



# Transformations and Adaptations

Recently many prose novels have been adapted into graphic novel format. Several publishers are bringing out adaptations of classics for younger readers as well as for teens, and popular fiction is even receiving the graphic treatment. Previously published graphic novels are being greatly expanded in new editions. Here some new versions to consider.

## CLASSIC HERO TALE

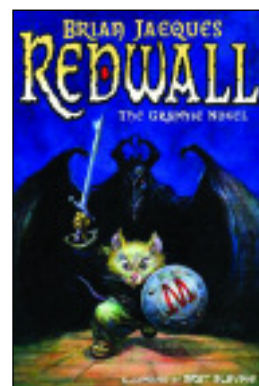
**Beowulf** is the oldest epic work written in English, and it has been retold in translations, prose novels, and the 2007 feature film co-scripted by Neil Gaiman. Stefan Petrucha's graphic novel version is adapted for younger teens and illustrated by Kody Chamberlain. King Hrothgar's land—now known as Denmark—has faced the depredations of the monster Grendel for years. Grendel stalks at night, killing Hrothgar's warriors and disappearing into the marsh by daybreak. No matter how well-prepared the men might be, no one survives an encounter with Grendel. Then the great and determined warrior Beowulf arrives from across the sea with his men to kill Grendel, become famous, and fulfill an oath of loyalty to Hrothgar sworn by Beowulf's father many years before. As in the original epic poem, Beowulf's defeat of Grendel means that he must fight an even deadlier foe, Grendel's mother.



Petrucha, who also writes the graphic novel adventures of Nancy Drew, retains a bit of the original epic's flavor, but the language is modern and easy to understand. Chamberlain uses silhouettes and shadows to keep the violence from overwhelming the sensibilities of younger readers; others who can handle some blood and brutality can read this version, which is suitable for middle school library collections. Although Chamberlain's art style is more in line with standard comic book illustrations, he uses a subdued, darker palette of colors to match the mood of the story. Younger readers who are used to their adventure heroes enjoying happy endings need to understand that this epic story ends on a somber note.

## HEROIC MICE OF REDWALL

Brian Jacques's **Redwall** (Philomel, 1986) began an incredibly popular series featuring a world of heroic and villainous animals. Set in the medieval English countryside, Redwall Abbey is a peaceful monastery of mice, where young Matthias is a novice monk. Long ago, heroic mouse Martin the Warrior came from Redwall, and a tapestry commemorating his exploits hangs in the great hall. All too soon, the Abbey's peace is shattered when villainous sea rat Cluny the Scourge arrives, leading an army of rats, stoats, ferrets, and other creatures. He is determined to take over the Abbey as revenge. Matthias learns that he must serve as Martin's spiritual heir by becoming a warrior to help his fellow creatures defeat Cluny and his army. The young mouse befriends the sparrows and field shrews in his quest to find Martin's sword and prevent the destruction of the Abbey.



The team that adapted the novel into graphic format comprises experienced artists and illustrators. Stuart Moore has written science fiction and adventure graphic novels, illustrator Bret Blevins has worked as an animation storyboard artist, and Richard Starkings is a font designer and letterer as well as the creator of the *Elephantmen* comics. Dedicated fans of the original novel might bemoan the loss of some favorite scenes, but the main action comes through very well. Blevins's black-and-white art capably carries the story along, making Cluny the Scourge and Asmodeus Poisoontooth look villainous, whereas Matthias appears young and innocent in the beginning and takes on more heroic features as the story progresses. As readers of the novel know, there is fighting as the Abbot leads the defense of Redwall against the invaders, and some good characters die. The violence here is not graphic or bloody, however, so the story is suitable for the same readers. This adaptation should do well in both elementary and middle school libraries and in public libraries and might introduce more readers to Jacques's world of Redwall.

## BOY VILLAIN AGAINST THE FAIRY WORLD

The bestselling *Artemis Fowl* series by Eoin Colfer features a twelve-year-old boy genius who runs his father's criminal empire because his father disappeared on the way to Russia and his mother keeps living



in the past, depending on drugs and sometimes not recognizing her son. The boy and his bodyguard, Butler, find a “healer” who is actually a fairy and use a combination of bribery and blackmail to seize her book—every fairy has one—that contains information that can spell trouble for the fairy world if a human could read it. No one has been able to do so, but Artemis knows how to find and get just about anything in the world that he needs. LEPrecon officer Holly Short must complete the Ritual to

replenish her magic, and having learned all about it from the translated book, Artemis and Butler kidnap her. But can Artemis use Holly to regain his family’s wealth and rebuild its reputation, even while his father remains missing? Or is Holly’s assertion that his actions will bring destruction down upon them all correct?

Andrew Donkin, author of books for children and adults, creates this adaptation with Colfer, and Italian comics artists and animators Giovanni Rigano and Paolo Lamanna produce the art. The graphic novel has a very European look, which is a bit eccentric compared with American comic styles. It matches the universe that Colfer created with fairy-world high technology and James Bond-type super gadgets. Rigano keeps the art free of any gratuitous violence, maintaining the story’s suitability for elementary and middle school libraries. Readers who prefer comics over prose fiction might find it a fun way to read the Artemis Fowl story.

