



Marble Season

Gilbert Hernández

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The untold coming-of-age story from a contemporary comics master

Marble Season is the semiautobiographical novel by the acclaimed cartoonist Gilbert Hernandez, author of the epic masterpiece *Palomar* and cocreator, with his brothers, Jaime and Mario, of the groundbreaking *Love and Rockets* comic book series. *Marble Season* is his first book with Drawn & Quarterly, and one of the most anticipated books of 2013. It tells the untold stories from the early years of these American comics legends, but also portrays the reality of life in a large family in suburban 1960s California. Pop-culture references—TV shows, comic books, and music—saturate this evocative story of a young family navigating cultural and neighborhood norms set against the golden age of the American dream and the silver age of comics.

Middle child Huey stages Captain America plays and treasures his older brother's comic book collection almost as much as his approval. *Marble Season* subtly and deftly details how the innocent, joyfully creative play that children engage in (shooting marbles, backyard performances, and organizing treasure hunts) changes as they grow older and encounter name-calling naysayers, abusive bullies, and the value judgments of other kids. An all-ages story, *Marble Season* masterfully explores the redemptive and timeless power of storytelling and role play in childhood, making it a coming-of-age story that is as resonant with the children of today as with the children of the sixties.

Marble Season Details

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From Reader Review Marble Season for online ebook

Ale says

At first I was a little skeptic about how much I would like this book but I did, I really did. It brought about some feeling I didn't even know I had about my childhood. I also got to meet both Gilbert and Jaime Hernandez at the book signing which made it all even better than I could ever imagine.

Jeff Jackson says

4.5 stars. Wonderfully textured evocation of childhood with its continually shifting allegiances, casually surreal moments, weeks of intense obsession, abject emotions, repressed romances, and personal mythologies spun out of rumors that you may just have started yourself. Less a narrative than an artfully sustained mood and web of correspondences. Masterful work from Beto.

Laura says

I bought it as an e-book, and I really disliked reading a graphic novel in the Kobo app. I guess I am spoiled by how lovely digital comics are through Comixology, where you can have each panel blown up. With Kobo it was hard to read the dialogue and there are no options to zoom in. I will be glad to buy this in paperback to read it again, but I'm disappointed that I won't be buying other Drawn and Quarterly e-books, especially since all the Chester Brown stories are available that way.

Zack! Empire says

I was born in the 80's, but most of my childhood memories take place in the 90's. I feel lucky for this because I was definitely part of the last generation to grow up without the internet, or cell phones. I actually remember a time when you took a long car ride and the only thing to do was to stare out the window. Or if you didn't know how to get past a certain part of a game, you had to figure it out, or talk to your friend who knows a guy who beat the game.

I think this is the reason this book struck such a cord with me. I can really remember having a childhood similar to the kids in Marble Season. I was pretty lucky that my neighborhood was filled with kids and we went on a lot of adventures together. We'd just be hanging out and start playing tag, and for the next few days tag was a really big deal. Then someone would just have a bunch of baseball cards or marbles, and tag would be forgotten. You were just going from one game to the next, living in your imagination.

If I had one criticism of the book it's that there really is no story. It just seems to be made up of Gilbert's random memories and impressions of childhood.

Reading Marble Season really took me back to that. For the most part I'm not a sentimental or nostalgic person, but it was nice to spend some time walking through the memories of my childhood.

Sonic says

A dreamy, fun, nostalgic return to childhood (in the 60s.)

Somewhere in-between Manga and American comics there is the work of Los Brothers Hernandez (in this case Gilberto Hernandez) ... I won't degrade it by comparing it to literature,...

almost without plot this was a charming emotional experience.

I highly recommend it, and I strongly discourage the completely unnecessary "afterword."

David Sanz says

Qué corto se hace a pesar de lo tocho que parece! Todo es muy intrascendente y parece que no pasa nada, pero en realidad son esos recuerdos de la infancia, que se quedan grabados.

Dov Zeller says

I rarely buy graphic novels and usually for whatever reason, I don't enjoy reading them more than once. I find I tear through them and no matter how much I love them, when I get to the end, I'm done.

Not so with "Marble Season." I could read this book again and again. That said, it is back at the library now and I only read it once, so I will do the best I can with this review.

"Marble Season" follows Huey, perhaps ten years old when the story begins? through a certain time in his childhood. To be honest, I am not sure how old he is or how much time passes. When I began reading it I thought "marble season" had some relationship to spring and summer. When the book ended, I thought it meant the span of time in which a kid might be interested in playing Marbles.

In some ways it seems not very much time passes from beginning to end. The characters don't grow physically I don't think (I kept looking at the youngest brother for clues that he was aging, because I thought it would be more noticeable), though they do shift and change and mature in certain ways. It's not a classic coming of age story, but there are some small and meaningful coming of age moments. It tries I think to elicit the feeling of childhood more than to tell a definitive story, though it does tell a story that has the texture here and there of a graphic novel, though perhaps more has the episodic movement of a comic strip.

Apparently it is loosely autobiographical, and so it makes sense that Huey is into comic books and always coming up with ideas for plays and movies and works on writing scripts. One of my favorite scenes is when he gets a bunch of older neighborhood kids (including his older brother) to act out a play he has written. It is brilliantly comical and so true to life the way the scene plays out.

