



Epilepsy Graphic Medicine Discussion Guide:

Epileptic by David B.

"A painfully honest examination of the effects of debilitating epilepsy on one man and his family, told through a combination of straightforward text and expressionist imagery that ranges in its palette from centuries-old symbolism to the secret worlds of childhood. Even as he shows up the hollow promises of every school of esoteric and alternative medicine his family encounters in their quest for help, David B. works a real kind of deeply human magic on the page..." ~ Jason Lutes

Why a Graphic Novel?

- Research suggests that we are better at understanding and absorbing information presented in visual forms, such as comics.
- Stories are more engaging than factual information alone. How much easier is it to remember and empathize with something a friend experienced versus hard statistics alone?
- Coined by Ian Williams, a physician in the UK, Graphic Medicine "is the intersection of the medium of comics and the discourse of healthcare."
 - Graphic medicine, then, combines visual storytelling and medicine, creating a unique opportunity for readers to experience and learn about healthcare experiences through comics.

To Learn More...

- www.graphicmedicine.org – The home base for all things graphic medicine.
- *The Graphic Medicine Manifesto* by MK Czerwiec et al. Available from Penn State University Press.



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Questions for Discussion*

1. Why does Jean-Christophe begin to act out the way he does, treating his family so cruelly? Why does his family allow him to continue acting out like this?
2. Why don't Jean-Christophe and David get along? Is there anything other than Jean-Christophe's illness that keeps them from being close?
3. What do you think of B's panels? How did they affect the story? How did they affect you? Are they at all similar to others you've seen? What do they do for the story that "only comics can do"?
4. Why does David depict Jean-Christophe's illness the way he does? Particularly the image of the snake, why choose a snake to represent his illness? Why does this depiction permeate more panels than just the ones we see Jean-Christophe in? How does this representation change as Jean-Christophe gets older?
5. What might David's fascination with war and battle and later the esoteric say about him?
6. What might Jean-Christophe's fascination with dictators and 70s rock/metal say about him?
7. In what ways does this memoir compare to others you've read? Do you think the comics medium was an appropriate format for this story?
8. How did the many therapies David's parents put the family and Jean-Christophe through affect David? How do they affect Jean-Christophe? Why do they pursue so many treatments?
9. Why do you think Jean-Christophe seemed cured when being treated by Master N? Later on, why do you think he succumbs to the illness? Is this inevitable or is there more to it than that?
10. Why must David keep writing stories and drawing? David does explain this, or try to. Does it help him deal? Is it his form of epilepsy?
11. *Epileptic* has been heavily challenged by people with the condition. Why do you think that is? Would you share this book with people in your life? People with epilepsy?

Remember: These are just suggested questions and there could be many, many more. Don't feel tethered to these – let the conversation flow naturally and use these questions as starting points when conversation stalls.