



## The Sandman Papers: An Exploration of the Sandman Mythology

*Joe Sanders (Editor) , Neil Gaiman (Introduction) , Renata Sancken (Contributor) , K.A. Laity (Contributor) , Joan Gordon (Contributor) , Leonora Soledad Sousa e Paula (Contributor) , David Bratman (Contributor) , Lyra McMullen (Contributor) , more... Stacie Hanes (Contributor) , Alan Levitan (Contributor) ...less*

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The definitive exploration of the **Sandman** mythology.

### The Sandman Papers: An Exploration of the Sandman Mythology Details

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## From Reader Review The Sandman Papers: An Exploration of the Sandman Mythology for online ebook

**Erinc says**

From my blog: Reviewing Comics

Since its first publication in 1989, The Sandman has been a subject of endless praise and popularity amongst both comic book fans and strangers to the medium. Many has credited Neil Gaiman's masterpiece for drawing fresh crowds into comic book readership with its elaborate plots and complex characters. When the sheer amount of historical and mythological themes that are intertwined within the long arc of the work is considered, it is no surprise that The Sandman is a very popular comic book for academics as well.

The Sandman Papers (2006), edited by Joe Sanders is an attempt to collect a series of essays written about Gaiman's famous work. Even before coming to the quality of the individual essays and the depth of the book, I think it should be acknowledged that publication of an essay collection that is solely devoted to a single comic book title sends out a very optimistic message for the study of the comic books in general and proves how much comics have come their long struggle to be recognized.

The Sandman Papers is organized into two broad categories according to the scope of the issues that are dealt within the articles presented. The first category, "Episodes & Themes", contain articles that take up a specific aspect of Gaiman's work and analyze it from a certain perspective.

Titles of the papers included in this section are as follows;

- "The Origin of The Sandman" by B. Keith Murphy
- "Of Stories and Storytellers in Gaiman and Vess's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'" by Joe Sanders
- "A Game of You-Yes, You" by David Bratman
- "The King is Dead, Long Liv the King: Orientalism, The Sandman, and Humanity" by Renata Sancken
- "Illusory Adversaries?: Images of Female Power in Sandman: The Kindly Ones" by K.A. Laity
- "Prospero Framed in Neil Gaiman's The Wake" by Joan Gordon

It should be noted that a common theme among the essays presented here is the focus on the multi-layered structure Gaiman has composed within the narrative of the Sandman. For all the readers of the comic book who are interested in possible ways of exploring some of the themes Gaiman presents, these essays offer a very interesting starting point and illustration of what can be done.

For those who want to go further, the second section of the book, "Larger Contexts", offers studies of the Sandman narrative within broader literary and theoretical frameworks. The essays presented here are;

- "Aether/Ore: The Dreamworld Descends to Earth" by Alan Levitan
  - "Of Parents and Children and Dreams in Mr. Punch and The Sandman" by Joe Sanders
  - "Imaginary Places and Fantastic Narratives: Reading Borges Through The Sandman" by Leonara Soledad Sousa e Paula
  - "Reinventing the Spiel: Old Stories, New Approaches" by Stacie Hanes and Joe Sanders
  - "Omnia Mutantur: The Use of Asian Dress in the Apperance of Dream from The Sandman" by Lyra McMullen
  - "Lesbian Language, Queer Imaginings, and in Death: The Time of Your Life" by Joe Sutliff Sanders
- As mentioned earlier, these articles provide interesting examples to the possibilities of studying Gaiman's work with relation to larger contexts.

Although some of the texts lack a certain degree of cohesiveness and integrity, what they all succeed in achieving is to prove the overall depth and suitability for academic scrutiny of The Sandman in particular and comics books in general.

It goes without saying that any fan of The Sandman, or Gaiman, would be curious to read the findings of these articles on their beloved works but The Sandman Papers also appeals highly to all who are interested in

the academic study of comic books for The Sandman is one of the richest sources for any intellectual inquiry and Sanders' book goes a long way of doing it justice.

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### **Valerie says**

I definitely didn't agree with every person in this collection, but all of the topics mentioned are worth discussing. If you're a recovering English major with a bad Gaiman habit who longs for the days of over-analyzing in the quad, this collection is pretty ideal.

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### **Robert Pocock says**

This is a book I really wanted to enjoy and recommend but am rather ambivalent about. (I first read "The Sandman Companion" by Hy Bender which I thought an excellent book but also thought it a missed opportunity to go into the detail that The Sandman deserves.) In contrast, my reservation here with "The Sandman Papers" is that the essays go into too \*much\* detail and are overly pedantic in their focussing on very narrow aspects of The Sandman. I was really hoping for something which took a broader sweep than is done here as opposed to the concentration on minutiae. Perhaps my rating is unfair - ie. I'm penalising the book for not being what it does not claim to be ! - and quite a lot of the different essays are interesting in themselves and academically well written. It just took a lot longer to read this book than it normally would. I'm not averse to academic writings so I can only attribute this to a diminishing interest as I read through the different essays. So, not something I'd recommend everybody go out and read but, if you're really interested in The Sandman, probably worth giving it a try. A worthy effort.

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### **Adam says**

I didn't enjoy this nearly as what I thought I would. Most of it is various people telling you what they think different pieces of the Sandman graphic novel they're reviewing mean. Most of the time, I could agree with them when they said that Neil Gaiman meant this when he did that in the novel, but there were also a lot of reviews where I don't think the author really understood the graphic novel. There was at least one reviewer who appeared to be actively attacking Mr. Gaiman for no particular reason other than that he seemed to enjoy ripping other people to shreds to make himself feel better. Reviews like that don't really make good reading.

