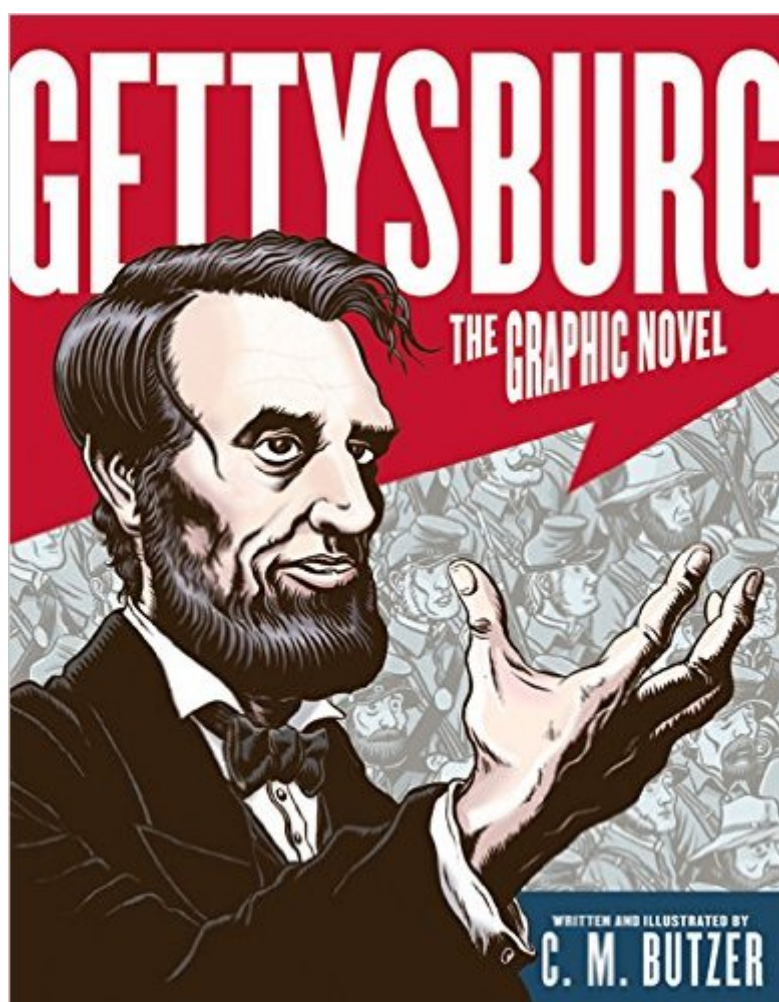


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# Gettysburg: The Graphic Novel



## Synopsis

Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address is familiar to all Americans. But never has his most famous speech—his 271 indelible words—been presented in such a visual and accessible format. Graphic artist and Civil War aficionado C. M. Butzer deftly uses a detailed, comic-book style to depict the Battle of Gettysburg; the national movement to create a memorial there; and the quiet day in 1863 when Lincoln delivered his galvanizing speech. Butzer uses only primary sources for the text, drawing from first-person letters and diaries, speeches, and Lincoln's own writing to unpack this series of historical events. The address itself is played out over eighteen pages, with every phrase given a visual interpretation that will resonate with young readers.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 80 pages

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Language: English

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Product Dimensions: 7 x 0.2 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.1 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (14 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #472,656 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #45 in [Books > Children's Books > Comics & Graphic Novels > History](#) #165 in [Books > Children's Books > Education &](#)

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 4 - 9

## Customer Reviews

About halfway through Gettysburg, a photographer arrives to record the aftermath of the battle. "Such a picture conveys a useful moral," he muses, as he focuses on a body lying on the battlefield. "It shows the blank horror and reality of war, in opposition to its pageantry." The same could be said of *Gettysburg: The Graphic Novel*. War is often spoken of in terms of great masses of soldiers advancing, retreating, or flanking the enemy. C. M. Butzer brings the battle down to the atomic level, showing individual soldiers fighting in the woods, charging with bayonets drawn, and staring up, dumbstruck, as a cannonball hurtles down upon them from the sky. And he does not flinch from the

