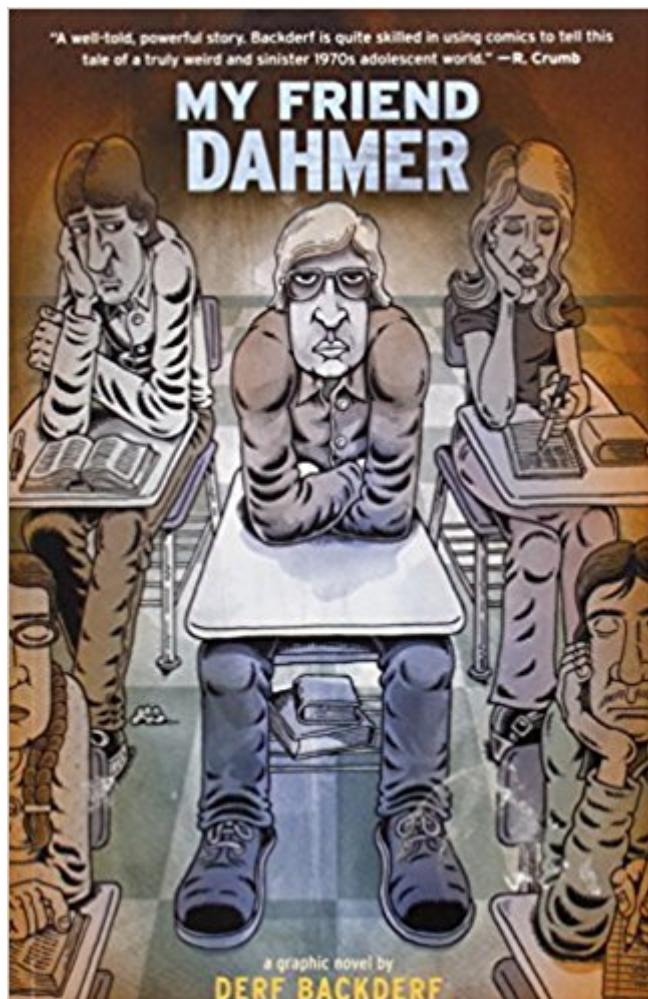


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# My Friend Dahmer



## Synopsis

NATIONAL BESTSELLER 2013 ALA/YALSA Alex Award 2014 Revelation Award at Angoulême 2015 ALA/YALSA Alex Award (Excellence in Narrative Nonfiction) *“You only think you know this story. In 1991, Jeffrey Dahmer”* •the most notorious serial killer since Jack the Ripper•seared himself into the American consciousness. To the public, Dahmer was a monster who committed unthinkable atrocities. To Derf Backderf, “Jeff” was a much more complex figure: a high school friend with whom he had shared classrooms, hallways, and car rides. In *My Friend Dahmer*, a haunting and original graphic novel, writer-artist Backderf creates a surprisingly sympathetic portrait of a disturbed young man struggling against the morbid urges emanating from the deep recesses of his psyche•a shy kid, a teenage alcoholic, and a goofball who never quite fit in with his classmates. With profound insight, what emerges is a Jeffrey Dahmer that few ever really knew, and one readers will never forget. *“Also available by Derf Backderf, *Trashed*. Find teaching guides for *My Friend Dahmer* and other titles at [abramsbooks.com/resources](http://abramsbooks.com/resources). Coming in 2017: *My Friend Dahmer* will become a major motion picture from director Marc Meyers. Praise for *My Friend Dahmer*: “The tone is sympathetic and enraged (â€œWhere were the damn adults?â€), while not excusing or making the story unduly fascinating. Backderfâ€s writing is impeccably honest in not exculpating his own misdeeds . . . and quietly horrifying. A small, dark classic.”* •Publishers Weekly (starred review)? “One of the best graphic novels I’ve read this year.” -- USA Today’s PopCandy “One of the most thought-provoking comics released in a long time.” -- Slate.com? “Carefully researched and sourced with ample back matter, Backderfâ€s tragic chronicle of what shouldnâ€t have been is a real butt-kicker for educators and youth counselors as well as peers of other potential Dahmers. Highly recommended for professionals as well as true crime readers.” *“Library Journal* “This isn’t a cautionary tale. Its insight sharedinsight arriving too late to save Dahmers victims, let alone Jeff himself, but perhaps soon enough to remind both teens and their caretakers that questioning peculiar behavior might be a better tack than ignoring or exploiting it.” -- School Library Journal? “Fortunately, cartoonist Derf Backderf isn’t one to avoid the troubling, even terrifying, truths that lurk in the dark recesses of that notorious serial killer’s early lifeand modern American life itself.” -- Foreword Reviews “A powerful, unsettling use of the graphic medium to share a profoundly disturbing story. . . . An exemplary demonstration of the transformative possibilities of graphic narrative.” *“Kirkus Reviews* (starred review) “Masterful. . . a rich tale full of complexity and sensitivity . . . There’s something about Dahmer’s life and crimes that seems almost crafted for treatment in the murky world of comix. Yet it’s empathy and nuance, not gore, that