I suppose I'd recommend this to people who have read The Sandman graphic novels and want to know what other people think of them. But you could probably get the same information from many of the Sandman or Neil Gaiman fan sites that are spread across the internet. Or you could have your friends read The Sandman and discuss the books with them.

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### **leighcia says**

As much as I enjoy reading literary criticism, sometimes this book reminded me of why the English department in universities seem mostly useless to me—petty debate and interesting observations that never seem to actually answer any questions. The wrong questions are asked. The answers are never satisfying, just

good fodder for cocktail conversation. I read through about two thirds of this book (a collection of academic essays written about Neil Gaiman's acclaimed comic book series the Sandman)—it was fun and entertaining, but not much more than that. And I think part of the enjoyment was derived from recalling and remembering parts of the original Sandman series.

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### **Eric says**

A series of essays by various authors examine themes and concepts within the Sandman storyline. Some were excellent and insightful, some very much not so. Worth a read for me, but probably not a book I'd return to again, and wouldn't recommend to the casual Sandman fan.

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### **Audrey says**

I'm having trouble coming up with a rating for this. I grab everything there is to read on Gaiman's Sandman series, because it's one of those definitive collections for me -- every addition to the canon, no matter how small or large, enhances the whole. This was a pretty uneven collection of lit crit, in my opinion, and the editing could've been better. There were a few pieces that just weren't pulled together strongly enough, and others that really seemed to be stretching. Yet there were 5 or 6 pieces (especially the ones dealing with Shakespeare, and the stunning triune piece on Pratchett and Gaiman) that were worth the price of purchase.

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### **Helen says**

Critical essays can be tough to read, especially when they attempt to dissect something you really love. That being said, it was fun to revisit Sandman in this way, and to see how different critics, even within one volume, can disagree both with me and with each other. Some grammatical and typographical errors, but on the whole good stuff, especially when Neil's work is compared with Terry's and the Discworld.

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### **Pale Horse says**

Two of the reviews here -- the longest, actually -- seem to think this was written by a single author. It's not. It's a collection of essays, all written by scholars for scholars and then collected. Its mere existence is nothing short of miraculous and long overdue, if you'll excuse the hyperbole. The Sandman is indeed for geeks, but it is not only that. Nor is much of literature, overlooked comic book literature in particular. The serious attention given to The Sandman here is admirable, and the authors all bring a variety of modern tools of criticism to bear. There are some especially significant essays here, but with 12 essays your mileage is going to vary. It's nice to see some traditional feminist critiques applied with "Lesbian Language" and "Illusory Adversaries?", but I think the second misses the point, while "A Game of You -- Yes, You" is a solid reply to another negativ feminist critique. Orientalism is tackled -- and somewhat redeemed -- in "The King is Dead" and "Omnia Mutantur". There are 3 essays on Shakespeare, which is kind of a no-brainer, but they need to be collected somewhere, and "Prospero" takes close reading in comics to a further extant than any other essayist present.

Not everything is gold (the opening essay is clunky, has a few factual mistakes or rather unfinished avenues - read *The Ten Cent Plague* for a better history of horror comics), but if you're interested in seeing *The Sandman* from a different point of view (or several) and can comprehend the joy in both praising and tearing something apart at the same time, dig in.

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### **Georgia says**

I can not say that all the articles were well-argued, but the important thing of this book is that it opens a dialogue in the area of comic studies, bringing the Sandman in the center. Academia needs comic studies and these articles form a good basis for beginning a discussion. I am looking forward to more related books. Comic books are not for geeks. *The Sandman* is high literature and this is a good beginning for it to be treated as such.

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### **Jayne Lamb says**

Absolutely garden-variety collection of standard academic essays on the Sandman series, which was incredibly exciting when it was published but in hindsight has become dated and a little ponderous. Wish there had been a few more critical essays - I liked the one that ragged on Harlan Ellison.

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### **Noel says**

Good for the avid fan, but somewhat trying even so.

There's just too much stretching to find academic meaning in unwarranted directions - the one entitled 'Lesbian Language, Queer Imaginings in Death: The Time of Your Life' went deeply abstract, in particular. Did enjoy the significance of graphic structure in 'Prospero Framed', but overall found far too many of these essays focused on the Shakespeare related stories. Did enjoy the one that linked Destiny-related stories to themes in Borges' work, but still felt it was gratuitous.

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### **Andrew says**

Cool collection of essays. Some incredibly fascinating ones, but there were also some that I either just didn't care about or I thought were poorly written.

Still, an interesting read, and a fun read right after my binge of the comics.

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### **Nicolo Yu says**

Its great reading if you're fan of Neil Gaiman and his work on Sandman in particular. Although not a must read, it is an informative book.

I enjoyed though, as I read it during noon break at work. It helps pass the time while digesting lunch.

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## **Evan says**

An interesting collection, aimed at a broad audience of both literature and pop culture scholars and comics fans. The writing is accessible, yet still thoroughly footnoted for the academics.

The essays do vary a bit in quality, with some of an exceptional standard of scholarship, and some feeling a little forced. There is a reasonable breadth of topic, though I felt - and many reading scholarly output on Sandman might feel the same in general - that there was a tendency to focus on the Shakespearean elements and influences.

Overall, well worth the read.

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