the difficulty of that task, as portrayed here, brings the experiences of war home in a memorable way.

*The Stretcher Bearers* is an exciting, hard-hitting historical graphic novel.

PETER DABBENE (May / June 2022)

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