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**300**



## Synopsis

The armies of Persia—•a vast horde greater than any the world has ever known—•are poised to crush Greece, an island of reason and freedom in a sea of madness and tyranny. Standing between Greece and this tidal wave of destruction are a tiny detachment of but three hundred warriors. Frank Miller's epic retelling of history's supreme moment of battlefield valor is finally collected in its intended format—•each two-page spread from the original comics is presented as a single undivided page.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

An emperor amasses an army of hundreds of thousands, drawn from two continents, to invade a third continent and conquer a tiny, divided nation. Only a few hundred warriors stand against them. Yet the tiny nation is saved. It sounds like the plot of a preposterous fantasy novel. It is historical fact. In 481-480 B.C., King Xerxes of Persia raised forces in Asia and Africa and invaded Greece with an army so huge that it "drank rivers dry." Then they entered the mountain pass of Thermopylae and encountered 300 determined soldiers from Sparta.... Writer-artist Frank Miller and colorist Lynn Varley retell the battle of Thermopylae in the exciting and moving graphic novel 300. They focus on King Leonidas, the young foot soldier Stelios, and the storyteller Dilios to highlight the Spartans' awe-inspiring toughness and valor. Miller and Varley's art is terrific, as always; the combat scenes are especially powerful. And Miller's writing is his best in years. Read it. Do not, however,

read 300 expecting a strictly accurate history. The Phocians did not "scatter," as Miller describes. His Spartans are mildly homophobic, which is goofy in such a gay society. Miller doesn't say how many Greeks remained for the climactic battle--you'd think 300 Spartans and maybe a dozen others, when there were between 700 and 1,100 Greeks. Herodotus's Histories does not identify the traitor Ephialtes as ugly and hunchbacked, or even as Spartan. 300 establishes a believable connection between Ephialtes's affliction and behavior, but his monstrous appearance, King Xerxes's effeminacy, and the Persians' inexplicable pierced-GenX-African looks make for an eyebrow-raising choice of villain imagery. Nonetheless, 300 is a brilliant dramatization. For the full story of the failed invasion, read Herodotus's Histories or, for a concise, graphic-novel retelling, Larry Gonick's great Cartoon History of the Universe: Volumes 1-7, From the Big Bang to Alexander the Great. For a lighthearted look at post-invasion Athens and a very young Alexander the Great, check out William Messner-Loebs and Sam Kieth's witty and gorgeous graphic novels, Epicurus the Sage Vol. I and Vol. II. --Cynthia Ward

The Battle of Thermopylae ranks as one of the ancient world's most important events, where Spartan King Leonidas and his 300-man bodyguard met the massive army of Emperor Xerxes of Persia, who intended to add Greece to his empire. To no one's surprise, the Spartans were destroyed. While the battle bought the Greeks enough time to defeat the mighty Persians, it was more important for the metaphor it created: occasionally one has to lose to win. This is clearly the inspiration behind Miller's attempt to place this epic tale in the context of a graphic novel. A renowned comics artist and writer known for hard-boiled stories of almost operatic intensity and stylishly overwrought violence, Miller (Sin City) injects his own brand of graphic sensationalism into this ancient tale of national survival. Miller clearly isn't as interested in being a historian as he is in telling a story, but his portrayal of the ancient world is compelling. His drawings of the bearded Leonidas are pensive and starkly imperial. The Persian King Xerxes is represented as majestically African, his body covered in a gaudy and bejeweled network of meticulously rendered chains and bracelets. Form and content are ideally wedded: Miller's writing is stark, his drawings moody and dramatic, and intensified by Varley's grimly appropriate palette of earth and blood. The reader can see and feel the harshness of both the Grecian landscape and Sparta's battle-worshipping culture, as Miller presents the complex historical moment facing the 300. (May) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This is not based on the book "The Gates of Fire" by Stephen Pressfield. This book has its own take

on Thermopylae. And what a take! The storytelling is wonderful. The images are wonderful. So many black heroes are depicted. That is great for my kids, great for anyone. Why wouldn't the southern Peloponnese have blacks? Look where it is. This is an awesome book. The in-your-face patriotism gets a thumbs-up from my family of boys. The unabashed manly vigor and honor is a refreshing change from all the limp and wispy "safe spaces" the precious lambs are demanding. This is a book for making men. Some images of nudity... nothing indecent. Nothing more than pgs-rated. We don't often see naked men or men in g-strings. Interesting decision. A few topless women. I'm a mom. I looked and couldn't see nipples. This book is fine for your family.

