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Steven Universe Original Graphic Novel: Too Cool For School



Synopsis

We're going to give you another reason to Believe In Steven! Schoolboy Steven, activate! Steven finds himself enrolled in Connie's school after a show-and-tell lesson goes awry...and things just get crazier from there! Steven is having a hard time fitting in with normal school and Connie just wants to graduate with good grades and a clean record, but when gem and homework collide, who knows what will happen. This is a lesson you don't want to miss! Based on the success of the Adventure Time and Regular Show original graphic novels, KaBOOM! is kicking off a series of brand-new stories about the misadventures of Steven Universe and the Crystal Gems!

Book Information

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Grade Level: 3 and up

Customer Reviews

We finally have a full-length graphic novel for Steven Universe and it's just lovely! It was so much fun to go to school with Steven, and in this longer format, the authors were able to take their time with it and make it feel almost like it could be an episode of the show. (Note: I read this on April 7, because it was being sold in local comic shops long before it was available on Amazon, but the release date to get it from Amazon was weeks later. I don't know why it took so long to become available here.) There are things they could have done better, and I'll probably be kind of thorough with my discussion of those because I'm a SU nerd, but overall the enjoyment overshadows the disappointments. The characters we know and love were almost always right on with their characterization, and though the background characters new to the story here were pretty one-dimensional (and sometimes

caricaturish), I could deal with it getting to see Steven in a new setting. Some of us had wondered about his school situation, since they never do explicitly state in the show that Steven's been educated at all, and this clears that up. The art is cute, with the characters' body language feeling appropriate despite the slight lean off the show model (the characters look sort of lumpier and sketchier), and as always the backgrounds are lovely to look at. And while I don't quite think the comic will stand on its own for readers who don't watch the show, I think it's fantastic to have a volume like this for those of us who love little in-between snacks. This book contains two full-color stories: The main story is "Too Cool for School," and then there's a little side story at the end called "Yard Sale." I'll examine "Too Cool for School" first and outline what I liked, what I didn't like, and what I thought was notable.

What I liked:

1. Steven is so dang melodramatic about no one wanting to entertain him in the beginning. He talks just like this in the show too, infusing everything with drama when he's overwhelmed. It's so Steven.
2. Connie brings Steven to school for show and tell and quickly makes a mess of explaining what Gems are. Her awkwardness was precious. I have personally tried to explain what Gems are to people who ask me about the show and it kinda sometimes goes a little bit like this. And he's so excited and eager to tell the other kids about being a half-Gem and enthusiastically admits he has no idea what exactly he is. He's just cute.
3. Steven starts obsessing over whether the Gems might have seen dinosaurs and it's really nice how the dialogue sounds like what real kids sometimes say.
4. When Connie and Steven get sent to the principal's office, you can just see the weight of Connie's parents' expectations pressing down on her shoulders as she wails about her permanent record. It's very true to her character.
5. Connie's resentment of Steven getting her in trouble evaporates relatively quickly when she sees him all wide-eyed about cafeteria lunch, and it's so perfect that she just can't stay mad at him. It reminds me a bit of their actual dynamic on the show during the episode "Fusion Cuisine."
6. When Connie set out to explain lunch cliques to Steven, I was expecting the sort of trite jocks/nerds/slackers dynamic, but they came up with some pretty unusual groups for the lunchroom. They have social media stars hanging out together, along with some board game enthusiasts, an anti-clique clique, and the Junior Safety Patrol. I figured they'd be portrayed as NERDS but Connie super respects them and isn't dismayed that Steven picks them to sit with (and of course he would; he'd love to be with people who appreciate protecting others!). I'm glad she wasn't like "no Steven they're unpopular," though she's even less popular so it works out. I like their design--I'm not sure what gender a couple of them are being portrayed as (which is nice ambiguity), though I'm sad they don't seem to have names.
7. I just love that Steven's chattering about school during his Gem mission. That's one thing I've always loved about the show: Steven is thrilled to talk about Gem stuff with

everyday people, but he's also just as excited about mundane stuff that's new to him.⁸ Pearl's comment about how Steven enjoys pummeling children his own age in dodgeball has the Pearl Tone exactly right. The way she humors him has a particular flavor and this nailed it.⁹ The bickering between the Gems regarding whether Steven should go to school is just classic. Pearl is in her typical frame of mind--that only Gem education is important and he's already learning what's necessary--while Garnet is firmly on Team Trust Steven, insisting that if he wants to do it then it must be what he needs. And what Garnet says goes, so there. Perf.¹⁰ The very mundane issue of getting a phone call through to contact the Gems when a snail monster started attacking the school was pretty entertaining.¹¹ I love when Pearl goes full Gem Dork on the principal when she's bragging about how cool her race is. It's accurate to TV Pearl--she loves telling everyone how great Gems are.¹² Steven wants to be called "marsh periwinkle" after a cute snail species. Connie objects but he seems adamant that he deserves this adorable name. **YOU BET YOU DESERVE IT STEVEN. YOU ARE A MARSH PERIWINKLE FOR SURE.**¹³ I think it's cute that Connie feels so honored at being accepted onto the Junior Safety Patrol, and she's happy that some people like her and know her name, but then she finds attention at school overwhelming when everyone's treating her like a hero and happily reclaims her lunch nook in the library. Too many stories like hers have the introvert being saaaaaad because she doesn't have friiieeends and then everything is solved when everyone suddenly loves her. But Connie ISN'T happy with that and never wanted it. Respect for introverts is rarely seen in plots like this and I loved seeing Connie withdrawing from the social attention and not being spun as a loser for doing so.