#### MORE AKIKO

**Akiko: Flights of Fancy**, originally published in 2002, is a supplement to the ongoing series of trade paperbacks collecting the adventures of Akiko, a fourth grade Japanese girl who travels to the planet Smoo and undergoes many adventures there (see a review of this series in *Graphically Speaking*, VOYA February 1999). This book includes filler stories, pin-ups, and other material that originally appeared in the comics but was not put into the trade paperback collections. Creator Mark Crilley also published **Akiko: Flights of Fancy, the High-Flying Expanded Edition** (Sirius Entertainment, 2007), which is almost double the size of the out-of-print first edition and includes material from more than fifty issues of the *Akiko* comics. Here readers will find such features as *A Traveler’s Guide to Smoo* and *36 Ways to Draw Spuckler*. In *Akiko at the Age of Eighty*, an elderly Kiko tells a reporter about her college years, marriage, motherhood, and retirement. *Akiko on the Planet Earth* finds the robotic Akiko being sent to replace the real Akiko while she has her adventures on Smoo, enduring a geography test and an after-school encounter with school bully Jimmy Hampton. The stories range in length from one or two pages to forty, and in some cases, Crilley writes two or three stories appearing concurrently, such as in *Market Day*, which is placed on the upper part of the pages, with *Glup & Glap, the Crankiest Aliens in Town!* just below it. Fans of the different characters will find their favorites featured in many stories, not just Akiko.

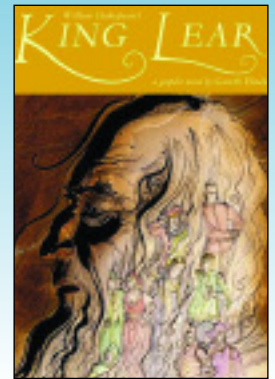


The cover art features a new look for Akiko, who still has the pigtails but looks a little more mature and much less like Olive Oyl’s kid sister. Although Spuckler’s robot sidekick, Gax, suffers a few mechanical breaks on the pages, Akiko subdues a running beast while being shot at by a thief, and Spuckler and Mr. Beeba often trade

insults (“idiot!” is yelled most often), this volume is basically suitable for elementary and middle schools.

#### SHAKESPEAREAN TRAGEDY

Shakespeare’s **King Lear** tells the tale of an old king, the father of three daughters, who seeks to settle his kingdom among them while he still lives. The elder daughters, Goneril and Regan, flatter him with flowery speeches about love and honor, whereas the youngest, Cordelia, can only give him plain words of loyalty, duty, and love owed. Giving in to the flattery, Lear disowns Cordelia and settles his kingdom upon Goneril and Regan and their husbands, which sets the tragedy in motion. The elder daughters seek only their own gain, each looking for power at the other’s expense. Lear can no longer discern true loyalty and love, even as those closest to him, including his Fool, try to protect their liege, who begins to go mad as a wild storm rages.



Gareth Hinds, who has previously adapted **Beowulf** (Candlewick, 2007/VOYA June 2007), uses Shakespeare’s text and a loosely formatted page layout that depends less on panels and more on the reader following the text. Hinds’s art is also not very comic book-like and ranges from highly detailed yet clear work to charcoal sketches to white-on-black line drawings. It might be a bit of a challenge for some readers, but the technique effectively reflects the stormy violence and political plotting. In his preface, Hinds explains how he selected the text and provides a link to his own colloquial translation for those who find Shakespeare’s language difficult to follow. This strong tragedy is better suited to high school, college, and more sophisticated graphic novel readers who can follow along with the format of the book. ■

#### WORKS DISCUSSED

- Colfer, Eoin. **Artemis Fowl: The Graphic Novel**. Adapted by Andrew Donkin; illus. by Giovanni Rigano and Paolo Lamanna. Hyperion/DBG, 2007. 112p. \$18.99. 978-0-7868-4881-2. \$9.99 Trade pb. 978-0-7868-4882-9. **4Q 3P M J**
- Crilley, Mark. **Akiko: Flights of Fancy, the High-Flying Expanded Edition**. Sirius Entertainment, 2007. 264p. \$24.95 Trade pb. 978-1-57989-088-9. **4Q 3P M J**
- Hinds, Gareth. **William Shakespeare’s King Lear: A Graphic Novel**. TheComic.com (<http://www.thecomic.com>), 2007. 128p. \$15.95 Trade pb. 978-1-893131-06-4. **5Q 2P S A/YA**
- Jacques, Brian. **Redwall: The Graphic Novel**. Adapted by Stuart Moore; illus. by Bret Blevins. Philomel, 2007. 148p. \$12.99 Trade pb. 978-0-399-24481-0. **4Q 4P M J**
- Petrucha, Stefan. **Beowulf**. Illus. by Kody Chamberlain. HarperTrophy, 2007. 96p. \$8.99 Trade pb. 978-0-06-134390-2. **4Q 3P M J**

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