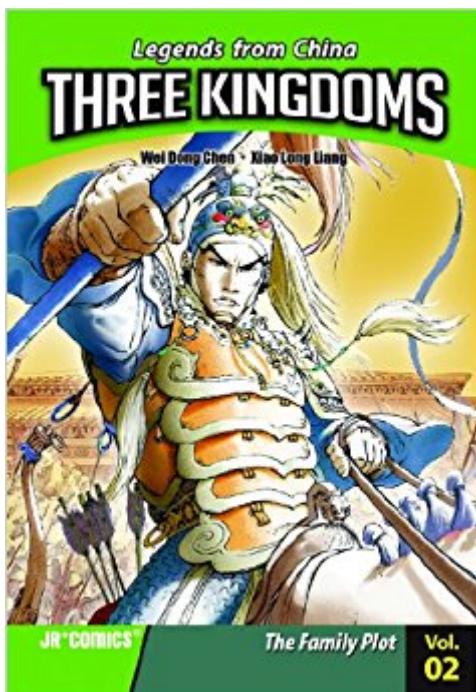


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Three Kingdoms Volume 02: The Family Plot (Legends From China: Three Kingdoms)



Synopsis

The coalition has fallen apart. The treacherous Zhuo Dong remains in power. The 18 men who united to save China are now at war with themselves. Now, in order for the fight to continue, a battle will be waged that doesn't involve soldiers, horses, or spears; it involves a desperate man who will go to desperate lengths to rid the world of a tyrannical leader.

Book Information

Series: Legends from China: Three Kingdoms (Book 2)

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Customer Reviews

Gr 8 Up—"Three Kingdoms" is a 20-part graphic-novel adaptation of the Chinese legend The Romance of the Three Kingdoms. Full of swordplay and Shakespearean double-crosses and deaths, each book chronicles the power struggle following the demise of the Han Dynasty at the end of the second century A.D. As is typical in legends and epics, the characters are flat. They all share the same motivation-tip the power balance in their favor. The cast of characters quickly accumulates, requiring some focus to keep things straight. Chapters helpfully open with a summary, including maps showing military locations and movements. Caption boxes identify characters and summarize at the end of each chapter. The finely detailed artwork packs a lot into each panel. Dramatic shifts in perspective can be difficult to follow. Panels sometimes take studying to understand. These installments provide an access point to one of the most famous works of Chinese literature, but lack the accessibility needed to generate wide appeal.-Travis Jonker, Wayland Union Schools, MI (c) Copyright 2013. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

Reason for Reading: Next in the series. While I thought the first volume most suited to this age group due to intellectual maturity, this second volume does become more graphic in all senses: violence, and sexuality both implied and visual. The first book was almost a whirlwind as we got introduced to the myriad characters and intricate plot, this book does continue in that vein but also settles down into various story arcs. Several dealing with the battles and politics but a major one in which the volume is named after "The Family Plot" where a plot to bring down a ruthless tyrant is put into action. The first female character is introduced via this plot and several other characters are explored more fully. I enjoyed this volume even more than the first one, but still do contend that it is not an easy read. I read the book in one sitting and recommend that as the best way to read it. Putting the book down halfway through and picking up again could prove disorienting as there really is a huge cast present here. It is hard to keep track of everyone but as the story progresses the characters are becoming more familiar. I could see myself re-reading this series after I'd been through it once. I didn't mention in my first review but this is based on a Chinese epic written 600 years ago called "The Romance of the Three Kingdoms".

The Legends From China series comic and text version of the Romance of the Three Kingdoms, one of the four great classics of Chinese literature, is a masterpiece of (relatively) simple storytelling, with great visuals. The only confusing point at times is the similarity in appearance of the many, many burly and bearded ancient warriors we are following, mainly because there are so many of them and most of them are quite invincible. But after a while the maze of characters starts to become clearer, and it's easy to become immersed in this amazing tale. Each book of about 170 pages is broken up into three or four individual tales, or adventures, mostly following our three heroes - Liu Bei, Guan Yu and Zhang Fei - as they go about their sworn mission, but also breaking away from time to time to tell someone else's tale (usually someone that's doomed to failure or death). Each section begins with an overview of what's to come (i.e. forecasting and spoilers), a map of the vicinity of China that is covered, as well as the odd box tale or illustration of a hero or two. Curiously, the text follows a western convention of family name last, inverting names like Liu Bei as "Bei Liu" (Liu is the family name), seemingly pretending that English convention is to do the same with all Chinese names, like Zedong Mao (Mao is the family name), or Kai Shek Chiang (Chiang is the family name, etc). Oh well... The second part starts off with another list of characters, focussing on the aftermath of the collapse of the coalition of 18 states opposing Dong Yuan and the late Han empire. The tale starts with rural battles between bitter rivals, the emergence of Zhao Yun

