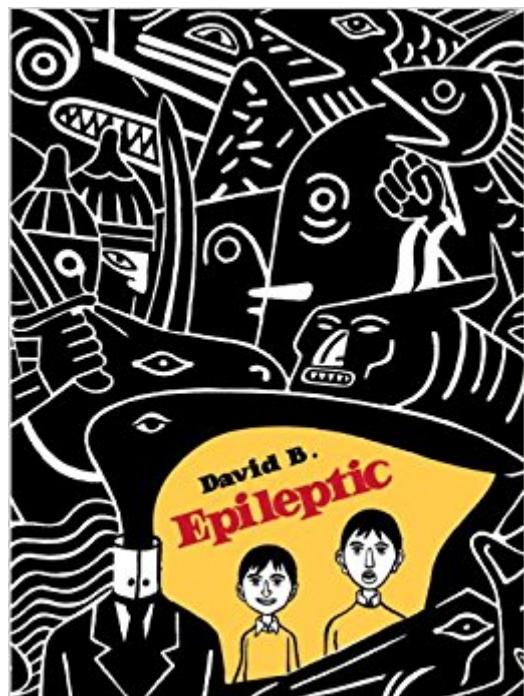


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# Epileptic (Pantheon Graphic Novels)



## Synopsis

Hailed by The Comics Journal as one of Europe's most important and innovative comics artists, David B. has created a masterpiece in *Epileptic*, his stunning and emotionally resonant autobiography about growing up with an epileptic brother. *Epileptic* gathers together and makes available in English for the first time all six volumes of the internationally acclaimed graphic work. David B. was born Pierre-François Beauchard in a small town near Orléans, France. He spent an idyllic early childhood playing with the neighborhood kids and, along with his older brother, Jean-Christophe, ganging up on his little sister, Florence. But their lives changed abruptly when Jean-Christophe was struck with epilepsy at age eleven. In search of a cure, their parents dragged the family to acupuncturists and magnetic therapists, to mediums and macrobiotic communes. But every new cure ended in disappointment as Jean-Christophe, after brief periods of remission, would only get worse. Angry at his brother for abandoning him and at all the quacks who offered them false hope, Pierre-François learned to cope by drawing fantastically elaborate battle scenes, creating images that provide a fascinating window into his interior life. An honest and horrifying portrait of the disease and of the pain and fear it sowed in the family, *Epileptic* is also a moving depiction of one family's intricate history. Through flashbacks, we are introduced to the stories of Pierre-François's grandparents and we relive his grandfather's experiences in both World Wars. We follow Pierre-François through his childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, all the while charting his complicated relationship with his brother and Jean-Christophe's losing battle with epilepsy. Illustrated with beautiful and striking black-and-white images, *Epileptic* is as astonishing, intimate, and heartbreakingly moving as the best literary memoir. From the Hardcover edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

David B. is one of the founders of the French experimental comics collective L'Association, and this hallucinatory work (the first of two volumes) is a sort of refracted story of his childhood when he was known as Pierre-François. On a literal level, it's a fascinating memoir of how his brother's epilepsy became the driving force of his family's life in the 1960s and '70s. Desperate to find a cure for his brother's condition, his parents turn to ascetic macrobiotic cults, deeply esoteric spiritualists and more in search of something that might help him. They encounter all manner of cruelty and quackery but occasionally find something that helps. B.'s own fascination with history and war seems to protect him from the despair that perpetually surrounds the family. His visual retelling of their suffering is a masterpiece of surrealistic cartooning and fantastic imagery. Readers see B. as a child; as his mind blurs the distinction between reality, metaphor and fiction, so does his art. He draws a macrobiotic healer as a cartoon tiger, and fills the book with iconic metaphors for disease (epilepsy is like a demon from a cave drawing). His has a fascination with Swedenborgian mysticism and Samurai warriors, who are vehicles for gorgeously stylized b&w illustrations of warfare and bloodletting. The narrative thread peels aside for digressions to depict young Pierre-François' dreams or to carefully denote the family's endless efforts to find relief for their son and ultimately for themselves. Almost every panel is a graphic balancing act between representation and psychological distortion. This is truly a remarkable and powerful piece of comics narration. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Adult/High School-This autobiographical work plumbs the psychological, social, and symbolic reaches of the author's experiences in a family that must deal with a devastating disease. Growing up in the 1960s and 1970s in France's Loire Valley, Jean-Christophe developed grand mal epilepsy around the age of 11. Pierre-François, nine, observes his brother's battle with the physical and social implications of the disease; their parents' efforts to find management of it through medical, macrobiotic, and even psychic interventions; and the author's own development in this milieu as a boy obsessed with history and warfare and as a dedicated artist. This is a full-strength novel with

