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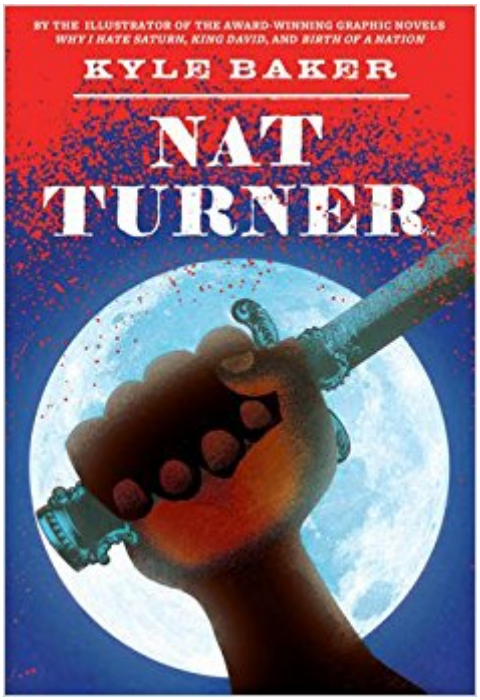

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Synopsis

The story of Nat Turner and his slave rebellionÃ¢â ¬â •which began on August 21, 1831, in Southampton County, VirginiaÃ¢â ¬â •is known among school children and adults. To some he is a hero, a symbol of Black resistance and a precursor to the civil rights movement; to others he is monsterÃ¢â ¬â •a murderer whose name is never uttered. In Nat Turner, acclaimed author and illustrator Kyle Baker depicts the evils of slavery in this moving and historically accurate story of Nat TurnerÃ¢â ¬â„¢s slave rebellion. Told nearly wordlessly, every image resonates with the reader as the brutal story unfolds. Find teaching guides for Nat Turner and other titles at abramsbooks.com/resources. This graphic novel collects all four issues of Kyle BakerÃ¢â ¬â„¢s critically acclaimed miniseries together for the first time in hardcover and paperback. The book also includes a new afterword by Baker. Ã¢â ¬Å“A hauntingly beautiful historical spotlight. A-Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Entertainment Weekly Ã¢â ¬Å“BakerÃ¢â ¬â„¢s storytelling is magnificent.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Variety Ã¢â ¬Å“Intricately expressive faces and trenchant dramatic pacing evoke the diabolic slave tradeÃ¢â ¬â„¢s real horrors.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •The Washington Post Ã¢â ¬Å“BakerÃ¢â ¬â„¢s drawings are worthy of a criticÃ¢â ¬â„¢s attention.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Los Angeles Times Ã¢â ¬Å“BakerÃ¢â ¬â„¢s suspenseful and violent work documents the slave tradeÃ¢â ¬â„¢s atrocities as no textbook can, with an emotional power approaching that of Maus.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Library Journal, starred review

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Customer Reviews

Grade 10 UpÃ¢â ¬â •Originally self-published in four installments, Nat Turner follows the dark legacy of the Virginia slave rebellion and subsequent murders of at least 55 white slave owners and their families in 1831. Baker presents a cinematic reel that integrates beautiful sepia-toned panels, newspaper headlines in period font, photographs, and historical texts; most heavily drawn from is the recorded Confessions of Nat Turner. The book begins with the brutal capture, mistreatment, and direct and indirect murder of native Africans by white fortune seekers, with disturbing detail such as the sharks following slave ships for the plentiful corpses thrown overboard. These images, as described by a young Turner to his astonished first-generation relatives, were apparently some of the first in a number of "visions" that the staunchly religious man experienced throughout his short life. Turner is presented as a fiercely intelligent, angry, yet steadfast individual whose potential was dashed in an era of hate and inhumanity. Those characteristics are mirrored in the actions of the slaves' rebellion, in illustrations that are not for the faint of heart or the weak of stomach. The ideas brought forth here are sure to ignite debate and discussion, and this book would be a most interesting companion to other studies of antebellum history such as Edward P. Jones's The Known World (HarperCollins, 2003).Ã¢â ¬â •Shannon Peterson, Kitsap Regional Library, WA Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Kyle Baker has authored more than 15 graphic novels and illustrated hundreds more in a career that extends over three decades. He is the winner of eight Eisner Awards and four Harvey Awards, among others. A pioneer in the graphic novel format since the 1980s, Baker helped define and evolve the medium with works such as Nat Turner, Why I Hate Saturn, and King David. Other titles include The Cowboy Wally Show; Truth: Red, White & Black; and Birth of a Nation. Baker has lectured at Dartmouth, Howard University, the Library of Congress, and the School of Visual Arts, and he regularly teaches homeless teens for the City of New York. Ã Â

This is Kyle BakerÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s amazing graphic novel biography of Nat Turner, the leader of the bloodiest slave rebellion in the United States. Turner was a slave living in Virginia. HeÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢d taught himself to read, because it was illegal to teach slaves to read ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â • slaveowners didnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t want educated slaves because they were more likely to rebel. TurnerÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s interest in reading was mainly so he could study the Bible, and his knowledge and high moral character had many fellow slaves referring to him as a prophet ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â • he also had periodic visions which he believed came to him from God.One of his visions, combined with a few convenient solar eclipses, eventually convinced him