as a mighty warrior, and the downfall of Sun Jian in a bloody ambush. Yuck! It's interesting that our heroes - the brothers three of Liu Bei, Guan Yu and Zhang Fei - are hardly seen in this book, other than to comment on events elsewhere while playing a chess game. Not Zhang Fei's style, to be sure. The tale of "The Family Plot", which dominates this book by running just over 100 pages, shows how a man sacrificed the "honour" of his daughter in order to restore justice through the downfall of two monstrous warriors. It's a fascinating tale that is too good to NOT be true! This instalment of the tale is much gorier and sexier than the first tale, also showing the suffering peasants of China toiling under the tyranny of Dong Zhuo, who is portrayed as a bloated lech. It's pretty creepy at times too... The book ends with an essay on the nature of literary tragedy, comparing the final rivalry between Dong Yuan and Lu Bu over the love of Chan Diao with the tale of Othello. It's a decent essay on the perils of emotion and bloody rivalry.

Disclaimer: I received an ARC via Netgalley. One always worries about the second installment of anything. True, there is the Empire Strikes Back., but in many cases there is always a subtle, if not huge, let down. The second installment somehow seems weaker; it isn't bad, but just not as good as the first. So it is with great pleasure, I can say that is NOT true of this second installment of the Legend of Three Kingdoms. The only thing wrong with this graphic novel presentation of the famed story is that you want more at the end. You go, "What? No! Can't be over yet!". This, undoubtably, is a good thing for the creative and production team behind the series. It is made easier on the reader that the ending is not a cliffhanger. You just don't want the story to end. This is better than Volume 1. It should be noted that there is violence and sex in this book. While neither is graphic, there is no nudity or copious amounts of blood, neither is coded. There are strategically placed towels and sheets, though. The focus of this superb installment is the plot to bring down Yhao Dung. This plot is set in place by Councilor Weng and makes use of his daughter Diao Chan, who transcends the stereotype of the sex using woman. What Diao Chan desires is far from money and fame, and has more to do with honor and survival. She is a Chinese Judith. The conversation between father and daughter, where he asks her to do the unthinkable, is beautifully drawn and written. Diao Chan is anything but a passive character and shines as a heroine who does not use a sword, but is no less heroic because of that. The love triangle between Diao Chan Yhao Dung, and Bu Yu is starkly played out among the jockeying for power that occurs in the kingdoms. The story is told and illustrated with such pathos that it resembles a movie. The closing panels of the volume focus on this love triangle and leave the reader grasping. The first half of the volume focuses more on battle and introducing new characters that will play larger roles later in the story. The theme that haunts

the love triangle, filial and family loyalty and ties, is also present and does an excellent job of connecting the two stories. Everything that made the first volume so good is still present - the beautiful art work, character listing, historical notes and explanation (I loved the bit about the chain scheme), as well as little extra pages depicting artwork or knowledge. These pages are placed better than they were in the ARC of the first volume. In many ways, however, this volume would undoubtably work better in an school setting than the first. The introduction of Diao Chan will not leave female students with a focus, a female character who has strength of character and who can do what men can not. The love triangle can be used in several different ways, besides the historical context. While the book itself makes a connection to Shakespeare's Othello, a teacher can also use Shakespeare's Much Ado about Nothing, making Shakespeare easier or more accessible for students who couldn't care less. If the first volume has the extras that allows the reader to tie the story to modern situations, the second volume allows the reader to connect great works of literature. Additionally, the love triangle can be used to discuss questions of morality and loyalty. Furthermore, the volume (and this is true of the first as well) can be used to get students who love movies such as Hero or Crouching Tiger interested in literature as well as history. As a final word, I cannot recommend this series highly enough. It is wonderful to see this work come out in America and the publisher should be applauded for doing so.

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