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# A.D.: New Orleans After The Deluge (Pantheon Graphic Novels)



## Synopsis

Now in paperback, The New York Times best-selling graphic nonfiction masterpiece depicting the lives of seven New Orleanians before, during, and just after Hurricane Katrina. **Best American Comics, 2010** **Mother Jones Top Books of 2009** **Daily Beast Recommends** **New York Best Comics of 2009, Runner Up** **MTV.com Best Nonfiction Comic of 2009** **San Francisco Chronicle** **“Best in Comics”** **A.D.: New Orleans After the Deluge** is a masterful portrait of a city under siege. Cartoonist Josh Neufeld depicts seven extraordinary true stories of survival in the days leading up to and following Hurricane Katrina. Here we meet Denise, a counselor and social worker, and a sixth-generation New Orleanian; **“The Doctor,”** a proud fixture of the French Quarter; Abbas and Darnell, two friends who face the storm from Abbas’s family-run market; Kwame, a pastor’s son just entering his senior year of high school; and the young couple Leo and Michelle, who both grew up in the city. Each is forced to confront the same wrenching decision—whether to stay or to flee. As beautiful as it is poignant, A.D. presents a city in chaos and shines a bright, profoundly human light on the tragedies and triumphs that took place within it.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

**Book Description** A stunning graphic novel that makes plain the undeniable horrors and humanity triggered by Hurricane Katrina in the true stories of six New Orleanians who survived the storm.

A.D. follows each of the six from the hours before Katrina struck to its horrific aftermath. Here is Denise, a sixth-generation New Orleanian who will experience the chaos of the Superdome; the Doctor, whose unscathed French Quarter home becomes a refuge for those not so lucky; Abbas and his friend Mansell, who face the storm from the roof of Abbas's family-run market; Kwame, a pastor's son whose young life will remain wildly unsettled well into the future; and Leo, a comic-book fan, and his girlfriend, Michelle, who will lose everything but each other. We watch as they make the wrenching decision between staying and evacuating. And we see them coping not only with the outcome of their own decisions but also with those made by politicians, police, and others like themselves--decisions that drastically affect their lives, but over which they have no control. Overwhelming demand has propelled A.D. from its widely-read early Internet installments to this complete hardcover edition. Scheduled for publication on the fourth anniversary of the hurricane, it shines an uncanny light on the devastating truths and human triumphs of New Orleans after the deluge.

A Q&A with Josh Neufeld

Question: You follow the stories of seven characters and their various encounters with Hurricane Katrina. Tell us a little bit about each of these unique individuals and why you chose to tell their stories.

Josh Neufeld: When it comes to Katrina, that which links the population of New Orleans--not to mention that whole Gulf Coast region--is a devastating sense of loss: of lives, of possessions, of home, of community. Each of the characters in A.D. suffered that loss in a different way, and I wanted the story to reflect those different realities. I selected Denise after hearing her on a public radio program. The mainstream media, in the days following the storm, inaccurately reported roving gangs, shootings, rapes, and murders at the New Orleans Convention Center. Denise witnessed what really happened, how the people there were abandoned by the authorities and how they did their best to help one another--often with the so-called "thugs" at the forefront. I knew Denise's story had to be front and center in A.D. I found Leo (and, by extension, Michelle) online. Leo had been a reader of the blog I kept as a Red Cross volunteer, and when I then read his blog and learned that in addition to everything else he had lost his extensive comics collection, I felt an intuitive understanding for him. After all, besides being a cartoonist, I'm also a long-time comics collector. The idea of losing my prized possessions--and all the memories they hold--is terrifying to me. I learned of Abbas and Darnell from a mutual friend, and even though Abbas and I couldn't be more different--from our backgrounds to how we've lived our lives--I totally identified with the series of questionable choices that led to his being stranded in his flooded grocery store. I read about Kwame in my alma mater Oberlin's alumni magazine, about how his house in New Orleans East was totally flooded, how his school was ruined, and how he had to spend his senior

year of high school in Berkeley. He then went directly from California out to Ohio for college. His story echoed that of so many other displaced New Orleanians. Having led a peripatetic childhood, myself, I strongly related to his tale. And the Doctor, of course, is a real-life French Quarter raconteur --as well as being a key participant in the post-Katrina relief and recovery efforts. (He also hosted Larry Smith and me in his "slave quarters" guesthouse when we first visited the city.)

