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One Dead Spy (Nathan Hale's Hazardous Tales Book 1)



Synopsis

Nathan Hale, the author's historical namesake, was America's first spy, a Revolutionary War hero who famously said I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country before being hanged by the British. In the Nathan Hale's Hazardous Tales series, author Nathan Hale channels his namesake to present history's roughest, toughest, and craziest stories in the graphic novel format. One Dead Spy tackles the story of Hale himself, who was an officer and spy for the American rebels during the Revolutionary War. Author Hale highlights the unusual, gruesome, and just plain unbelievable truth of historical Nathan Hale--from his early unlucky days at Yale to his later unlucky days as an officer--and America during the Revolutionary War.

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Customer Reviews

I have been a fan of Nathan Hale (the spy, not the author, who I'd never heard of before) since I was a kid forty years ago. I have a rather large collection of books about him, including my prizes, an original Stuart from 1856 and a copy of Seymour's "Documentary Life". This book will go well on that shelf. The premise of this book is a bit of magic realism: As Nathan Hale speaks his last words, a huge history book swallows him up. A few minutes later he emerges, starry eyed (but still with his

hands tied behind his back), explaining that "I'm in the history book now" and that he has read the future history of America. He tells the enthralled hangman and the British soldier (who I take to be William Cunningham) the story of his life and of the beginnings of the American Revolution. When he comes to the end of his story, they want to know more, so like Scheherazade, he postpones his execution by spinning more tales, which will be a future series of graphic novels (I can't wait for the one about Benedict Arnold). The book is very funny, with a lot of gallows humor--literally, since the frame story all takes place on the gallows. For example: Hangman: Do you have any regrets? Hale: I regret that I only have one life. Hangman: Ha ha! Good one! If you had an extra life you could be hanged, then just walk away. One of my favorite bits of silliness was this one: "George Washington. He's from Virginia. He looks like this." "Meh. This is my George. King George." "George vs. George. They sort of look the same." "By George! They do look the same." There are also poignant moments, including this one, just after Hale comes out of the history book: Hangman: Does it happen? Do you get hanged in the future?

Reason for Reading: I enjoy this type of children's historical graphic novel/biography and have appreciated Hale's artwork in other books. This was so much more than I had expected it to be. It simply was brilliant and an excellent read all round. Nathan Hale (writer) has done for American History what Rick Geary has done for 19th century crime. The two series are admirably similar in their focus and format bringing more information to the table on exciting events from the past through a totally enticing graphical format. Hale sets up his series by telling the story of the historical Nathan Hale as he is about to be hung, the man, his executioner and a British Guard are on the block when something happens which allows Hale to tell the story of his past which includes the story of the American Revolution up to this point. Told with extreme detail, I was quite amazed at how much I was actually interested in (and understood) the military strategy, battle details and reasonings behind various maneuvers. This part of war I'm not usually very interested in but Hale (author) has made it exciting and funny. Along with this detail, there is also the personal stories of the people involved in the war as they related to Hale (the spy). We learn about Henry Knox, George Washington, Thomas Knowlton, Benjamin Tallmadge and many others. I especially appreciated how Hale (the author) brought history alive with his humour; he sometimes goes beyond the scope of the book and makes comments about our world to the reader, he pokes great fun at these historical characters, making fun of strange names and strange circumstances. The executioner is my favourite character as he is the one he is not quite so "book-smart" and asks the questions and makes the comments the reader probably would.

I've been a fan of Nathan Hale's for a while. Nathan Hale the author and illustrator, not the patriot, although you could be pardoned the confusion. I loved his illustrations for the graphic novels "Rapunzel's Revenge" and "Calamity Jack," and his picture book "Yellowbelly and Plum" was one of my son's favorites. Hale's current series has moved him to the top of my list. In 2012 Nathan Hale and Amulet Books started a series of graphic novels based on American History, under the banner (literally) "Nathan Hale's Hazardous Tales." The first book in the series is "One Dead Spy," and it and the following books are interesting, easy to follow, and downright entertaining. I'm buying every one of them. "One Dead Spy" is about Nathan Hale (the patriot), executed in 1776, at the very beginning of the American Revolution. The 128-page hardcover comic begins with Manhattan in flames, and a whistling Hangman bringing a noose to a gallows. He shoots a bald eagle away, and prepares Nathan Hale to be hanged. They're soon joined by a British Officer, and these three will be the narrators for the rest of the book. Given an omniscient overview of American History, Hale sees what the destiny of the country is, and even though things look grim for the colonists (and more especially for Hale personally) in September 1776, he knows that there's a brighter future. He proceeds to tell the Hangman and British Officer all about the American Revolution, focusing on the first year, and Hale's role in it. Nathan Hale makes a good narrator for the years 1775-76, and his path crosses with the likes of George Washington, Henry Knox, Ethan Allen, Benedict Arnold, General Howe and other notable heroes and villains of American History.

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