



Cast Away on the Letter A

Fred (Illustrations)

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"Philemon is my new favorite companion. He's brave, resourceful, and he knows what to do when attacked by a lamp." — Lemony Snicket

On an ordinary day in the countryside, Philemon falls into a well on his father's farm and lands . . . on the Atlantic Ocean — literally on an A-shaped island complete with unicorns, centaurs, and exploding clocks. He begins a wild and whimsical journey home through a fantasy world as original as Alice's Wonderland, as richly imagined as Little Nemo's Slumberland, and as exciting to explore as Oz.

Cast Away on the Letter A Details

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Author : Fred (Illustrations)

Format : Hardcover 48 pages

Genre : Sequential Art, Graphic Novels, Adventure, Comics, Humor, Fantasy, Childrens, Fiction, Middle Grade, Bande Dessinée, Graphic Novels Comics

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From Reader Review Cast Away on the Letter A for online ebook

Stuart says

Frédéric Othon Théodore Aristidès, but more commonly known as Fred, was a French cartoonist best known for his series called Philemon. Shortly before his death in 2013, Fred finished volume 16 of this popular series and effectively brought the series to a close. One year after his death, TOON Books started translating these titles to English. To date, there are three published - 1. Cast Away on the Letter A, The Wild Piano, and The Suspended Castle. Allow me to tell you a little bit about the series and each of the books individually.

Philemon is a French teenager whose best friend is a donkey named Anatole. He is also a bit lazy, a bit of a dreamer, and has a dad who gets easily aggravated at the "tall stories" that Philemon tells him. The first story Cast Away on the Letter A begins with Philemon falling down a well and landing on a beach. It is here where he met a well-digger named Bartholomew and finds out that he is on the island. The island is the letter A and part of the words on the map "ATLANTIC OCEAN." Who knew that those words on the map were actual places. :) He also encounters a centaur while on this particular adventure. Later in the adventure, Bartholomew and Philemon enter a ship in a bottle and sail to the other A in Atlantic where they enter into a labyrinth. Philemon loses Bartholomew and his wandering around, he escapes back to his home.

In The Wild Piano, Philemon's dad thinks he's crazy, but his Uncle Felix remembers Bartholomew and is stunned to learn that Philemon found him. However, Uncle Felix seems scared to talk about the letter A island. He also fancies himself a bit of a magician, and he decides to help Philemon return and try and save Bartholomew. While there, Philemon breaks a law and must perform a concert on a wild piano. This ends up looking like a mix of concert and bull fight. Because he was able to defeat the piano, he is rewarded with an elevator ride. On this ride, he finds Bartholomew and they try to escape. While trying to escape, they encounter a giant man (perhaps Gulliver of Gulliver's Travels). Eventually, they do escape through a wardrobe (C.S. Lewis anyone?), which leads them back to Uncle Felix's room.

In The Suspended Castle Bartholomew is sad to be back in his village. Having been gone 40 years, he feels completely out of place. He doesn't like the clothes he wears. He misses his castle and his centaur butler. Uncle Felix decides to help him return, but Bartholomew forgets his hat when leaving. This causes Philemon to chase after him. This time they end up on the letter I. They try to make it back to the letter A and Bartholomew's castle, but are captured by a captain with a boat shaped like a whale (thoughts of Melville come to mind). While Bartholomew and Philemon were rowing on the whale boat, pelican-shaped boats flying in the sky tried to capture the whale. They were only able to capture Bartholomew and Philemon though, which they took to a castle suspended by a rope. They were then mistaken as "cutters of the rope," whom the people had been awaiting for 2,000 years. Philemon and Bartholomew cut the rope (improperly) and the castle sank with everyone escaping except the captain who went down with his castle. Philemon and Bartholomew also make it back home.

The first three books in the Philemon series are absurdly delightful. The illustrations are crude, but the number of literary references are astounding. If you are looking for a trip through strange lands, then you'll enjoy this series. I think it's more geared toward teenagers, but adults might find some pleasure in it as well.

Anna Finger says

target audience: 9-13

genre: Fantasy (everything was made up from falling into a well and ending up on the “A” in the Atlantic Ocean to the centaurs that Phil meets on the island)

Text-to-self: The events in this book were crazy and reminded me of some of the crazy dreams that I have had. Phil falls into a well and ends up in the Atlantic Ocean which makes no sense at all and many times I wake up and think about my dreams. They make absolutely no sense and I often wonder what caused me to dream such crazy things.

text-to-text: All of the crazy made up things in this book reminded me of a Dr. Seuss book. There were bottles growing on trees and lamps that were also plants and all sorts of other crazy things.

text-to-world: Kids today spend all of their time on the computer or in front of some sort of screen. They don't have the imagination to dream up crazy things like what happened in this book. I think that it is really important to get kids away from the screen and doing other things like playing outside or reading a book.

Aurora says

For this and other reviews please check out my blog www.buzzonbooks.com

This book is not what I was expecting. With the title “Cast Away on the Letter A” I was thinking it was going to be an alphabet book of sorts. Philemon and his adventures are totally new to me, so I had no idea! It's original title was ‘Philémon – tome 02 – Le naufragé du A’.