Question: Tell us a bit about the publishing story of A.D. Josh Neufeld: The project began in the summer of 2006. My buddy Jeff Newelt, who is the comics editor of the storytelling site SMITH Magazine, had read Katrina Came Calling, my self-published "zine about my time volunteering with the Red Cross in the Gulf Coast after the hurricane. As a disaster response worker stationed in Biloxi, Mississippi, in October 2005, just weeks after the storm, I delivered hot meals to sections of the city without power. While I was there, I met many folks who had lost everything in the hurricane. Those experiences with the Red Cross gave me a sense of connection that later provided vital background and context for A.D. I felt it was important to tell the story from the perspectives of a range of real people who had lived through the storm: well-off and poor, black and white, young and old, gay and straight, male and female, those who evacuated and those who stayed behind, people who were greatly affected by the flooding and even some who weren't. So my first job was to act as a journalist: After I spoke with friends, friends of friends, tracked down accounts of the storm and its aftermath on the radio, in magazines and newspapers, and on the Internet, seven people emerged as A.D.'s "characters": Denise, Leo, Michelle, Abbas, Darnell, Kwame, and The Doctor, whom I finally met in person in January 2007. It was then up to me to weave the characters' stories together in comics form, illustrating the storm and their disparate paths into and through it--while periodically fact-checking with them and keeping up with their changing fortunes. A.D. was serialized on SMITH in 2007-2008. I had always planned for the comic to be a book, however, so when Pantheon agreed in the summer of 2008 to publish it, I couldn't wait to get to work on reformatting and expanding it. The book edition of A.D. has about 25 percent more story and art than what appeared online; I also made significant changes and revisions to large chunks of the original material. That, combined with the different reading experience between online and print, in my mind makes the A.D. book a completely new animal.

Question: When your work was serialized, the characters in your book were reading and commenting on the webcomic in real time and, in some cases, the actual characters would e-mail you and say, "Hey! You got this part wrong." Was that a helpful editing process for you? Is this the future of journalism? Josh Neufeld: I don't know if it's the future of journalism, but in my case, feedback of any kind is really important to

me. And with a large-scale project like A.D., doing it first on the web made creator-à reader communication easy. Whether it was a New Orleanian reader correcting my pre-hurricane timeline (which I later amended) or one of the actual characters responding to his or her portrayal, I was grateful for the feedback. It was like having an entire community as my research and fact-checking team! There was one case early on that sort of set the tone. When I first introduced Denise in the strip, she was concerned that her character might be perceived as a stereotype. I decided that the best way to deal with her concern and to avoid similar issues in the future would be to run my scripts by her beforehand. I was totally happy to do that, because it is her story after all! My main goal was to get it right. I was gratified a few months later by Denise-à's reaction after a reader commented that he was gripped by the episode in which the storm hits Denise-à's house, but winced at one piece of ripe dialogue that sounded contrived. Denise, who, like everyone else, was following the story online, responded directly on the A.D. message boards: "That woman is me, and that is exactly what I was thinking at that moment and for many, many moments during the hurricane." How often do journalists have their subjects verify their stories in real-time, online? Thank you, Denise! Question: Why did you choose to color the panels the way you did? Josh Neufeld: I love one- or two-color art--how it is simultaneously restrained and expressive. For this story, it seemed the perfect way to capture the feeling I was going for. The main events of A.D. take place over a four- or five-day period. So the first thing I did when I converted A.D. to print was to use color to signal each new day. I also thought of each individual color scheme as a sort of visual "soundtrack," a guide for the reader through the story-à's emotional ups and downs. Josh Neufeld on the Making of A.D. This set of images illustrates my process in creating imagery for A.D.: New Orleans After the Deluge. This panel shows Hurricane Katrina's winds whipping down Canal Street. I started out with a small thumbnail sketch, just something to suggest the main force of the action and the prominent "props" or objects. Click on thumbnails for larger images The next stage was a full penciled drawing, with all relevant details included. I usually draw this stage using a non-repro blue pencil, and use "X's" to indicate large areas of black (like the street and the shadows of the buildings). From pencils I proceed to inks, where I make the final decisions about which lines will go in the completed drawing, fill in all the blacks, and otherwise prepare the drawing for coloring. I vary the width of my inked line to indicate which objects are in the foreground and which recede to the background. While working on the final, colored version of this panel, I realized that the artwork called for lines representing the driving rain. I actually drew those on a separate layer and added them to the scan of the original artwork. Finally, using PhotoShop, I implemented the blue-green color scheme of this section of the book. Voila! A completed panel from A.D.--Josh

Neufeld --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Starred Review. American Splendor artist Neufeld beautifully depicts the lives of seven New Orleans residents who survived Hurricane Katrina. In the dialogue-free opening chapter, *The Storm*, Neufeld powerfully intersperses images of the hurricane gathering speed with the cities it crippled when it hit Louisiana on August 29, 2005, specifically New Orleans and Biloxi, Miss. Readers are then introduced to seven New Orleans residents, from all walks of life and parts of the city. Denise and her family—mother Louise, niece Cydney and Cydney's daughter, R'nae—join thousands of hungry and thirsty New Orleanians waiting to be evacuated after their apartment is destroyed. Leo, the publisher of a local music zine, and Michelle, a waitress, reluctantly leave the city for Houston and are devastated when their apartment (and Leo's impressive comics collection) is flooded. Other characters flee, or try unsuccessfully to ride out the storm. Neufeld's low-key art brings a deeply humanizing element to the story. Though the devastation caused by the hurricane and the government's lackluster response are staggering, Neufeld expertly underscores the resilience of the people who returned to rebuild their lives and their city. (Aug.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I can't believe someone is making money on this. This is like going into a museum and seeing a blank canvas and the artist is revered. They did it, I didn't. Same thing with this book.

