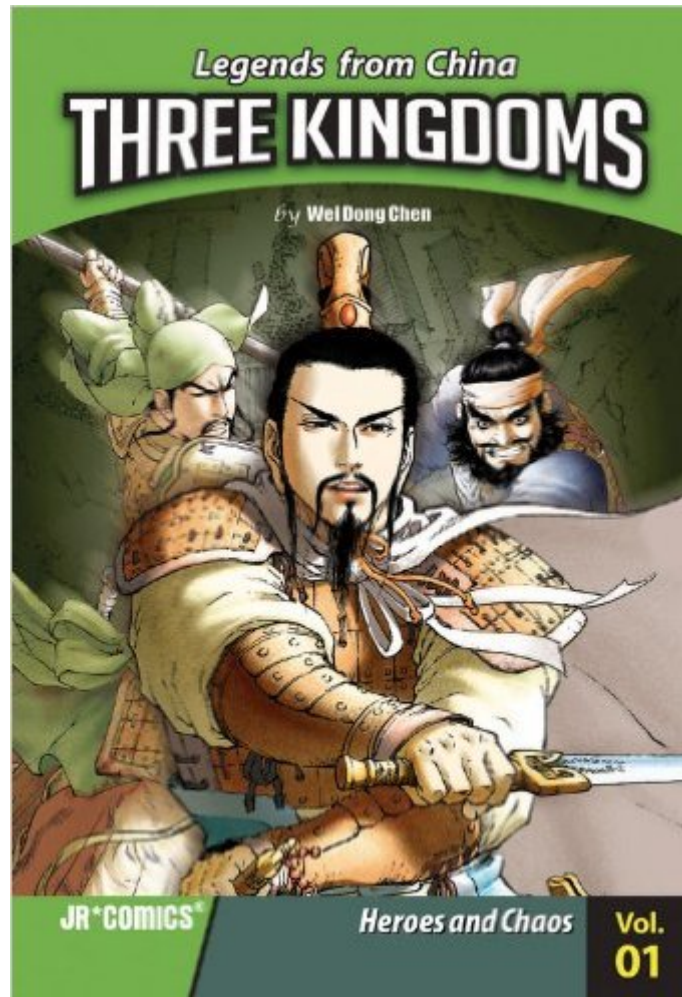


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Three Kingdoms 01: Heros And Chaos (Legends From China: Three Kingdoms)



Synopsis

At the end of the second century, the lands of ancient China are thrown into turmoil when the Han Dynasty collapses, and when a tyrant overthrows the weak emperor, a group of regional lords forms an army to restore the nation. But bravery and valor are soon stifled by ambition and cunning, and the coalition dissolves before the battle is even won. Now, a new group of heroes must emerge if China is to survive.

Book Information

Series: Three Kingdoms (Book 1)

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Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (7 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

Reason for Reading: I love Chinese history. Though I usually am interested in 20th century history, I have read Chinese mythology and thought this dive into ancient history sounded interesting. First I'll start off with some caveats, the publisher's recommended reading age has not been given at this time but I'll vouch that it will be younger than my recommended age of 16+. ">Read more

I bought the 20 volume Monkey King series for my son and then I saw this. My son is in third grade and he was able to read the Monkey King series on his own. This series is more difficult for him to understand on his own so I read it first, go over the plot and the characters with him, and then he reads it on his own. It's a complicated plot involving 18 different factions engaged in political intrigue and military strategy, so my son has lots of questions and we work it out together. He thinks he is reading a comic book but he's actually learning something about Chinese literature and history. Not a bad way to spend quality time together.

Disclaimer: I received an ARC via Netgalley. The debate over the literary quality of comic books or graphic novels probably dates back from when the genre started. There are graphic novels that prove the case that the genre is literature. *Watchmen* is an example of this. Comic publishers have also known that one way to get parents to buy comics for the children is to put classic literature in comic book form, hence *Classics Illustrated*. It has seemed, however, that the bulk, if not all of these illustrated classics, are from Western Literature. Now, I love English literature, so I'm not really complaining; yet, variety is great and there are some great Eastern classics. Therefore, it is nice, wonderful, brilliant, to see a publisher put out *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* in comic form. It is even better to see it created and illustrated by two Chinese artists, Wei Dong Chen and Xiao Long Liang, whose illustrations are inspired by ancient Chinese painting techniques. If you have stared in wonder at the Chinese paintings in museums, you'll love this artwork. This graphic novel does something that I wished the translation of *Three Kingdoms* I read had done - include a character list. Actually, the graphic novel has a character list with head shots, and it comes at the beginning, making a rather handy reference, and periodically names are shown over characters. This was great for I always knew who people were. The purpose of this graphic novel is also to educate, so each chapter is preceded by a textual summary that gives background and context (including maps). The graphic novel also includes a concluding essay that briefly discusses the themes and connects them to current events. This essay would be a great discussion springboard for a class, or even inspiration for a paper for older students. Parents of pre-teens should know that this is an action comic so there is fighting; however, blood is kept to a few cuts on cheeks or bandages, and there is no gore. There is a beheading, but the beheading of Macbeth in the graphic novel version of the play was far bloodier. There is mention of executions, but these take place off panel. For those who don't know, *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* is about a period of Chinese history when China was not unified and suffered through various civil wars. The book is a classic piece of Eastern literature, and the first book formed the basis of the recent film *Red Cliff*. This first volume starts at the very beginning of the tale, and focuses mainly on three blood brothers - Bei Liu, Yu Guan, and Fei Zhang. What is highlighted in this first volume are the bonds of loyalty that exist between friends as well as the ties that one has to one's country. The three blood brothers face choices of who to serve, for all sides seem weak (and Fei Zhang has little liking for politicians that don't know his worth). This choice makes the graphic novel far more than a simple hack and slash book. There are various discussions or examples of decision making and sometimes a battle isn't the correct choice. Furthermore, there is a beautiful series of panels that show the cost of combat, not just on those

warriors fighting but on their families as well. The one thing that the work does extremely well is treat complex issues in such a way that a pre-teen can understand them, but this is done without talking down to that pre-teen. The writing handles serious issues well, but there is also plenty of humor pleasant. It is easy to see a reader who likes Spider-Man's one liners enjoying this book, in particular the character of Fei Zhang who at one point is so hungry that he could eat a dead mule's guts. The best aspect of the graphic novel, however, is the art work. It is stunning. It is beautiful. It belongs in a museum. I have only two real quibbles with this book. Before I mention them, I should point out, again, that I was reading ARC. These quibbles might be changed before final publication. Additionally, they are quibbles and won't stop me from buying the book. Yes, I am planning on reading this series. The first quibble is when Bu Lu uses the word "troll" as an insult. Maybe it is a translation issue, and the word troll is closest translation to the Chinese term or maybe Chinese really does have a word for troll; I don't know. Troll, however, is far more closely linked to Norse legend. Having a Chinese warrior in 200 C.E. China call someone a troll feels really out of place. I would've preferred the original insult and if explanation was needed a footnote (there is footnote for the word eunuch). The second quibble is the placement of two pages - one showing various helmets, the other listing the Nations in China. Where they are placed interrupts the flow of story. It could be that they were placed there to serve as tension increasing breaks, but they don't come across that way. I'm glad the pages are there; I just think they could be better placed. My final word is this. My favorite character in The Romance of Three Kingdoms is Ge Liang Zhu. I knew he wouldn't be in this part of the story, and I was prepared to miss him. The writing and artwork is so good that I didn't miss Zhu, master arrow-collector, at all. If you like Chinese movies or Japanese movies, cartoons or comics, you should check this out.

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