put *My Friend Dahmer* alongside Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home* and David Small's *Stitches* in the annals of illustrated literature." •Cleveland Plain Dealer "A new classic of the graphic novel genre. . . . A moving book that qualifies as one of the great graphic novels, a work of art." •Creative Loafing "A well-told, powerful story. Backderf is quite skilled in using comics to tell this tale of a truly weird and sinister 1970s adolescent world." •R. Crumb? "Anyone who opens *My Friend Dahmer* to satisfy a morbid curiosity, and likewise anyone who expects to find no more than a cynical publishing venture here, is bound for disappointment. It is a horrifying read, yes, not so much for what it reveals about the sad early (and inevitably terrible) life of Jeffrey Dahmer, but because of what it reveals about the bland emotional landscape of Middle America, in this vision a petri dish for psychoses in many degrees and forms." Backderf's odd stylization, with figures that look like organic robots, is a perfect vehicle for this conception. His graphic approach is grotesque, droll, and it rags on reality as masses of kids knew and still know it. Lots of books exist about the agonies and cruelty of the adolescent high school experience, but few so compellingly bring us straight into that soulless environment, showing the ways it can shelter, allow to burgeon, and, at the same time, be completely blind to real madness. It wasn't easy reading this book, but I'm glad I did." •David Small, author and illustrator of *Stitches*, a National Book Award finalist and #1 New York Times bestseller "Stunning. Horrifying. Beautifully done." •Alison Bechdel, author and illustrator of *Fun Home*, a National Book Critics Circle Award finalist "My Friend Dahmer is a brilliant graphic novel and surely ranks among the very best of the form. Like Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*, the book plumbs a dark autobiographical mystery, trying in retrospect to understand actions and motivations to piece together the makings of a tragedy. Like Charles Burns's *Black Hole*, it's a starkly etched portrait of the horror of high school in the 1970s. Comparisons aside, *My Friend Dahmer* is entirely original, boldly and beautifully drawn, and full of nuance and complexity and even a strange tenderness. Out of the sordid and grotesque details of Dahmer's life, Derf has fashioned a moving and complex literary work of art." •Dan Chaon, award-winning author of *Among the Missing* and *You Remind Me of Me* "Just when you think you know all there is to know about Jeffrey Dahmer— one of the most notorious criminals of the past century— along comes *My Friend Dahmer*, which adds significantly to our understanding of this rare form of psychopathology. The graphic novel format helps the reader appreciate the adolescent mind-set of Dahmer's high school classmates. Although none of those who grew up with Dahmer expected to hear what they learned on July 22, 1991, when he was caught, no one was really surprised, either. This unique book allows the reader to listen in on the fascinating reminiscences of those who watched the developing

mind of a future serial killer."?Ã¢?â?•Louis B. Schlesinger, PhD, Professor of Forensic Psychology, John Jay College of Criminal Justice "ItÃ¢?â?cd be so easy to pigeonhole and think that the reason you canÃ¢?â?çt stop reading *My Friend Dahmer* is because it offers a voyeuristic peek inside the monster. And it does. But as it turns its self-aware eye on the boy who doesnÃ¢?â?çt belong, the real magic trick is how equally hateful and sad you feel for the monster himself. This oneÃ¢?â?çs still haunting me."?Ã¢?â?•Brad Meltzer, author of *Identity Crisis* and *The Inner Circle*, a #1 New York Times bestseller?? "As someone who walked the halls of Revere High School with both Backderf and Dahmer and was there from the beginning, I am astounded by the accuracy and truthfulness of this portrait. I know of no other work that so clearly shows the teenage days of an American monster, long before the rest of the world heard of him.

Mesmerizing."?Ã¢?â?•Mike Kukral, PhD, Revere High School class of 1978, Professor of Geography, Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology, author of *Prague 1989: Theater of Revolution* "If you want to read a heavy story about a disturbing teenager, *My Friend Dahmer* will certainly quench your dark little desires. But this book is about a lot of other things that matter much, much more: the institutionalized weirdness of the suburban seventies, what it means to be friends with someone you donÃ¢?â?çt really like, a cogent explanation as to why terrible things happen, and a means for feeling sympathy toward those who donÃ¢?â?çt seem to deserve it."?Ã¢?â?•Chuck Klosterman, author of *Sex, Drugs, and Cocoa Puffs: A Low Culture Manifesto*?and *The Visible Man* "A solid job. Putrid serial killer Jeffrey DahmerÃ¢?â?çs origins are explored in this fine book. Dig itÃ¢?â?•itÃ¢?â?çll hang you out to dry."?Ã¢?â?•James Ellroy, author of *My Dark Places* and *L.A. Confidential*

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Derf Backderf has been nominated for two Eisner Awards and has received a host of honors, including the prestigious Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award for political cartooning. His weekly comic strip, *The City*, has appeared in more than 100 newspapers over the past 22 years. Backderf lives in Cleveland, Ohio.

