BOOK SYNOPSIS

A national bestseller, Derf Backderf’s Alex Award winner *My Friend Dahmer* is the bone-chilling graphic novel that inspired the major motion picture starring Ross Lynch as Jeffrey Dahmer.

You only think you know this story. In 1991, Jeffrey Dahmer—the most notorious serial killer since Jack the Ripper—seared himself into the American consciousness. To the public, Dahmer was a monster who committed unthinkable atrocities. To Derf Backderf, “Jeff” was a much more complex figure: a high school friend with whom he had shared classrooms, hallways, and car rides.

In *My Friend Dahmer*, a haunting and original graphic novel, writer-artist Backderf creates a surprisingly sympathetic portrait of a disturbed young man struggling against the morbid urges emanating from the deep recesses of his psyche—a shy kid, a teenage alcoholic, and a goofball who never quite fit in with his classmates. With profound insight, what emerges is a Jeffrey Dahmer that few ever really knew, and one readers will never forget.

REVIEWS AND PRAISE

“A well-told, powerful story. Backderf is quite skilled in using comics to tell this tale of a truly weird and sinister 1970s adolescent world.” — American cartoonist R. Crumb

“ASTOUNDING.” — Lev Grossman, author of *The Magicians*

“The tone is sympathetic and enraged (‘Where were the damn adults?’), while not excusing or making the story unduly fascinating. Backderf’s writing is impeccably honest in not exculpating his own misdeeds . . . and quietly horrifying. A small, dark classic.”— *Publishers Weekly*

“One of the best graphic novels I’ve read this year.” — *USA Today’s Popcandy*

“One of the most thought-provoking comics released in a long time.” — *Slate*

“Carefully researched and sourced with ample back matter, Backderf’s tragic chronicle of what shouldn’t have been is a real butt-kicker for educators and youth counselors as well as peers of other potential Dahmers. Highly recommended for professionals as well as true crime readers.” — *Library Journal*
“This isn’t a cautionary tale. It’s insight shared too late to save Dahmer’s victims, let alone Jeff himself, but perhaps soon enough to remind both teens and their caretakers that questioning peculiar behavior might be a better tack than ignoring or exploiting it.” —School Library Journal

“Fortunately, cartoonist Derf Backderf isn’t one to avoid the troubling, even terrifying, truths that lurk in the dark recesses of that notorious serial killer’s early life and modern American life itself.” —Foreword Reviews

“A powerful, unsettling use of the graphic medium to share a profoundly disturbing story . . . An exemplary demonstration of the transformative possibilities of graphic narrative.” —Kirkus Reviews

“Masterful . . . a rich tale full of complexity and sensitivity . . . There’s something about Dahmer’s life and crimes that seems almost crafted for treatment in the murky world of comix. Yet it’s empathy and nuance, not gore, that put My Friend Dahmer alongside Alison Bechdel’s Fun Home and David Small’s Stitches in the annals of illustrated literature.” —Cleveland Plain Dealer

“A new classic of the graphic novel genre . . . A moving book that qualifies as one of the great graphic novels, a work of art.” —Creative Loafing

“His graphic approach is grotesque, droll, and it rags on reality as masses of kids knew and still know it. Lots of books exist about the agonies and cruelty of the adolescent high school experience, but few so compellingly bring us straight into that soulless environment, showing the ways it can shelter, allow to burgeon, and, at the same time, be completely blind to real madness. It wasn’t easy reading this book, but I’m glad I did.” —David Small, author of Stitches


“My Friend Dahmer is a brilliant graphic novel and surely ranks among the very best of the form. My Friend Dahmer is entirely original, boldly and beautifully drawn, and full of nuance and complexity and even a strange tenderness. Out of the sordid and grotesque details of Dahmer’s life, Derf has fashioned a moving and complex literary work of art.” —Dan Chaon, author of Among the Missing & You Remind Me of Me

“This unique book allows the reader to listen in on the fascinating reminiscences of those who watched the developing mind of a future serial killer.” —Louis B. Schlesinger, PhD, Professor of Forensic Psychology

“It’d be so easy to pigeonhole and think that the reason you can’t stop reading My Friend Dahmer is because it offers a voyeuristic peek inside the monster. And it does. But as it turns its self-aware eye on the boy who doesn’t belong, the real magic trick is how equally hateful and sad you feel for the monster himself. This one’s still haunting me.” —Brad Meltzer, author of Identity Crisis & The Inner Circle

“As someone who walked the halls of Revere High School with both Backderf and Dahmer and was there from the beginning, I am astounded by the accuracy and truthfulness of this portrait. I know of no other work that so clearly shows the teenage days of an American monster, long before the rest of the world heard of him. Mesmerizing.” —Mike Kukral, PhD, Revere High School class of 1978, Professor of Geography, Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology
“If you want to read a heavy story about a disturbing teenager, My Friend Dahmer will certainly quench your dark little desires. But this book is about a lot of other things that matter much, much more: the institutionalized weirdness of the suburban seventies, what it means to be friends with someone you don’t really like, a cogent explanation as to why terrible things happen, and a means for feeling sympathy toward those who don’t seem to deserve it.” —Chuck Klosterman, author of Sex, Drugs, and Cocoa Puffs: A Low Culture Manifesto

“A solid job. Putrid serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer’s origins are explored in this fine book. Dig it—it’ll hang you out to dry.” —James Ellroy, author of My Dark Places & L.A. Confidential

**AWARDS AND ACCOLADES**
- ALA/YALSA Alex Award Winner
- ALA/YALSA Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers, Top Ten
- Virginia Readers’ Choice
- ALA/YALSA Great Graphic Novels for Teens, Top Ten
- Capitol Choice’s Noteworthy Titles for Children and Teens

**MEDIA AND RESOURCES**
- Teaching Guide
- Movie Trailer: My Friend Dahmer was adapted in a major motion picture in 2017, starring Anne Heche, Vincent Kartheiser, and Ross Lynch.

*A NOTE ON AGE RANGES*
A publisher-suggested age range covers the gamut of readers that publishers envision using the book, whether for independent reading, family sharing, group study, or in other ways. Educators have the best sense of the appropriate age range for the diverse learners they work with and understand these ranges vary depending on a book’s intended use.

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