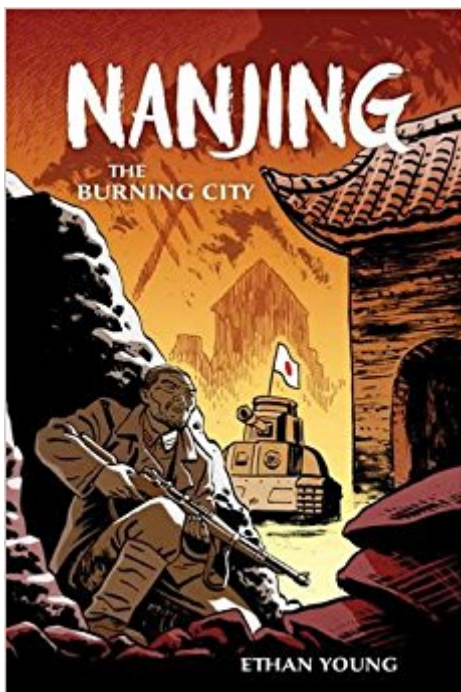


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# Nanjing: The Burning City



## Synopsis

2016 REUBEN AWARD WINNER - BEST GRAPHIC NOVEL! After the bombs fell and shook the walls of Nanjing, the Imperial Japanese Army entered and seized the Chinese capital. Through the dust of the demolished buildings, screams echo off the rubble. Two abandoned Chinese soldiers are trapped and desperately outnumbered inside the walled city. What they'll encounter will haunt them. But in the face of horror, they'll learn that resistance and bravery cannot be destroyed by the enemy.

Ethan Young (Tails) delves into World War II's forgotten tragedy, the devastating Japanese invasion of Nanjing, and tells a heart-wrenching tale of war, loss, and defiance. Beautifully illustrated in black and white.

"In Nanjing, cartoonist Ethan Young tells an intimate story against an epic landscape. Bold, heart-breaking, and gorgeously rendered."

•Eisner and Printz Award-winner Gene Luen Yang (Boxers & Saints, American Born Chinese)"Young's decision not to glorify violence or titillate the reader in any way avoids a common pitfall and heightens the drama. This is stunning, stirring historical fiction by a creator at the height of his craft." (Starred review)

•Publishers Weekly"Young's is just one chapter in an overwhelmingly grievous episode of the 20th century. The specifics might be fictional amidst a historical backdrop, but in creating names, depicting individual faces both living and dead, Young conjures a haunting microcosm amidst a horrifying event of epic proportions."

•Smithsonian APAC Bookdragon"A rugged black and white style ... a little Kubert, a little Tardi."

•The Beat"Nanjing: The Burning City deserves a spot alongside not only historical comics, but wartime prose and non-fiction as well. It's not often that an author can so skillfully evoke powerful emotion while telling a complex and long-forgotten story and this book is an excellent, necessary addition to the genre."

•The A.V. Club"Haunting and powerful, Nanjing is a moving tribute to an event which needs to be remembered, as much as we'd like to forget it."

•Eisner and Harvey Award-winning author Derek Kirk Kim (Same Difference, Tune)"Young's expressive, thoughtful line work takes full advantage of comics' power. Nanjing reads effortlessly while begging the eyes to savor each page. A triumph at the very soul of the medium, a perfect marriage of Toth and Tatsumi."

•Eisner Award-winning writer/artist Nate Powell (March, Swallow Me Whole)

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Acclaimed comics creator Young (*Tails: Life in Progress*) has released his most ambitious project yet: an intimate look at what's known as the Rape of Nanjing: six weeks during the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, in which Japanese troops systematically tortured, sexually assaulted, and executed hundreds of thousands of Chinese soldiers and civilians. Although records of the massacre have largely been destroyed, Young draws on the best information available to tell a fictionalized account of two Chinese soldiers attempting to escape their city. Along the way, they meet several equally desperate refugees, and their destinies become intertwined. Young's black-and-white artwork is heart-wrenchingly beautiful in its depiction of countless tragedies, and his writing remains tight throughout. Most notable among the fascinating cast is Yan, a battle-hardened wife and mother who retains her agency during the infamous violence against women. Young's decision not to glorify violence or titillate the reader in any way avoids a common pitfall and heightens the drama. This is stunning, stirring historical fiction by a creator at the height of his craft. (Sept.) - Publishers Weekly (Starred review) "In Nanjing, cartoonist Ethan Young tells an intimate story against an epic landscape. Bold, heart-breaking, and gorgeously rendered." -Eisner and Printz Award-winner Gene Luen Yang (*Boxers & Saints, American Born Chinese*) "Haunting and powerful, Nanjing is a moving tribute to an event which needs to be remembered as much as we'd like to forget it." -Eisner and Harvey Award-winning creator Derek Kirk Kim (*Prime Baby, Same Difference and Other Stories*)

Ethan Young is a prolific illustrator. His main expertise is sequential art and cartooning. Whether it's comic books or storyboards, Ethan Young brings his own unique sense of style and storytelling to

every panel. Young has contributed comic book art to Dark Horse Comics, Image Comics, DNA Creative, Ardden Entertainment, Hermes Press, and Johnson & Johnson. He has also drawn and designed for advertising, video games, independent films, T-shirt designs, album covers, logos, fantasy & sci-fi illustration and much more. Young is currently the lead storyboard artist for 'The Centsables', a Saturday morning cartoon on Fox Business Channel. The author lives in Ithaca, N.Y..