I remember reading a page on the net several years ago, which was a cartoon detailing a fishing trip with Jeffrey Dahmer and a friend when they were teenagers. On this trip, young Jeff caught a sunfish and, instead of throwing it back as his friend asked, he proceeded to chop it to death with a pocket knife. I have always remembered this, but have never found the page again. Just this past Sunday I found out it was part of an actual book called *My Friend Dahmer*, written by Derf Backderf. So I checked out the Look Inside bits, and was interested enough to get a copy. It arrived Monday, and I've been through it twice since then. It's not so much the drawing style, which is basically R Crumb, but the haunting story it tells of Dahmer before he became a serial killer, when he was a child and something might have been done for him, if the adults around him had only looked up from their own self-absorption and seen there was something terribly terribly wrong. Backderf makes no bones about his sympathy (pity, really) for Dahmer ending when Dahmer committed his first murder; however, he also draws an unflinching picture of Dahmer's loneliness, his isolation from others and from his family, and his (Backderf's) own participation in making Dahmer feel less than human. I'm a contemporary of the kids depicted in this book -- I graduated high school in 1975, they graduated in 1978. I was an outcast, and was bullied about as badly as Dahmer. I was pretty much ignored by my parents and the teachers. But why didn't I become a serial killer? Why am I reasonably well adjusted, and have been a contributing member of society for lo, these 40 some odd years since graduation? What makes one person become an average wife/mom/worker bee, and one person the worst serial killer in recent history? I think those are all questions that keep me turning back to this book, and that make me recommend it to all y'all out there. There are no graphic depictions of murder, death or gore -- a couple of illustrations of roadkill and one incident which shows that Dahmer, even in his descent into madness, still retained a core of humanity and kindness many "normal" people don't have. At least until he finally crossed the line and became a murderer. Well worth the money, well worth the read.

This book took me about the length of a movie to read. I know some people knock this book but they must not like comic books or don't know how to read them or prefer gore or something. I wasn't crazy about the art style at first but it quickly grew on me as I got drawn very quickly into the story. I don't feel it drags at any moment and is a very haunting story. I can remember the "dahmers" from our school- boys who acted very much like he did. I was more in the shoes of what author- I wasn't popular, I was the art kid in the school always drawing and I had a few acquaintances much like he did. Makes you wonder what those peoples lives are like behind closed doors. I'm drawing on too much so I'll end this review here. If you enjoy comic books and dark things interest you especially based on true things, this book is for you!!!!

I decided to read the book before I saw the movie. I am very happy that I did. I finished it in two hours because I just couldn't look away, Mr. Backderf did an amazing job, and if you read the part where he explains how he obtained all of the information, you'll understand that Derf wanted to make this book as great as possible. It is definitely worth the read, even if you aren't into graphic novels.

A very interesting perspective into the early years of one America's most notorious serial killers. The tragic early life of Jeffrey offers an intriguing idea as to the formation of the psychology of a psychopath. This is not an apology for Dahmer's crimes but rather a glimpse of the failure of society that allows a being like Dahmer to slip under the surface where they fester to the point beyond redemption.

I read this and then gave it to my 16 year old daughter. This is an important book that emphasizes the banality of evil and how we all need to be vigilant to young people that are struggling. There were so many times that early intervention may have prevented these tragedies. The drawings are powerful and really capture the 80's (I'm almost 50). I met Derf at Genghis Con and he drew a self portrait on the title page.

This story hit close to home on the psychological aspects of isolation. It always had but reading how it molded the young Dahmer into who he eventually chose to become, this book is a terrifying look into how environment can take a person's positive potential and fuel only the darkest possibilities. It was painful to read how little support Dahmer had and how it left him alone with only his demons.

The first time I read it I cried because I was thankful for the people I had in my life growing up, even if they were on the periphery.

I couldn't put this book down! First of all, the physical feel of the book is very pleasant! It's super smooth! And the inside panel can be used as a bookmark! The art work is pure talent! The smallest lines of ink help to capture the story. I went to school with Dahmer as well. I lived a mile from his house. I learned things from this book that I had not known. WOW!!! It was thought provoking and brought back many memories when I read it. I highly recommend this book!

This was a very incitful book on a young Jeffrey Dahmer and his youth and how it was spent and what he became.

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