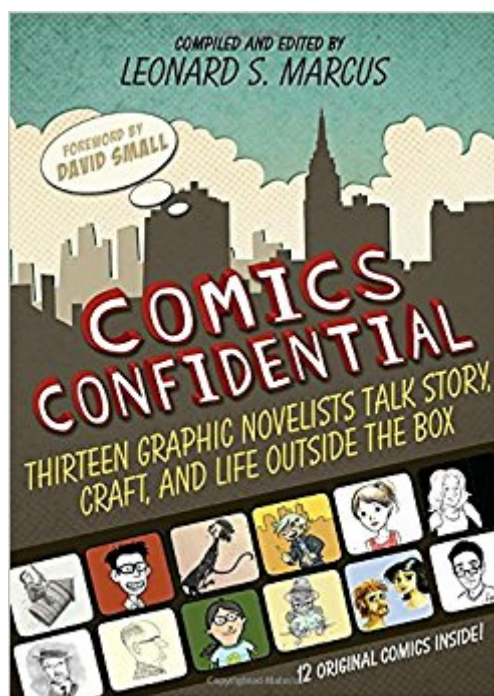


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# Comics Confidential: Thirteen Graphic Novelists Talk Story, Craft, And Life Outside The Box



## Synopsis

A must-have collection for comics fans and creators everywhere, packed with interviews and original comics by today's foremost graphic novelists. Respected anthologist Leonard S. Marcus turns his literary microscope to the world of comics, which has lately morphed and matured at a furious pace. Powerful influences from manga to the movies to underground comix have influenced the thirteen artists and writers interviewed in these pages to create their own word-and-picture narratives. Here are their moving, funny, inspirational stories: true tales from the crucible of creative struggles that led each to become a master of one of today's most vibrant art forms. The book also contains an original graphic short on the common theme of "the city" from each of the artists, a mini-comic set in a cityscape of their choosing—present-day, historical, or imaginary. Featuring interviews with: Harry Bliss, Catia Chien, Geoffrey Hayes, Kazu Kibuishi, Hope Larson, Danica Novgorodoff, Matt Phelan, Dave Roman, Mark and Siena Cherson Siegel, James Sturm, Sara Varon, Gene Luen Yang

## Book Information

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Grade Level: 5 and up

## Customer Reviews

Gr 6 Up—In this volume, Marcus compiles interviews with 13 different graphic novel artists. All of the interviews retain their question-and-answer format and are about 12 to 14 pages long. They cover the interviewees' childhoods, how they got interested in comics, ways comics and graphic novels have changed over the years, and the creative process. Each interview also includes

an original two-page comic, created specifically for this volume, loosely focusing on the theme of "city." Each artist featured is a currently working, well-known creator of material for children (e.g., CÃfÂtia Chien, Kazu Kibuishi, Hope Larson, Dave Roman, and Gene Luen Yang). The work provides an interesting perspective on the evolution and growth of graphic novels, as the artists come from different times and places. While there is not enough information to be useful for reports, this is an engaging volume for the format's fans to learn more about the creators behind popular works and might serve as a good bridge from graphic novels into more prose-based selections. VERDICT A solid choice to supplement a robust graphic novel collection. Hard-core fans will be pleased.ÃÂ -âElizabeth Nicolai, Anchorage Public Library, AK

This is an engaging volume for the formatÃÂ -âs fans to learn more about the creators behind popular works and might serve as a good bridge from graphic novels into more prose-based selections. A solid choice to supplement a robust graphic novel collection. Hard-core fans will be pleased.ÃÂ -âSchool Library Journal (starred review)Most valuable for young readers may be the discussions of the cartoonistsÃÂ -âs work routines, providing the indispensable insight that this is not just an art but a job and emphasizing the level of professional discipline it requires. In addition to the interviews, each cartoonist provides an original short comic, deepening the significance of their words and illustrating how comics occupy a seemingly impossible position, simultaneously intensely personal and resonantly universal.ÃÂ -âBooklistThough this will likely be most valued by kid fans of the assorted artists, this could easily serve as a source for a variety of programming both in the classroom and the library.ÃÂ -âBulletin of the Center for Children's BooksMarcusÃÂ -âs chosen comics creators together represent a nice range of styles, topics, nationalities, backgrounds, and intended audiences...The profiles are concise and informative; taken together as a whole, the book represents a snapshot of the genre as it continues on its upward trajectory (what with Newbery Honors going to graphic novels in consecutive years).ÃÂ -âHorn BookEach substantial, in-depth artist's interview is introduced by an insightful, expertly crafted biography, and accompanied by a short comic created by the artist just for this book...It's hard to imagine anyone--especially an aspiring artist--who wouldn't be fascinated and inspired by the creative paths of this talented group of graphic novelists and the thoughtful, clear-eyed context that Marcus gives their stories.ÃÂ -âShelf Awareness for Readers