The author Fred Othon Aristidès started writing this series in the 1960s. You can tell by the quick storyline and art that it is an older series but for me that just seems much more authentic. Originally in French, the series is in the process of being translated to English and published here in North America. I believe the full series is already released in the United States and we have just received the first here in Canada (which I believe was actually the second in the series. The full collection (if I did my research correctly) is 16 stories.

The pictures are like sketches, if you have ever seen ‘Tintin’ it is very comparable. There are lots of details for such small pictures and they definitely helped get the little details across.

This is the first graphic novel I have ever read (for me, if I wanted visuals I would watch TV lol) but I honestly didn't mind it. The visuals really helped get the setting across without having to use so many words (yes, that is the point, I know) but I always felt as though the story would lose something. In this case I feel like my brain probably would have painted a nicer picture but the drawing were authentic that it is worth making an exception.

There is not a lot of heart to the story, or character development. The adventure piece is clear though so I am hoping as the series progresses we will see more of that. The character development happens with little blurbs at the front of the book – “Philemon is an imaginative teenager who lives on a farm in the 1960s. When a message in a bottle sparks his curiosity, he falls right into a world of fantastic adventures...” this is not only your character development, but also a pretty accurate summary of the story.

Will I read the rest of the series? Probably, just for the sheer simple pleasure. These stories will be perfect for

the days that my brain is struggling. Do I expect a lot of the series? No, but I think the simplicity is what makes it so enjoyable for me.

If you love Tintin, inspector gadget or you just want to try something different give this series a try.

Jennifer Heise says

Philemon's adventures may be set in the 1960s, but the trippy graphic novels are not dated (at least as translated for the TOON books series) for modern young readers. Adults who loved Phantom Tollbooth and E. Nesbit and other surrealist fantasy for children and tweens will also enjoy it. It's comparatively tame (Modern readers may wince a bit at the breaking of bottles in an open pasture),b but has enough adventure to draw one in. My six year old son (fan of the Benjamin Bear TOON series) enjoyed it very much and agreed that he would be interested in more from the same author.

There's a fairy-tale atmosphere in the story, in which Philemon accidentally travels through a semi-abandoned well to rescue someone who is sending messages in a bottle asking for help, and his adventures there looking for a way back. Philemon's father is the classic parent of a fairy tale adventure-Jack; the other characters play their parts as companions, assistants, etc.

Nicola Mansfield says

I like this a lot. An English translation of a French "comic strip", as they call them over there, this is the adventures of Philemon and there appear to be many others available in the original language. Toon Books has chosen to translate and print this one in its "Toon Graphics" series, virtually a level 4 coming after the graded readers. This book is a large oversized one, like a picture book, and as is common with the French style the book's design is presented with many square panels per page. This is a fun story of adventure. Philemon sees a bottle with a message in his hardly ever used well and when he climbs in discovers an entirely new and different world. I like Philemon already and will watch for the next one to come out.

Erik says

Fun adventure through a pretty bizarre and surreal world. I felt like it could and should have been fleshed out a lot more than it was (it's a really short story) but it was still a pretty solid read.

Matti Karjalainen says

Fredin "A:n haaksirikkoinen" (WSOY, 1993) ilmestyi ensimmäisen kerran joskus 1960-luvulla, ja tekeepä mieli sanoa, että kuinkas muutenkaan. Surrealistisesta juonesta ja psykedeelisistä visioista saisi varmaan enemmän irti jos olisi poltellut jointin tai pari.

Toinen tähti ei olisi välttämättä ollut väärin, olihan tässä kiistattomasti visuaalisia ansioita, mutta tarina

edellä mennään, eikä se minusta ollut hauska, jännittävä tai oikein millään tavalla kiinnostava.

Sarjakuva ei siis ollut ihan minun makuuni, mutta on helppo ymmärtää, miksi Filemon nauttii kulttimainetta.

Kim says

Philemon is the best adventure comics ever.

Matthew Brady says

I think this is the second installment in a classic children's comics series from French cartoonist Fred, with the series following the adventures of his character Philemon. Based on this volume, it seems to be pretty eminently skippable. The story follows a kid who falls down a well and ends up on a strange island that is located on the letter A on maps of the Atlantic Ocean. There's some kinda amusingly surreal stuff, but nothing much happens; he just wanders around looking at stuff before he ends up figuring out how to get home. There's little in the way of stakes or conflict, and the art is only so-so. If it was illustrated in a clear-line, Tintin-esque style, it might be worth checking out all the weirdness, but it's kind of messy and inconsistent. Not a very attractive package, and I wouldn't recommend it. Luckily, it's pretty short.