horrors of war; after the battle, he shows bodies scattered on the battlefield and a soldier nonchalantly carrying an armload of amputated arms and legs. In just 80 pages, Butzer sets the scene, depicts the battle and its aftermath, and shows the movement to create a national cemetery on the site, as well as Lincoln writing his speech and the ceremony at Gettysburg. This is a lot of material, and the first half of the book is too compressed. The initial skirmish at Gettysburg is over with in three pages, and the action is hard to follow. The generals speak in sound bites and then disappear. We catch a brief glimpse of a field hospital, a short exchange with the governor of Pennsylvania, a snatch of conversation among the cemetery planners. Butzer compensates for this with copious notes in the back of the book, in which he fully explains each scene and adds more historical details. This makes interesting reading, but it would have been even better if it had been integrated more fully into the narrative. While this part of the book is hard to read, it also succeeds in doing something only a graphic novel could do: It puts the reader inside the story. It's one thing to read an account of a battle, but quite another to look down the dusty streets of Gettysburg and see the Confederate troops advancing while the local African Americans move out to safer territory. Once Lincoln appears, about halfway through the book, the action slows. We see Lincoln riding the train to Gettysburg and meditating in silence in his hotel room. Then we get to see a rare sight: The delivery of the Gettysburg Address in its original context, at the battlefield, and preceded by a long, fiery speech by the famous orator Edward Everett. When Lincoln takes the stage, the stillness is palpable. As Lincoln delivers the speech, Butzer backs away from literal reality, illustrating the words with depictions of the full pageantry of American civil rights history, from the Revolution and the founding fathers to union marches, suffragists, and a gay liberation parade. Butzer's figures sometimes look stiff and awkward, but he is very good at setting the scene and conveying emotion. And that's the real value of Gettysburg: it does more than just present the facts, it puts the reader in the heart of the story, providing a rare look at history from the inside out.--

Brigid Alverson

The second half of this book is really great. Lincoln's speech at Gettysburg is complemented with emotionally powerful illustrations. I want to use this part of the book in a lesson in my classroom. The first half of the book, where it actually depicts the Battle of Gettysburg, is a bit blah. A few images are powerful, but the text is a little boring.

This is the 65th review of a book that is somehow connected to the Civil War that I have written. I am also a teacher of American history. I only mention this so that the reader knows that I do not

come to my critiques of this book lightly. Butzer has attempted to do something that would be tough no matter who the author is - tell the entire story of Gettysburg in just 80 pages of a graphic novel. By the entire story, I mean why the war was going on in the first place, the status of both sides when the battle started, the battle itself and dealing with the dead, the wounded and the dignitaries that came to nose around afterwards. It also includes the decision to make a special cemetery at Gettysburg and the Gettysburg Address and a discussion of the famed speech, plus additional comments and a bibliography. If I were asked to do this in two typewritten pages I would find it to be a difficult challenge, so I do appreciate the task faced by Butzer. Butzer's treatment of the Gettysburg Address is brilliantly conceived and wonderfully demonstrates the power of the little speech to the crowd at the cemetery and the power of the speech as it has resonated down through time. He also does a great job of talking about how difficult it was to deal with so many dead and wounded once the armies had moved on. The awful nature of Civil War surgery is shown (including a pile of amputated limbs). However, his focus was just wrong in so many ways and there are at least two factual errors. The battle itself gets just 9 pages out of the 80 - the little skirmish in Gettysburg itself that started the battle gets two complete pages! If you are uninformed as to the particulars of the Battle of Gettysburg, this book will do little to inform you. But, there is a great deal of, in my opinion, wasted space dedicated to Lincoln's trip to Gettysburg and the build up to the dedication ceremony. On pages 22 and 23 Pickett's Charge is drawn in one epic sweep, but the dimensions are wrong (the length of the charge is dramatically shrunken) and the height and angle of Cemetery Ridge is greatly exaggerated. It is a low rise, not the steep angle shown in the book. It looks like Pickett is leading a charge up the dam of a man-made lake, not up the gentle heights of Cemetery Ridge. This distinction makes Lee's decision to attack the Union line directly look like less of a calculated risk and more like a cruel suicidal attack on an impregnable position. On page 38 workers are building the gatehouse to the cemetery in order to prepare for the ceremony. He also alludes to this in his notes at the end of the book. But, this gatehouse was built before the war (its cornerstone was laid in 1855 and it was used as Union General O.O. Howard's headquarters during the battle) as a part of Evergreen Cemetery, not the national cemetery. When I first visited Gettysburg, I also assumed that the gatehouse went with the National Cemetery. So, sometimes brilliant, sometimes lacking and sometimes just plain wrong, I rate this graphic novel 3 stars out of 5.

As both a civil war buff and comic book junky, I often wondered why a product like this had never been created (I suppose it takes the bicentennial of Lincoln's birthday to motivate the publishing community). I found the book gave an interesting perspective on the battle itself, which surprised me

given the amount of media previously dedicated to the event (the Gettysburg motion picture and several made for TV renditions). The difference was the author's ability to let the reader inside the minds of the characters, similar to a novel, while the artwork allowed one to sit back and enjoy the action. My only criticism is that I would have liked to have seen this expanded into a several part series, instead of just one publication.

As someone who picked up this book, not because of a curiosity about Lincoln, but because of an appreciation for the graphic novel as a medium, I was pleasantly surprised: C.M. Butzer's skill as a storyteller is readily apparent and lends itself wonderfully to the task of relating an important slice of history to young readers. Throughout, Butzer's compositional choices speak to a creator who is well versed in the tradition of the medium and, that this book was produced for a young audience belies the sophistication it is imbued with. My only complaint is similar to reviewer B. Russo's: I would like to see Mr. Butzer bring his formidable talents to bear and stretch his legs on a lengthier project.

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