that God wanted him to lead a battle against the forces of evil. And in the American South of the 1830s, evil was definitely well-represented among white slaveowners.When Turner and his accomplices began their rebellion, they initially stuck with quiet weapons ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â • knives, axes, farming implements ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â • rather than guns, and they didnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t just kill slaveowners ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â • they killed women and children, too. They spared poor whites who they felt were as downtrodden as slaves, but they still ended up killing 60 people and amassing a force of 70 slaves and free blacks. Turner himself is believed to have killed only one person ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â • he was extremely smart, but he was a lousy fighter.The rebellion was put down after two days, but Turner was able to hide out for several months. When he was finally captured, he was tried and sentenced to be hanged. He was also beheaded, and his body was buried in an unmarked grave.Kyle BakerÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s book takes most of its text from Thomas Ruffin GrayÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s book, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“The Confessions of Nat Turner,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• which included extensive interviews with Turner during his trial and before his execution. His art illustrates passages from the book, or interprets common episodes in the lives of slaves. There is very little dialogue or word balloons, and the art is entirely black, white, and sepia-toned brown.TurnerÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s story is an amazing one. HeÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s not a pure hero or villain ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â • yes, he fought against terrific injustice, but he committed widespread murders. Baker depicts Turner warts and all ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â • but I think itÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s clear he sympathizes with him and his cause.ItÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s a stark and brutal story, frequently very violent. Turner and his rebels massacre families, ambush people in their homes, behead children ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â • their actions shock us, and I think, rightfully so. But itÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s still very hard not to sympathize ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â • TurnerÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s actions arenÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t sugarcoated, but itÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s also made very clear that heÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s living in a terribly unjust world, where slaves were subjected to horrible punishments for crimes like reading and playing drums. Slaveowners were said to be terrified of slave rebellions ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â • and a lot of that terror may have been because they knew they deserved whatever the slaves would do to them.If you only know BakerÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s work from his wonderful ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Plastic ManÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• series from a few years ago, this story will probably knock you out of your socks. His cartoonish style on DCÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s comedic series is nowhere to be seen here. The art is, at turns, rough-hewn and furious, and then lushly rendered and gloriously lit, sometimes crudely emotional, sometimes shockingly beautiful, and sometimes both at once.ItÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s a fantastic story about an unsung American freedom fighter, beautifully illustrated by one of our great graphic storytellers. You should pick it up.

Nat Turner was a African American slave in Southampton County Virginia who was born in 1800. He led a slave rebellion in August 1831 and was executed that November. When he was in jail awaiting execution, a white lawyer named Thomas R. Gray visited him and wrote down Turner's own story which was published in 1831 as The Confessions of Nat Turner. This is not to be confused with the 1967 novel of the same title by the white Virginia author William Styron. However both Styron's novel and the graphic novel Nat Turner by Kyle Baker are derived from Gray's original Confessions.The illustrations for Baker's Nat Turner wordlessly illustrate the original 1831 Confessions which appears as text set in the graphic novel. The words of the original Confessions and Baker's graphic narrative enhance each other, creating a most powerful document for understanding Turner's life and motivation. Originally self published as a four part series, Nat Turner sold out two printings and won several prizes in 2006, including an Eisner Award for best reality-based work. Since 2008 it has been published as a single volume through a commercial press.Part One is called "Home" and tells the story prior to that covered in Gray's Confessions of Nat Turner of Nat's mother being captured in Africa by slavers, transported to the coast, and put onto a slave ship to America where she is sold as a slave. Part Two is called "Education" and tells the remarkable story of Nat, a gifted child with mysterious powers, who can read, who is deeply spiritual, and starts to receive visions and messages. At the same time, he is witness to the brutality of human slavery all around him and as it effects him and his parents, wife and children. After his wife and children are sold away from him, his visions take a dark turn where he sees white spirits and black spirits engaged in battle and blood flowing in streams. He is told to be prepared to receive a sign to begin his fight against the Serpent. The first sign of a solar eclipse marks the beginning of Part Three - Freedom in which Nat starts to tell a select group of close associates of his visions and they make plans for the rebellion. The Great Barbados hurricane of August 1831, which turned the Sun blue as far north as Virginia was to Nat Turner, the sign he had been waiting for to begin the slaughter. He and his four allies went into houses in the dark of night, killing all the whites, taking their weapons and horses, and recruiting followers from their slaves. Before they were eventually stopped, there were about 60 armed freed slaves following him and over 55 dead whites in their trail. Part Four - Triumph details Turner's last days.I had read Gray's book The Confessions of Nat Turner prior to reading Baker's graphic novel, and I find the combination of the hauntingly expressive images with the simple straightforward text an exceedingly effective manner to present Nat Turner's life and activities to a modern audience. The story is compelling to me because I live just two hours from the site of the rebellion, and slave conditions would have been the same here as

they were for Nat Turner in Virginia. Baker has made the story one that I will never forget. At the end of the book is a Bibliography of further readings and a Teacher's Guide that would make this a powerful classroom instructional tool.

I'm a history teacher, and I purchased this because I was debating using it in my classroom. I've always been skeptical about using graphic novels in the classroom, but after trying out (and having huge success) using Maus by Art Spiegelman in the classroom, I decided to try using them more often. This one worked excellently as well. There is very little in the majority of history books about Nat Turner, so this was an enlightening read for both myself and my students. I issue all of this praise with a WARNING though: It is very graphic. While the novel is entirely in black and white, some of the images are very graphic and students could find them anywhere from slightly disturbing to highly disturbing depending on the student. I would make sure the students are mature enough for this before assigning it.

I was impressed with the artwork in Nat Turner the graphic novel. I could see this novel being used in either middle school or the early high school years. The novel explained slavery quite well with the pictures. I did not think that a graphic novel could explain Nat Turner story appropriately but I was wrong. I highly recommend this graphic novel.

My only complaint was how graphic some of the violence is portrayed....almost to the point if glorifying it. Will be cautious if I use it in the classroom.

Excellent work.

Great Read

Masterful strokes and shading produced a remarkable visual account of the circumstance of this historic figure. It has the feel of both a documentary and movie combined. Very little to read yet it wasn't a barrier in communication in the slightest. An instant classic and collectors item.

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