What I didn't like:¹ The front cover depicts Steven looking out the classroom window at the Temple. Nothing I've seen in the show suggests a school with that view would be possible, considering where the Temple is.² Connie's catching the bus at a stop that is apparently close enough to Steven's house that he happened to run into her. Connie doesn't live in Beach City, so I don't know why she's catching the bus there. She claims her dad's car is busted and that's why she's riding the bus, but then she even continues to ride the bus the following year. Not sure this was actually thought out.³ I don't like how nobody wanted to hang out with Steven at the beginning but they didn't seem to have a reason. Amethyst literally said she was too bored to do anything and Pearl appeared to be ever so busy with . . . calisthenics? At least Garnet disappeared into her room and she could have been doing something important, but she didn't say what. I wouldn't mind if they volunteered a reason they couldn't pay attention to him right then, but this almost felt mean, and weird.⁴ The teacher and the principal talk really cartoonishly (not in a good way); they say stuffy adult things and sometimes speak in ways that sound like a kid wrote what they think grown-ups sound like; they're unreasonable and use unnecessarily complex

words in very awkward ways ("None of you are from space! That is highly improbable."). I also have a pet peeve about "adult who doesn't believe in fantastical story takes care to mock magic children who are telling the truth" tropes, especially if they immediately flip into starry-eyed awe when the proof arrives. The principal especially has some circular, repetitive, tortured-sounding scolding, particularly at the end (e.g., "With accidents of this magnitude disciplinary action is our only course of action"). The background kids are sometimes stuck in a sort of cruel hivemind too. Throwing erasers and paperballs at the new kid because he told a weird story about being a superhero seems exaggerated.⁵ When Connie and Steven get called into the principal's office, Steven's dad is summoned but you never see the Maheswaran parents. Don't know why that is. I like that Greg points out that he didn't even know Steven was going to school, though.⁶ I'm confused about why the second snail monster appeared. When they hunted down the first one, they found its Gem and bubbled it. Then the Gems said it was fine for Steven to take a snail shell from the site, only to find it turning up as a monster later. In other situations, mother monsters sometimes leave behind parasites after they've been defeated, but those parasites don't have Gems. This one did, so it must have been an identical second monster that the Gems didn't know was still there? I don't really understand how that happened.⁷ The principal refers to Pearl as the "legal guardian" of Steven. Which she is not in any way. She's an alien from space with no legal standing of her own.⁸ I think the principal deciding not to expel Connie because she got a good exam score is bizarre and nonsensical reasoning. It doesn't seem connected to the principal's reasoning about her endangering students by leading them to fight the snail.⁹ Pearl protests the concept of "giving a ship a gender" when Steven's teacher talks about the mothership. She seems completely baffled by this, even though Gems don't have actual genders and THEY do this too. (They have called Gem monsters "mothers" if they spawn clones, and they called Rose Quartz Steven's mother even though she is technically not a woman.) I usually like when the Gems are confused about Earth stuff but this doesn't seem like it should confuse Pearl.¹⁰ I fundamentally do not understand the ending of this story. Connie was almost expelled (and nonsensically saved through her exam score), and she was scolded and her friend kicked off the property. And yet when she returns to school in the fall (and has the same teacher), everyone is wearing glasses like hers to celebrate "Connie Day" and she's praised for "saving the school" (even though the building literally fell down) and Steven is also honored by the principal even as his expulsion is upheld. It just felt like a very strange and nonsensical way to end the story.

Notable:¹ The Gems are wearing their latest outfits in this comic! Amethyst has her black stars on her knees. BUT! In the frame when they warp away from fighting the snail monster, Garnet's colors have reverted to her first outfit. Just that one frame. Weird.²

Pearl is oddly not drawn with blue eyes in "Too Cool for School." Her eyes are actually pretty important to her aesthetic, so it was weird to see her with black filled-in eyes in the first story. She has her blue eyes again in the short! (And in the first story, Sour Cream's blue eyes are filled in blue, so I'm not sure why Pearl's aren't.)³ In a summer shot of the Cool Kids, Sour Cream is wearing his Pants Become Shorts in shorts mode. Nice callback. And Sadie's maybe flirting with a boy in the Big Donut, and Lars looks jealous!⁴ There were unfortunately tons of language errors, punctuation glitches, and misspellings--which is a shame because this is a professional publication but it made me feel a little like I was reading a fan creation online. My list:

- * Connie asks Steven why he's up so early with no question mark.
- * The teacher says she'll send Steven to the "principals office," no apostrophe.
- * Connie misspells her own last name in her talk bubble while discussing her future.
- * Greg asks about signing something and doesn't get a question mark.
- * Steven's handwritten sign misspells mustard as "mustart" and leaves a word out of "the fizz some lemon lime soda," which is odd for a kid who aced the final exam at the end.
- * The coach asks the students to "gather round" with no ending punctuation in his talk bubble.
- * Pearl refers to "chilren" in one talk bubble instead of "children."
- * Steven asks about show and tell with a period instead of a question mark.
- * The principal uses the word "unfortunetly."
- * The principal utters this inexcusable sentence: "There are an order to things Miss Maheswaran that we must obey."
- * The principal misspells "receive" as "recieve" in one talk bubble.
- * And she uses the word "undoutably," spelled like that.
- * Pearl's dialogue has "?!" at the end of a comment that wasn't in any way a question.
- * Pearl uses the word "spacefairing." The word is actually "spacefaring."
- * Pearl talks about Gems having "trancended" rigid structures instead of "transcended."
- * And she uses the wrong its while talking about Steven's space family.
- * The principal leaves an article out of this sentence: "Steven is never ever ever come to this school again."
- * Connie manages to spell the Latin name of *littoraria irrorata* correctly, but then her talk bubble uses the word "reffered" instead of "referred."
- * Connie asks a question about what makes Steven think he deserves a cute nickname but she leaves off the question mark.

And then there was the second story (which I may like even more than the main story!): the short "Yard Sale," in which Vidalia has a yard sale and Steven buys something special for each of the Gems, but then he lacks money for an old game system he wants to try. After some failed attempts to barter with Vidalia, they promise her babysitting for Onion, and Steven feels this is terrible because nothing is worth that.

Stuff I loved: Amethyst has no idea why anyone would want to sell their stuff because she is a huge hoarder and I love her wanting to buy a purple guitar because it has two "thingies."

I CAN'T EVEN DEAL WITH GARNET WANTING THE MOM SQUAD SWEATER. IT IS THE CUTEST THING IN THE WORLD.

The mention of Vidalia knowing Amethyst well enough to

know she does NOT want anything in that room was hilarious. And we have Pearl offering car repair and Garnet offering to break the car first. Garnet is just an incredibly special kind of funny and I just love it.

Kinda disappointing. Part of it is that it feels bloated...it would be two or three episodes' worth of animation, but doesn't have enough content to carry that. The basic idea of "Steven doesn't go to school because one time he did he kinda caused a monster attack and destroyed the building" would have been a good 22 page story, but 140+ pages? Plus, a lot of the padding is school jokes that suggest the author was homeschooled and just threw together cliches from sitcoms, because Connie is apparently in the only junior high class that does show-and-tell. It's a mishmash of school tropes from kindergarten through high school, all in one class. There's a six page story at the end that is more of a solid piece than the main tale. Neutral.

This was ordered in November and after months of printing delays it finally arrived! I'm not really a reader of graphic novels but I bought this for my 10 year old but we both love the show. I think the art is nice and the story is cute, but I found some of the frames strange as in the characters seem to be reacting to something and it's hard to tell what that is. The action was sometimes hard to follow. The story is also odd in that it ends with certain people upset with Steven and Connie (I don't want to spoil anything) and then later those same people are honoring them for the same incident. ???The last short story with Onion was cute. Overall I think it's fine and my son will like it, but it feels a little like it needs some finessing.

I literally just got this graphic novel and it's better than I expected! There was a perfect balance of comedy, drama, and adventure, and it had a perfect happy ending. Although I was weirded out by that mini comic "Yard Sale" but overall it was great and I am looking forward to reading the next volume.

Loved it! It's a nice little story to read while waiting for the new episodes. Worth the buy. There's even a short comic at the end. It's funny and you get to learn more about Steven and Connie than we knew before. It reads like it was an actual episode from the show. It's not a short story, so if you're thinking it's about the length of a regular comic book, it's not. It's fairly thick. It would be a great addition to your bookshelf!

I enjoyed reading it, but I wasn't too happy with how the main story ended. There is a mini story in the back of the book, and I find that story to be funnier than the first one. Any Steven Universe fan would enjoy it, but I think anyone unfamiliar with the show would be confused on some of the magical elements.

It was a very sweet story that completely captured the personalities of all the canon characters. It was funny and more realistic than I certainly anticipated. 11/10 Would read again. (I've read it twice already!)

I just got the graphic novel today and I just love that I finally get to see what Connie's school for the first time and it's funny how the principal looks kinda similar to Kuvira but softer. I also like how Connie's classmate team up and fight the snail monster (spoiler alert).

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