Emily says

A French comic book adventure from the 1960s (part of a series that ran for decades in the magazine "Pilote") recently translated into English for the first time. After checking it out from the library on the enthusiastic recommendation of "Beth Sniffs Books" (see her excellent review) it took me a while to sit down and read it because I was not attracted by the visual style. When I did, the rather fun and fantastical story grew on me, but even after deciding I liked the book and would read as many subsequent volumes as get published, I still can't shake a sort of visceral distaste for Philemon's midriff baring shirt and his bare flappy feet. Others may not have this problem. On a happier note, I was amused at one point to see a visual reference to the painting "The Raft of the Medusa" by Gericault. This same trope appeared in Asterix the Legionary (with the recurring pirate characters hilariously posed as the dying people on the raft), which was published in 1966, a couple of years before Philemon's adventures first appeared, so I'm guessing this was a conscious playful echo of that joke.

Nancy Kotkin says

Story: 5 stars

Art: 4 stars

Full-color children's graphic novel in the fantasy genre. Originally published in the 1960s in France. This is the first book in the Philemon series. Fantastical combination of elements from Robinson Crusoe, Alice in Wonderland, and Dr. Seuss, with some mythical creatures (i.e. a centaur and a unicorn) and the Raft of the Medusa (famous painting by Theodore Gericault) thrown into the mix. All of those ingredients blend

surprisingly fluidly into a fast-paced story. What the book lacks in character development, it makes up for in vivid imagination. The art has a very Seussian feel to it. Includes notes in the back of the book about the creator's influences.

Kate Foran says

Philemon's adventures is absurdist fantasy--wacky then wackier. The reader doesn't know what's driving the action, or who our characters really are--that's not the point!

First printed in 1972, this TOON graphics reprint includes a spread on p. 44-55 that gives some background on mythology elements and symbols that the creator, Fred employs (unicorns, the Raft of Medusa, etc.). It's like finding easter eggs in your comic -- makes for excellent rereading.

Would appeal most to 10+, maybe 13+.

Autumn says

Graphic Novel #2

Copyright Date: 2014

The target audience for this book is intermediate level readers. The book requires the reader to have a more advanced vocabulary than what most primary level readers would have. Although the books contains a numerous amount of illustrations, each page is filled with text. There is also a lot going on within the book and you must be able to pay attention to many details at once to understand what is going on. It is for these reasons I believe the target audience is intermediate level readers.

The genre of this book is clearly fantasy fiction. There are so many elements within this book that completely impossible. One of those impossible elements include falling into a well that leads you to the middle of the Atlantic ocean. Also, in the middle of the ocean there are several islands that spell out the word "Atlantic Ocean" like on a map. Finally, there is a centaur in the book that is an old man's servant. All of these occurrences within the book lead me to believe it is fantasy fiction.

Text-To-Text Connection

- I would connect this book to Narnia. Both books have main characters that accidentally go into a new world that contains unimaginable things. Narnia contains centaurs, a talking lion, and an ice queen. This book also contains a new world that has a centaur, several magical islands, and lamp flowers that attack people. Both of the books main characters that encounter new adventures and both face huge issues (finding a way home and fighting a war). Finally, both books have an ending that consists of the main characters achieving their goal of either finding a way home or winning a war. Although they went through many struggles to achieve their goals, in the end they were successful.

Text-To-Self Connection

- This book reminds me of my first trip to Nebraska on my own. I ran into many issues just as the main character did in his journey to find a way home. I got lost three times and I almost ran out of gas. It took me

two more hours than it should have to get to Omaha. Just as Philemon, the main character, went through struggles like falling down a well, being attacked by lamp flowers, and almost getting shipwrecked, I too faced many difficulties on my journey. We both wanted to get back home and in the end we did, but we both had to fight through many unexpected obstacles.

Text-To-World Connection

- It might be a stretch, but I see a connection between this book and the Holocaust. Philemon was taken from his home without his consent and had to go through a numerous amount of life threatening obstacles to get back home. The Jews were taken from their home without their consent and were forced to go through many life threatening events to get back home. Although many Jews died during the Holocaust and nobody died in this book, the struggles they each faced were difficult. Philemon was engulfed by a well that put him in a new place that had a dangerous environment, just as the Jews were placed in concentration camps. Also, within the book Philemon had to watch people go through struggles of living on a raft to escape the island. The Jews had to watch their people go through struggles of torture and pain every day until it was over. I know the Holocaust was much more severe than this book, but they do contain some connections.

Oak Lawn Public Library - Youth Services says

Title: Cast Away on the Letter A

Author: Fred

Lexile: GN240

Pages: 48

Recommendations and Comments: Fantastic story of Philemon as a castaway on the letter A. Very engaging story and the pictures are great. I am not a huge graphic novel reader, but I thought this was a fun and interesting story. The best part of the book is the history lesson at the end. Different parts of the story are explained. Also at the end of the book is a guide to reading graphic novels.

Stars: 5 out of 5

Reviewed by: Jamie

Barbara says

On an outing with his donkey to the family well, Philemon lowers himself into the hole when he finds a note asking for help in a bottle. It turns out that the well is a portal to a whole different place, and he ends up in the Atlantic Ocean where Mr. Bartholomew has been lost for decades. Although this is a rather strange adventure, it has lots of appeal because something happens on just about every page. Talking animals and strange objects are featured here, and readers will want to know what happens next as well as what happened before the story began. There are all sorts of occurrences as the characters move from one letter of the alphabet to the next.