well-developed characters, subplots concerning both World Wars, and riffs on the popular culture of the period in which hip Westerners looked to the East for solutions to health and spiritual maladies. David B.'s black-and-white panels spin with Jungian figures of serpents and offer snapshots of commune kitchens, woodlots haunted by his recently deceased grandfather, and street alleys where neighborhood children fantasize the distant past and uncharted future. This volume comprises half of the eight titles originally published in French, and readers will eagerly await its companion. Teens who have read Don Trembath's *Lefty Carmichael Has a Fit* (Orca, 2000) or Lauren Slater's *Lying: A Metaphorical Memoir* (Random, 2000) may find this book to be the one that encourages them to become aficionados of sophisticated, graphic-novel literature. Francisca Goldsmith, Berkeley Public Library, CA  
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Very unorthodox story and art of David B., maybe also in US eventually becoming a household name.

the only prior experience i brought to this reading of a graphic novel was 'jimmy corrigan: the smartest boy in the world,' which is why recommended it to me. ultimately, i think that the genre is all that connects them. this book is much more intimate, personal, passionate, and chilling. all things 'smartest' wanted to be but only got 4/5's of the way there. i myself am an epileptic and there are fewer diseases that this book relates to than just ones that are 'out of control.' the effects of epilepsy are far more psychological than physical. where a cancer victim is at the mercy of the disease and body, the epileptic, like many schizophrenics is affronted by dark and sinister shadows, lurking demons. however, it's one thing for an epileptic to be able to voice this. i find it amazing that David B., the brother and author, found so many ways of accurately depicting the demons' influence and sympathetically already fighting in his own way to overcome them with the tools of a child. both graphically and through the course of the story you learn of the ways the family and David B. adapt to confront the shadow, though the epilepsy ultimately remains intractable. another thing about this book that opened my eyes, is that for the epileptic, the story is told in first, second, and third person. for the family member, where it may always seems superficially to be a disease to which the family remains a third party, one may realize the struggles endured that were ignored. if i were to ask my mother how it felt for her to go through many of the struggles faced in this book, she might not think much of them. but upon reading and seeing the struggles afresh, she might realize that she had much more at stake than anyone, even herself, gave her credit. this book is so moving and deep

because of David B.s ability to so comprehensively annotate each of five family members struggle. the autobiographical aspect takes a backseat to the chronicling of a dark disease that is never cured, much like alcoholism, but only ever treated and hoped against. the ending is particularly potent on this point: it is a tenuous grasp that is held to consciousness, and a varying relationship any of us have to reality, but when we hold together we arent scattered below. .mfg

A bit hard to read. Lettering is too small and pictures are too packed in.

I'm not usually a reader of graphic novels, but this book does a great job using illustrations to help tell the story. This book is a heartbreakin story about a young boy with schizophrenia and his family's unrelenting pursuit to find treatment. This book gives great insight to the social aspect of disease, how it can affect not only the person with it, but also their friends and family.

None of the individuals portrayed in this story emerge intact, including the author David B. I was left with the impression that either David B. is so fully aware of this that he purposely (and perhaps brilliantly) avoided communicating how messed up everyone in his family is, or that they are so messed up that he has no idea how messed up they are. Clearly he is angry at his family for spending his entire childhood revolving around his brother and his illness, but that's perfectly normal for someone who has grown up with a seriously ill family member. But David B's self awareness seems to end there. The damage is more extreme and disturbing because his family's approach to illness and guilt is more extreme and disturbing. This book is not "light reading" in any sense - There were times when I was only able to take in a page or two in a sitting. The art is so rich and complex and the story is so complicated, I needed to take breaks or I wouldn't know what I was reading anymore. The book is brilliant, beautifully translated from French, and like nothing I've ever read.

Excellent graphic novel. The visual style looks almost like a relief or cave painting. Unlike superhero comics it doesn't make excessive use of perspective, and instead flattens everything into a very 2D feel. The story is moving and very frank about how siblings can mistreat each other, even (or especially) in the face of illness.

A wonderfully rich tapestry memoir story filled with Magical Realism, family feud, and wonder. The characters are interesting, and the scenes are gorgeous. Only, one thing prevents this work from reaching legendary status. The author simply doesn't give you time to breathe. David B. serves up

such wonderful imagery. Course after course of incredible moments, and intriguing anecdotes. But it feels like more of an onslaught than a feast. Beautiful? Sure. Would I read it again? Doubtful.

Not as interesting as I expected.

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