This graphic novel looks at Katrina and its aftermath, from five different viewpoints. (Note -- the flap says "seven stories", but it seemed to me that the couple's viewpoint was mostly that of the guy, and the two friends' was mostly that of Abbas.) Point of view aside, this book creates a powerful impression of "what it was like". The most dramatic stories are those of the people who suffered most -- Denise, and Abbas and Darnell -- but the others add to the strength of the overall impression. The graphics are particularly gripping early on, when the storm and the flooding are happening, but they work on many levels throughout the book. Someone criticized this book as being politically slanted -- how could it not be, considering what happened? I don't think it was slanted at all, I think it tells what happened.

Hurricane Katrina, which devastated the city of New Orleans in August 2005, was an epic disaster in American history. It held us all in thrall to our television sets for weeks. But what Josh Neufeld's

masterful comic book, or graphic novel about the subject wisely does is give us a perspective on this cataclysmic event through the eyes of a few survivors of that drama that goes light years beyond what television delivered. The structure of the book is a calendar posting of the days before, during, and after the storm, chilling depictions of the natural events and a shifting of colors so gripping, that I literally could not put it down. The survivors we follow through the storm and its aftermath are people outside of the gentrified and suburbanized quarters of New Orleans, and much of America. We resonate to their human-scale concerns as they attempt to ride out or evade the destruction that implodes in their midst. Real family values and ties of friendship, not the often ersatz versions that are dispensed through political rhetoric, are present on every page. The drawings and real-life dialogue so viscerally convey their emotions, which you or I might have in a similar situation, that it was hard to keep in mind that this book was a created artifact. It seemed as I read that it must have sprung to life in one moment as the embodiment of this unforgettable event. I don't want to give away any of its contents, so I will just say, it's a must read and a must keep. For high school and college teachers, as I am, I would recommend the Random House Teachers' Guide by Sari Wilson, which helps young people probe the depths of what the Deluge means in the context of their own lives and that of our nation.

I really liked this book. It brings you back to that place and time that so many of us have already forgotten. The comic book format gives you access to characters making those basic human decisions that were so perilous at the time -- a family with a sick kid reaches a hospital which is being evacuate. They can't stop, but have to figure out if they should leave their sick child behind. A shopkeeper needs to decide if he should stay in his store and defend against looters, or abandon the city. Families get dropped off at the convention center and can't figure out if buses will or will not come. Will the feds come and help or not? It's all here. Neufeld's book is really well done and brings these stories to light in a remarkable manner. It is clearly well reported too -- he seems to have spent a lot of time interviewing people to get their stories. It is a quick read, a sad read, and a beautiful read all at once. Ben

Katrina is a really tough subject to tackle, because it was such an emotionally raw event, because it was complicated in how it played out, and frankly because I suspect a lot of people don't want to hear about it anymore. So it's all the more impressive how readable and engaging Josh Neufeld managed to make A.D. The a cross-section of characters are all vivid (and real), with interwoven stories that both humanize the broader story of the storm (the flood, the levee failure), and make its

complexities comprehensible. It's not just the decision to use the comix form to tell a nonfiction story, it's how well that form is used here. It's hard to make a story like this one readable without being sensational or maudlin, and A.D. pulls that off. I should disclose some bias in favor of Mr. Neufeld and his work in general, but I think this is his best yet. An illuminating performance and a lasting document.

One thing most of us really wanted was first-hand knowledge of what went down during and after Hurricane Katrina. This book presents a unique perspective on that very subject with its graphic novel format. Easy to read and follow, and the artwork is superb. It is interesting to follow the lives of several people directly affected and see how they they coped with the water, the loss of homes, cars, pets, friends, relatives and property, and even a 15,000 title comic book collection. What happened at the Convention Center? Why did people go there? Why couldn't they leave? Although this is a very serious subject, it is told from a human perspective, with compassion, humor, pathos, and empathy. Did I mention that the artwork is fantastic!?

Had to have this book for a summer reading assignment or I probably would have never bought it. It was a good story and a neat presentation of the effect Katrina had on a diverse group of people however I found it hard to follow and really enjoy due to the graphic novel set up. Would be good for a younger kid to learn about Katrina if some of the scenarios weren't so "real" as in deaths and thugs but some of the details might be a little too much for them. I probably would've enjoyed it more if it weren't for it being a graphic novel but to each is own.

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