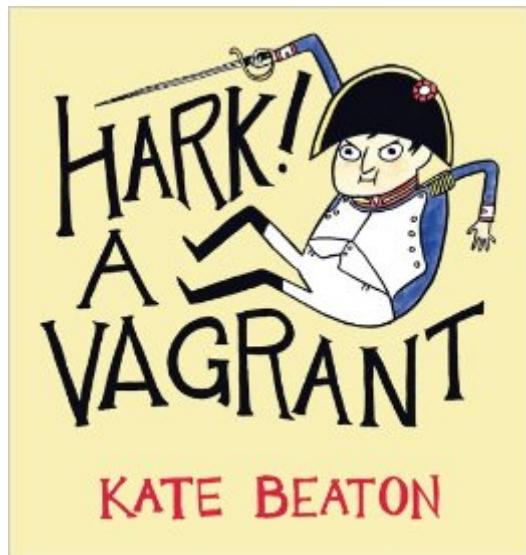


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Hark! A Vagrant



Synopsis

FEATURED ON MORE THAN TWENTY BEST-OF LISTS, INCLUDING TIME, , E! AND PUBLISHERS WEEKLY! Hark! A Vagrant is an uproarious romp through history and literature seen through the sharp, contemporary lens of New Yorker cartoonist and comics sensation Kate Beaton. No era or tome emerges unscathed as Beaton rightly skewers the Western world's revolutionaries, leaders, sycophants, and suffragists while equally honing her wit on the hapless heroes, heroines, and villains of the best-loved fiction. She deftly points out what really happened when Brahms fell asleep listening to Liszt, that the world's first hipsters were obviously the Incroyables and the Merveilleuses from eighteenth-century France, that Susan B. Anthony is, of course, a "Samantha," and that the polite banality of Canadian culture never gets old. Hark! A Vagrant features sexy Batman, the true stories behind classic Nancy Drew covers, and Queen Elizabeth doing the albatross. As the 500,000 unique monthly visitors to harkavagrant.com already know, no one turns the ironic absurdities of history and literature into comedic fodder as hilariously as Beaton.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a laugh-out-loud collection of comic strips about characters and events from famous (and not-so-famous) events in history and literature. No, this is not ordinarily a combination you would think could produce side-splitting laughs, but Kate Beaton isn't your ordinary comic artist. Her caricatures are amusing all on their own (a refreshing change from the usual flat images in political cartoons), but where she really shines is in her writing. Some of the subjects may be obscure, but

the writing is colloquial and witty. Armed with her talents, Beaton offers some truly keen insights into past and present culture. Her light touch ensure that nothing comes off as pedantic; I often found myself laughing for several minutes before wondering why no one had used some of her arguments in academic work. She is also masterful in her ability to take lesser-known historical or literary events and make them funny without requiring any lengthy, unfunny explanations. The comics stand entirely on their own, but if you know the historical context, they're that much better. Lest anyone feel deceived, many (but not all) of these strips are also available on the author's website of the same name. However, this book is well worth the price of supporting a brilliantly incisive comic and being able to take her sassy characters with you wherever you go. Or, you could just leave this book on your coffee table. Your guests will thank you for the history lessons when they finish laughing.

Hark! A Vagrant is my favorite webcomic, and it deserves a much wider audience than it has. Now a selection of the best strips (with commentary!) have been collected in this handsome volume. Kate Beaton's comics are hilarious and erudite, and her drawing style is fluid and expressive. There are comics about Jane Austen, Watson and Holmes, Richard III, Tesla, etc. This is a great comic for lovers of history and literature, or who also just love her sense of humor. Favorites of mine: "Dude-Watching With the Brontes," p. 7, "The Famous Fitzgeralds," p. 150, "Joe Kennedy trains the President," p. 31, and any of the comics that feature Fat Pony. For long-time fans, there is new material, and the aforementioned commentary. Besides, it's just nice to have it as a lovely hardcover book.

Hark! A Vagrant is by far one of my favorite webcomic series. It is engrossing and very entertaining, the characters always seem to reflect who you'd expect them to be except they don't take themselves too seriously. Another plus is you don't even need to know the historical figures, in fact I enjoy it more when I don't! Much like XKCD, a strip from Hark! A Vagrant frequently sends me to wikipedia to read the full bio of historical figures. I feel I've learned more about history from this webcomic than my 7+ years of history classes in school. I sincerely hope many people buy Kate Beaton's book in support of her comic.

And "Hark! A Vagrant" is truly one of the treasures of the modern world. It wanders all over literature and history, occasionally visits Beaton's hilariously-remembered childhood or goofy present day family, and manages at every turn to jumpstart your giggler. Her child-like (but actually subtle and sophisticated) caricatures and goofy rapper's oaths uttered by Victorians in velvet breeches are a

bottomless joy. In a proper society bankers would live in apartment blocks and people like Kate Beaton would be carried about in extravagant litters by studly men. (It sounds like a Hark! A Vagrant strip.) In the meantime, the least you can do is buy a copy of her wonderful book, and then remember to give a bunch of them at Christmas. Your friends will thank you.

I am not as knowledgeable about history as some of Kate Beaton's readers, but I know a great deal about the literature she references. I must say, she hits all the most ridiculous points -- from Charlotte and Emily Bronte's love of screwed-up men, to the absurdities of King Lear, to the war between Watson, Stupid Watson, and Gay Watson. To be sure, Beaton's comics have often led me to look up historical figures about which I knew little or nothing, particularly those whose race or gender cut them out of the traditional narrative. For instance, I wouldn't have known about Rosalind Franklin's work on the structure of DNA, or Matthew Henson's contribution to the first (white) expedition to the North Pole, without Beaton -- not to mention several stories which only came to my attention upon reading other Beaton comics which do not appear in this book. In short: while most of these comics are available for free on the interwebs, I think it's totally worthwhile to send Kate Beaton some cash moneys for her work in disseminating history and literature to the masses.

This book is great. Not only is it an exhaustive collection of a very funny webcomic, but the book itself is high quality and well printed. One of my favorite things about Hark! A Vagrant is the thinking and personal growth that it stimulates. Though most of the jokes are enjoyable without knowing details of the historical topic, they have on many occasions encouraged me to do a bit of research to get the full story. The author's humor writing style is superb as well, as she smoothly slips from straitlaced to crass and back, all to great comic effect.

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