Another great theme throughout the book is Huey's relationship with toys and card collections and comic books. He learns a lot about people's expectations around gender through various kinds of play (there are a few particularly poignant and funny moments relating to his relationship to a certain doll/action figure.)

But I also love some of the quieter moments. Huey alone reading or working on a project. His deeper conversations with his friends. The way his confusion, frustration, curiosity and affection are often internally at war with each other.

All in all this is a charming, meandering, evocative exploration of childhood (that time in childhood when children often begin to understand that they are on their way to adulthood, and in some odd way, practicing for it or working their way toward it). I love following Huey through his days as he tries to make sense of a strange world and all of its baffling dynamics, allegiances, hierarchies, violences and boredomes.

Peter Landau says

My 10-year-old son keeps asking me why it's called MARBLE SEASON. They barely ever play marbles, he says. I just tell him to keep reading. It's been a long time since I had been so moved by a comic book, probably the last time I read something by Gilbert Hernández. He's a master of the form, telling an evocative story about childhood that captures the potential of youth without neglecting the boredom, the excitement, the weirdness, the fluidity of friendships, the confusion of burgeoning sexuality, all told subtlety and with a line that reminded me of the minimalistic majesty of PEANUTS. My son likes the book, and I want him to keep reading it as a reminder that his age is magical and fleeting.

Jon(athan) Nakapalau says

Silver Age Comics...Mars Attacks Cards...G.I. Joe...a trip down memory lane for anyone who grew up in the 60's and can remember when neighborhood kids played games with each other. The tension between individuals set against the backdrop of adolescent awakening is masterfully captured by Gilbert Hernández in this wonderful coming of age GN.

Ademption says

Gilbert Hernández in Dennis the Menace-mode. Marble Season is an episodic and engaging narrative. The book reminded me of being a kid after school, walking around, meeting mostly harmless and strange other kids, watching fights, trading comics. This is the best work Gilbert has done in quite a while.

David Schaafsma says

Deceptively simple growing up tales, thinly veiled memoir. It feels as episodic as any of my kid summers, just one thing after another, yet themes develop as things move along... big brothers/little brothers/comics, boys-girls... Huey's love of comics and sci fi and his role in neighborhood storytelling is constant throughout. As is consistent with Beto, there is one strikingly pretty, inaccessible girl that sort of wafts her way through it all, sort of mysteriously, which in my experience is how nerd boys experience such girls, as sort of specters of the inaccessible, of beauty, of class....

Near the end, Huey talks to a girl pretty seriously about growing up, and boys and girls, and we see there is

an arc to the whole, and we are being set up for the next set of tales... It feels very familiar to me in many ways, like I am reading my own neighborhood growing up stories. As always, Beto's work seems simple at first, then a closer reading reveals his understanding of whatever culture he is depicting... with grace and love and humor.

Jan Philipzig says

Childhood: Warts and All

Popular culture usually gets childhood wrong. There does not seem to be much of a market for realistic portrayals of childhood, but there certainly is one for excessively cute, wise, and viscous children...

The kids in *Marble Season*, on the other hand, actually think, talk, and behave like kids. It is the rare case of a cultural commodity getting childhood right, warts and all. In fact, the only two other cases that come to mind are the newspaper-strip classics *Peanuts* and *Calvin & Hobbes*. Come to think of it, comics appear to be better-suited for the portrayal of childhood than film and television, maybe because the language of comics allows for more reader participation and can insinuate certain aspects of childhood that cannot be captured by child actors.

Anyway, Gilbert Hernandez takes full advantage of the potential of the comic-book language, providing an episodic, erratic, often vague and sometimes surreal narrative whose loose structure reflects the childhood experience itself - its limited concentration span and sense of logic, its lack of self-reflection, its devotion to the moment and to the immediate environment, its passion for constructing manageable microcosms.

Marble Season is an absolute masterpiece, highly recommended to anybody with an interest in alternative comics!

Greta says

One of my brothers landed in hospital once when they were playing with marbles while lying on their bellies, and he lost a tooth. Another brother landed in hospital when my brothers were running and chasing each other around the house and he ran through a glass door. Although we practiced mad air jumps off swings, my sister foolishly fell from a playground swing and broke her collarbone. My youngest brother ended up with a hole in his ankle when his foot got caught in the wheel while double riding on a bicycle, and a hole in his head after his bicycle rolled over due to handling the front brake inadequately.

I was lucky. I only broke the fingers of my right hand when my brother (with the two holes) landed on my hand while we were wrestling for fun.

Apart from the girl that landed in hospital after swallowing one too many marbles, and a GI Joe doll that broke its arm, nothing really happens in this collection of random childhood memories, which I thought was quite boring and easily forgettable.

However, if you had an unexciting childhood, you might end up liking this.

Bert says

Cute, funny, poignant little distillation of that very particular 'season' of childhood when it's all superheroes, bullies, collecting, playing, feeling guilt about doing bad things, growing up. i loved the nostalgic-feeling drawings, how evocative some of those wordless, still panels are, and just thought the whole thing was a joy.

Addie says

I really liked this book. The drawings were great. My favorite character was Barnabas. Even though he isn't in it very much he was weird!