This book is a beautiful Hard Cover with a sewn binding. It is done in Black, White and Gray tone. It features quality paper and excellent printing. It is slightly smaller page size than an average comic collection, it is about the size of your average Hard Cover novel. Although it is 216 pages it can be read rather quickly. The back of the book features pre-production sketches made by the artist and includes his commentary on them. Ethan Young is the writer and artist and I predict big things from him. He is a very talented man. While residing in Ithaca New York he is of Chinese Ancestry. His art style reminds me of a cross between Milton Caniff and Joe Kubert. The story is a fictionalized story set against the backdrop of a very real event. In 1937 the Japanese bombed the heck out of Nanjing, China and left it in burning ruins. Then the Japanese soldiers came into Nanjing killing the surviving soldiers and civilians alike. They also raped women and very young girls both. This horrible massacre lasted six weeks and 300,000 Chinese are believed to have been killed. This conflict then led directly into World War Two. The story follows two surviving Chinese soldiers as they plot to escape The Burning City which is under Japanese Occupation. It is a powerful and compelling story which I am sure will be on the ballot for every Major Graphic Novel Award come next year. My Highest Recommendation.

I've been familiar with Young's work for several years now. He's been running Tails as a webcomic for about four years, and he's been more recently drawing an independent pamphlet comic called Piggy. Both have been good, enjoyable, fairly light-hearted stories, so his shift in tone with Nanjing is notable. This is very much a war story, and while Young avoids showing any gore, he doesn't shy away from the atrocities of a large conflict. Not only are several characters shot and killed, but the protagonists at one point stumble across a group of Japanese soldiers who're in the midst of raping some Chinese civilians. There is nothing here that even starts to suggest there's any glory in war. Despite not being known for darker works, Young shows off his skills exceptionally well here. He turns in some excellent storytelling here, much more subtle and nuanced than what he did for Tails. The illustrations are somewhat more detailed in Nanjing and Young uses that to great effect, substituting slight facial expressions and changes in posture for dialogue. It shows a much

greater confidence in his own abilities, and returns a more thoughtful and engaging story. Further, Young seems to have stepped up his inking abilities quite a bit as well; there is lots of beautiful linework throughout. The brushwork on some of the scenery in particular was wonderfully executed. One thing I found fascinating about the story overall was how it directly confronts the racism that was at play during that conflict. Here in the United States, we frequently lump all Eastern countries into a single checkbox, but Young's tale shows more than a few Japanese soldiers actively degrading the Chinese as a whole. Interestingly, though, while the Japanese soldiers are clearly the primary antagonists throughout the book, and it makes sense to portray them more negatively, Young doesn't exactly make his Chinese heroes out to be above racial prejudices either. It's not uncommon for a country to paint their enemies with a broad brush of racism. It's a deliberate attempt to dehumanize them, so individual soldiers can justify killing them. If the enemy is something less than human, after all, shooting them isn't much different than killing a cow to make some hamburgers. The enemy is only just a walking meat sack, not a human being with their own hopes, fears and dreams. And while Young shows the Japanese soldiers with less empathy than his protagonists, he also shows that everyone is susceptible to their own biases. Young's story could well have been placed in any war setting. I don't doubt similar events transpired in Iraq, Vietnam, Korea, or any of a hundred other wars. Placing it during the Sino-Japanese War, though, does highlight an almost entirely neglected (in the U.S.) piece of modern history and, while Nanjing is not intended even as a primer on the subject, it's more than engaging enough to encourage readers to find out more.

Ethan Young's *Nanjing: The Burning City* is a fascinating and harrowing snapshot of a part of World War II history that is often overshadowed by the Invasion of Normandy and the Holocaust, but it is just as compelling and heart-breaking. Young makes his way through this tight, suspenseful narrative with the confidence, grace, and skill of a longtime comics master. Definitely a creator to watch. The graphic novel includes some intense depiction of war but not sensationally so. It's expertly handled in stark black and white. There is some brief, and uncomfortable, nudity to show some of the harsh and eye-opening realities of war and this historical event. The book includes a bibliography; I could see this being used for educational purposes for older students.

Ethan Young's *NANJING* is a gorgeous and poignant book that is a must read for all fans of the graphic novel genre. Young's art style paired with his well paced storytelling create both a haunting and engaging tale of survival. I couldn't put this novel down and have already re-read it several

times. I am extremely anxious to see what Ethan Young's future endeavors will be and I very much look forward to reading them.

It's not very often that I open a comic book and read it cover to cover in one sitting. Even rarer is a comic book that brings tears to my eyes. Nanjing: The Burning City was both of those things to me. Young masterfully tells a story set in one of the darkest periods of Chinese/Japanese history and never loses sight of the humanity in all of it. This was easily the most powerful work I read in 2015.

just wish it was longer!

3.5 stars Two Chinese soldiers are trapped in Nanjing after the quick and brutal Japanese victory. They talk of both their immediate future and the deeper meaning of life as the city burns around them. The horrors of slaughtered children, raped women, wanton destruction and unfeeling invaders are captured well. The Captain is a strong character that is well rounded: he is a realist about war. My rating is based on the following: 1) Many comics have been written about the brutality and senselessness of war. This doesn't add anything new to the genre. 2) Mr. Young's bibliography has excellent source material - "The Rape of Nanking" from 1997 is the essential work on this event. Unfortunately, Mr. Young's story is a fictionalized account. While it captures the spirit of the event, my belief is that a fictionalized account diminishes the story.

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