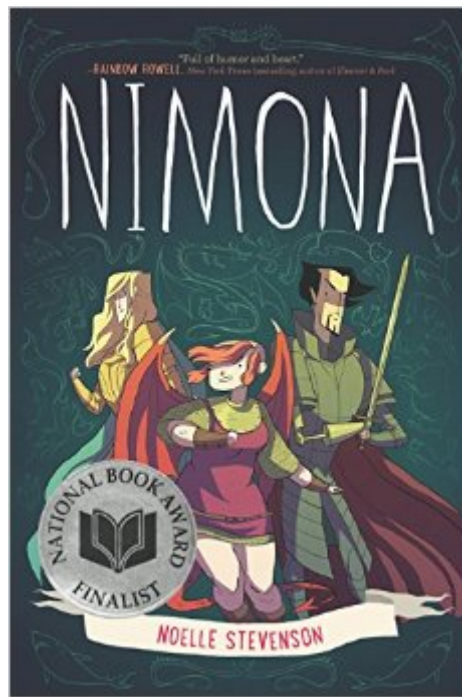


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# Nimona



## Synopsis

Indies Choice Book of the Year \* National Book Award Finalist \* New York Times Bestseller \* New York Times Notable Book \* Kirkus Best Book \* School Library Journal Best Book \* Publishers Weekly Best Book \* NPR Best Book \* New York Public Library Best Book \* Chicago Public Library Best Book

The New York Times bestselling graphic novel sensation from Noelle Stevenson, based on her beloved and critically acclaimed web comic. Kirkus says, "If you're going to read one graphic novel this year, make it this one." •Nemeses! Dragons! Science! Symbolism! All these and more await in this brilliantly subversive, sharply irreverent epic from Noelle Stevenson. Featuring an exclusive epilogue not seen in the web comic, along with bonus conceptual sketches and revised pages throughout, this gorgeous full-color graphic novel has been hailed by critics and fans alike as the arrival of a "superstar" talent (NPR.org). Nimona is an impulsive young shapeshifter with a knack for villainy. Lord Ballister Blackheart is a villain with a vendetta. As sidekick and supervillain, Nimona and Lord Blackheart are about to wreak some serious havoc. Their mission: prove to the kingdom that Sir Ambrosius Goldenloin and his buddies at the Institution of Law Enforcement and Heroics aren't the heroes everyone thinks they are. But as small acts of mischief escalate into a vicious battle, Lord Blackheart realizes that Nimona's powers are as murky and mysterious as her past. And her unpredictable wild side might be more dangerous than he is willing to admit.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Noelle Stevenson's Nimona debuted as a webcomic before being reworked into a graphic novel. I find that it reads better "or maybe I'm better able to keep up with it" as

a collection. Pages have been revised and a new epilogue added for this edition. Although it's set among knights and battles, it's a very modern-feeling story, because Nimona is a very young and current character. She's a shape-changing teenager with all the attitude and lack of respect for authority that goes along with that. Stevenson's art does a terrific job of capturing those feelings visually, without needing to spell out for us everyone's motivations textually. We meet her as she meets one-armed supervillain Lord Ballister Blackheart. She's a fangirl, and in spite of her abilities, Blackheart is a bit suspicious of her youth, enthusiasm, and drive. He's also got a grudge against Sir Ambrosius Goldenloin. The two were young heroes together before their battle led to his loss of limb. Nimona's fascinating because Stevenson doesn't make her stereotypically feminine. She doesn't feel the need to prominently signify "this is a girl," which is a refreshing take on these kinds of comic projects. In fact, the first thing we see Nimona turn into is not a cat or something fluffy or cute, but a shark. She's also fond of being a dragon. (When she does turn into a cat, it's to jump on someone's head.) There's plenty of adventure and action here, portrayed in a way you've likely never seen before. Stevenson also humanizes the traditional bad guy type by giving him significant motivation and personal ethics, while Nimona doesn't seem to take much of anything seriously. I figured her sympathies are as changeable as her physical state; plus, as we learn more about her background, she's got good reason to ignore her past. As the story continues, some items appear that will be familiar to readers, from documents revealing a secret conspiracy by a reputable source of authority to distrust of financial institutions. There's a pending epidemic and discussions of how to reconcile science and magic. What appeals to me most, though, is the little family Nimona and Blackheart make and the fatherly way he treats her, particularly on board game night. (The publisher provided a review copy. Review originally posted at ComicsWorthReading.com.)