This is the best thing the Mercurial Frank Miller has ever done. Yes, I put it above Batman: Year One, Ronin, The Dark Knight Strikes back (and it's tepid sequel, which appears to have been done in a weekend), and when I read and re-read this, it takes the sordid taste of The Spirit, one of the worst films ever, out of my mouth. A grand re-telling of the stand of the 300 Spartans, this is beautiful, cinematic and a wonderful, very fast read with not a wasted scene or word in it. An excellent tale. One of the best graphic novels ever.

I've read over 100 different kinds of great Japanese manga (graphic novel) in my life. Frank Miller's 300 just told them to, "SIT DOWN".

As a collection of the original comics, 300 is much better read in one sitting than reading the individual comics on a monthly schedule (which is what I did eight years ago). This book first achieved phenomenal success after its release as a single graphic novel (or hardcover trade, or whatever, I'm not going to argue terminology here) simply because after one issue you become so restless you just have to read the next one. That's why I enjoyed it much more in its current format; collecting the issues was a chore because Miller makes it so compulsively readable and the interim between issues killed me. The art is breathtaking, the writing appropriate, and the coloring by Liz Varley is brilliantly done. A lot of criticism has been directed toward this hardcover, chief among these being the fact that it is not historically accurate and that it is an exercise in racism while simultaneously objectifying women. Since I loved this comic, I respectfully disagree with all these arguments. Just look at the characterization of the Spartan Queen, done in only a handful of panels, which show that Miller did devote time and thought to what kind of people Spartan women were to survive in such a warlike society. This book is about soldiers, above all else, and during that time soldiers were men who protected their families at the cost of their own lives. The slave-oracle of the

Ephors is a device Miller uses to highlight the lecherous and corrupt natures of these so-called holy men, but it is not intended to objectify women (and I meant no offense by calling the girl a 'device.')

Miller definitely did not plan to espouse any racist views either; he simply conceived a cosmopolitan Persian army consisting of dozens of conquered nations and hundreds of tribes as a disorganized force unable to match the discipline of the Spartans who received identical training in war. Authorial intent is what we must consider when reading 300 which uses Greece in 480 B.C as its setting, so it is not meant to comment on current issues in society, but issues that, according to historical speculation, were common at the time. I enjoyed this book because I was looking for a beautifully-drawn, action packed read, and this is exactly what I found. Recommended to all Frank Miller fans and artists starting out in the comics medium.

I doubt that the historical accounts tell the side story of betrayal and the treachery of the humpback as he sides with Xerxes and the Persians. But this is what makes up a great piece of fiction, the unexpected and untold story of gods and ghosts. This is one of the best graphic novels ever produced. It has enraged some historians and students of the Battle of Thermopylae, however, taken for exactly what it is; fiction based on a historical event, it is an amazing piece of work. Frank Miller is truly an artist and that includes his ability to tell a story. If I wanted a historical account I would read "Gates of Fire," or watch the History Channel's account of the Spartans. But for the richness of imagery Miller has put into this book, I can forgive him for representing King Leonidas as a young man, rather than a white hair. I also appreciate the way Miller has represented the Lakedaemonians (Spartans) as more than just men, but as Greek warriors, the epitome of physical power and proportion. This includes giving them manly facial hair and leaving their protective uniforms off showing every muscle and tendon. Lynn Varley set a great tone, pun intended, with colors and gives continuity to the book. It is a complete piece of work from beginning to end, you have a feeling of great power and immanent doom. Anyone who had to learn the story of the Hot Gates will enjoy this as much as the teenager who hated history and had to learn why their school mascot was a Spartan.

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