Enjoyable interviews, this book is a good gift for a teenager interested in becoming a graphic novelist. Marcus's questions can seem mundane, like, "Do you have a work routine?" The answers,

however, can be very interesting. Matt Phelan, for example, works in a backyard studio. Sara Varon tells us Monday and Wednesdays are her drawing days because of her part-time job. Varon is one of the artists I was not familiar with and I do hope she gets to quit her part-time job. On the other hand, young readers interested in a career in comics need to hear this stuff. I've read a number of online interviews with Gene Luen Yang and read his books. I learned more about him here. James Sturm's interview made me laugh out loud. The Geoffrey Hayes interview was interesting. He revealed that he was devoted to his brother Rory Hayes, also a comics creator, who died of a drug overdose. I've just read Hayes' new kid's comic book, 'Benny and Penny in How to Say Goodbye.' The Benny and Penny story is about death and loss. This interview is quite touching, having read that book. Included in Comics Confidential are specially commissioned original comics. Some of these are quite fine. The watercolor cityscape about dance by Mark and Siena Cherson Siegal is especially lovely. For educational purposes, I was pleased that all the artist's initial sketches were included in the book. Teachers of writing and/or illustration will find this book a most useful tool for introducing new artists and techniques to the classroom.

COMICS CONFIDENTIAL: Thirteen Graphic Novelists Talk Story, Craft, and Life Outside the Box is a series of interviews with 13 comic artists speaking on all manner of subjects from first jobs and artistic techniques to childhood obsessions. Award-winning author, reviewer and essayist Leonard S. Marcus conducts and compiles the interviews. He speaks with artists like Hope Larsen, Sarah Varon, Danica Novgorodoff and Gene Luen Yang, perhaps the biggest name of the bunch.

COMICS CONFIDENTIAL isn't an anthology --- it's more like a documentary in which Marcus discovers what makes each artist tick as well as what brought them to their craft. The informative nature of the work very much suits it for academia. It's more of a chronicling than a story. This is more of a resource than entertainment. The book would sit very well in a library, especially at an art school, or as required reading for a history of comics course. The anthropological approach to comics and comics creators is refreshing and continues to build on the trend of validating comics as a high art form. Marcus asks all of his subjects about their childhoods, how they got into comics, who or what their inspirations were and generally what their family life was like. This loose template helps to highlight and compare the differences and similarities in the origins and early lives of comic artists. It is wonderful to follow their early careers and note how unique everyone's journey into comics can be. The nice thing about COMICS CONFIDENTIAL is that all of the artists Marcus interviews have been making images for a long time, but most of them aren't entirely well-known to the average comic book reader. Names like James Sturm, Geoffrey Hayes, Catia Chien, Mark and

Siena Cherson Siegel, Harry Bliss and Matt Phelan have all been around for a while but, like everyone else in the book, they fall on the often neglected alternative spectrum of comics. The best thing about the book is that each interview is followed by a short comic from that particular artist. A lot of the works tend to be autobiographical and rather introspective. Dave Roman narrates what it was like growing up in Long Island and the wonders of visiting New York City. Gene Luen Yang also illustrates his expectations of big city life and how the reality of college shattered his comic book-fueled illusions. Kazu Kibuishi relives a day spent in a bustling metropolis. All of the artists contribute short two page stories ranging from a bear leaving the city for the country and a woman finding a feral boy in the park to a block party in a small neighborhood. COMICS CONFIDENTIAL is a straightforward exploration of a selection of non-mainstream comic artists. It appeals to comics historians who are interested in documenting the medium. It will appeal to academics who enjoy a collection of artists works and statements and it also appeals to lovers of alternative and more introspective comics. Leonard Marcus's respect for the medium shows through in this book. COMICS CONFIDENTIAL is a love letter to the comics history. Reviewed by Michael Lee Harris

This book is an intriguing look at thirteen comics and has inspired me to consider my own future as a writer. Leonard Marcus interviews these diverse comics and delves into their varied childhoods and work routines. It was fun to learn about each writer's different routine and read about how they started writing comics. I would have to say my favorite part was hearing about each writer's work routine. It made me feel better about not having a strict routine and valuing the space for creative minds to work! The comics drawn for this book are also neat to see because each was drawn specifically for the book and all revolve around the same theme. Each of the thirteen writers has a unique take on the theme. Check out this book to see what they came up with! Anyone would love this book, especially kids who read comics and/or aspire to be writers. Review by Mason H. age 14 Denver Mensa

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