Nimona is the debut graphic novel, written and illustrated by Noelle Stevenson. It was actually a free online web comic that Stevenson started in 2012, and doubled as her senior thesis at the Maryland Institute College of Art. But Stevenson has risen to fame in the comic-book world, for illustrating the insanely popular (and fantastic) series *Lumberjanes*, and her affiliation with Rainbow Rowell's *Fangirl* cover-art and subsequent fan-art. I came to my Noelle Stevenson appreciation very late in the game, as I had to eagerly await the much buzzed-about Volume 1 of *Lumberjanes* earlier this year. But as soon as I knew I had to make my way to

As a fan of Lumberjanes, I started following Stevenson on Twitter and was instantly in love with her sense of humour and subversive, feminist commentary – particularly in relation to the wonderful world of comics. So when it was announced that a web comic which helped garner Noelle Stevenson her now considerable fan-base was going to be published as a graphic novel, you better believe I jumped for joy! And it's not hard to see how Nimona helped launch Stevenson's career as a funny deadpan epic that feels a little bit like Monty Python and the Holy Grail with more heart, symbolism and gadgetry. The book opens with villain Lord Ballister Blackheart meeting his new self-imposed sidekick, a young shapeshifter girl named Nimona. In the beginning the comic has a lot of fun with turning old tropes on their head wherein the villain has ethics, the female sidekick is more blood-thirsty and conniving than her mastermind boss and though it's set in a medieval-looking era, there's a great blend of science and technology alongside jousting bouts and knights in shining armour. But then Stevenson starts to really expand the world-building, and challenge readers with her subversive storytelling. We learn that Lord Ballister Blackheart has a more complicated back-story with shades of grey, while the local hero Ambrosius Goldenloin (best name, ever!) has more darkness to him than first meets the eye and a far more complex and tender relationship to Ballister. Nimona, meanwhile, is more than the tough, smart-aleck sidekick – she leaves breadcrumbs to her true story, and it's far more heartbreaking than anyone – especially Ballister – ever presumes. Nimona is brilliant and unique – there's really nothing else quite like it, and now that we've had the pleasure of reading it I can see what a gift Noelle Stevenson is to the wonderful world of comics – particularly for this female-friendly, smart graphic novel that has a lot of appeal for younger audiences. The universe of Nimona is particularly clever, as a contemporary-medieval setting where fantasy and science-fiction sit side-by-side and can each be seen as magical in certain circumstances. This medieval mash-up also means that Stevenson explores political tyranny playing out on the serfdom populace, which opens the story up for a lot of big concept ideas – particularly in the battle of good and evil. You need only be following Stevenson for a few days on Twitter to know that she's big on feminism, equality and diversity – and all three are in abundance in this book. In particular, Ballister and Goldenloin have hints of a romantic back-story, which is teased out beautifully (these two have so many fans – check out Tumblr to get an idea of how beloved they are!). Ballister and Goldenloin also feel like a nod to realised slash-fiction – like Stevenson took two story archetypes (the villain and the hero) and actually gave them the

complicated attraction that fans often clamour for and explore in fanfiction (hello, Draco & Harry!). *Nimona*™ is such a treat, and I encourage anyone who was once like me “totally in the dark about Stevenson’s sheer awesomeness” to make this book a “must-buy”! It’s funny, smart, subversive and challenges just about every adventure trope you can think of – a truly great book for monster girls and boys alike.

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