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Stitches by David Small, Norton, 2010

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Recommended Readings



Stitches

by David Small, Norton 2010

Reviewed by Robert Stapleton

David Small's graphic memoir *Stitches* is freshly out in paperback. You should celebrate by grabbing a copy, or even buying one. Here's why: Small's story is a searing portrait of the haunting images of his formative years, and they are haunting. His mother was born with her heart on the wrong side of her chest and isn't too concerned with figuring out how to employ it. Small's father is a radiologist and practices his craft on a six-year old David in the basement. The dominant family characteristic is silence, and a crazy grandmother does not make things any better for our young hero. When David develops a cyst in his neck at age 11, he will end up losing more than his voice.

Small's art, though, is what elevates the graphic novel form and turns the story into a grand weeper. The black and white treatment, accentuated with expert light and shade, becomes a deft illumination of a young boy's growing confusion and evaporating innocence. Small's panel-to-panel juxtapositions are especially arresting as evocative incisions into the cruel, adult world into which David is being hurled. The best literature surprises and makes the human story fresh again. Small's memoir will hurt you a little, but ultimately renew your faith in the human powers of resilience and imagination.

- Robert Stapleton is assistant professor of English at Butler University.