



## So Smart in Their Fine Uniforms (Arrowsmith, Book 1)

*Kurt Busiek , Carlos Pacheco*

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### **So Smart in Their Fine Uniforms (Arrowsmith, Book 1)** Kurt Busiek , Carlos Pacheco

Combining reality and fantasy to create an alternate world in which magic and science have coexisted for centuries, ArrowSmith: So Smart in Their Fine Uniforms presents the tale of a young hero's coming of age during a period of war and wizardry. With World War I engulfing Europe, young Fletcher Arrowsmith runs away from home to serve his country as one of the elite airmen, a squadron of talented mages who use spells to fly and attack their enemies. But as the innocent teenager's romantic visions of valor and honor are quickly destroyed, he learns of the true costs of love and battle. Now disillusioned and distraught, Fletcher must find a way to hold onto his beliefs while evading the attacks of enemy soldiers, sadistic vampires, fire demons, and rock trolls.

### **So Smart in Their Fine Uniforms (Arrowsmith, Book 1) Details**

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Author : Kurt Busiek , Carlos Pacheco

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## From Reader Review So Smart in Their Fine Uniforms (Arrowsmith, Book 1) for online ebook

### Gina says

I didn't like it as much as I wanted to. There is some gorgeous artwork, but - and I believe this is the point - adding magic to World War I doesn't make it any less depressing. Also, it felt like the youth of the main protagonist should have mattered more. He started young where he had to run away to join, but then he seemed like any other, older recruit. Other characters were more interesting.

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### Justin says

I think that perhaps the folks who are complaining about the "clichés" or "stereotypes" found in Kurt Busiek and Carlos Pacheco wonderful series Arrowsmith might be missing the point. Busiek has made a name for himself by revisiting classic stories and ideas and giving them a fresh look. Keep in mind that he helped start a comics imprint called "Homage Comics."

With Arrowsmith, Busiek takes the classic "fresh-faced boy goes off to war to fight the good fight and make a difference, while along the way learning about life, love, death, and the true nature of war" story and gives it a thorough shaking. First, the world that Fletcher Arrowsmith inhabits is quite similar to ours, but history is somewhat different. A map showing the United States of Columbia, Gallia, and Prussia is one indication that things are not quite what we're used to. Additionally, this is a world where magic and the mundane exist side by side. The scene where a New York City street bustles with activity as humans, trolls, dwarves, and other fantastic creatures go about their daily business illustrates this particular twist quite well. Finally, while this is very much a World War I story, the trappings have very much been altered. Gruesome battles still claim young lives by the thousands, but instead of traditional chemical weapons, the armies employ magical weapons that vampirize soldiers or incinerate entire towns. And the men of the Overseas Aero Corps are hotshot aerial fighters, but instead of flying planes, they're flying through the air with the aid of magical dragons.

When you add these twists to a classic story, and factor in Busiek's talent for showing the humanity of even the most "stereotypical" of characters, you have something really special. It doesn't hurt that Carlos Pacheco's artwork is nothing short of breathtaking. His vivid style works just as well for a World War I epic fantasy as it does a sprawling superhero saga, and establishes the look and feel of the period as effectively as any artist I've seen since Paul Smith's work on the Golden Age.

All told, I was extremely pleased with Arrowsmith. I had high hopes given the creators involved, and was not disappointed. Arrowsmith should appeal to fans of Busiek's other work, particularly the acclaimed Astro City, and is a series that fans of quality comic books should take a chance on.

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### J.G. Keely says

Every Busiek comic I've read feels like a workshop for telling stories in the comic book medium. He fills his books with so much character and charm, weaving long and short plot arcs and always focussing on psychological progression. He just makes it look so easy.

There is something rudimentary in this collection, but that's not necessarily a bad thing. Busiek is staying very true to his sources, lifting liberally from War Stories and Fairy Tales, using all the cliches, but somehow, making us care about them again.

Solid little piece of storytelling worth studying if you have a mind to try plotting some comics. It's all streamlined, nothing superfluous, and yet he's not bashing us over the head with it.

While some authors might be inclined to rush through a story like this, supplementing the familiar with their own unpredictable twists to keep it from feeling dull, Busiek instead gives us to us straight, trusting in the depth of his characters and world to carry us through a story we have seen before.

Just goes to show, you don't have to be wacky and mind-bending to write a good story in comics these days; just because yelling is the loudest way to say something doesn't make it the best. Sometimes a quiet tone can carry more force, depending on what's behind it.

### My Suggested Reading In Comics

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#### Jude McLaughlin says

I really like the worldbuilding (United States of Columbia indeeeeed) and concept of the fantasy WWI.

However, our main character is a typical straight white dude who is, of course, exceptional which... \*yawn\*. We never see any women doing magic at all. No female mages, etc. We never see any people of color. Are the POCs' places taken by the supernatural beings? It's a very white world, and very male -- the only women we get are sexual objects (or, in the case of "Binnie Atherton", antisexual objects, because buck-toothed skinny rich white women who quote their fathers aren't cliches at ALL), and the only goal of any relationship building is for the extremely random (and dull) straight sex scene that is pasted in near the end. (And if you're going to call that a spoiler, I will laugh in your face, because it was amateurishly telegraphed for pages and pages.)

Overall, it was a disappointing book to have Busiek's name on. I keep it around (and gave it 3 stars) because I like the worldbuilding. Otherwise... dull.

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#### José Antonio says

Me he releído en estos días Arrowsmith. No lo cogía desde que lo sacaron por primera vez y me ha vuelto a gustar muchísimo. Pero me he dado cuenta de algo que hasta ahora había pasado por alto, por increíble que pueda parecer. Como sabéis, se trata de un relato sobre la I Guerra Mundial en una realidad paralela en la que la magia existe. Pues bien, más allá lo de la magia en realidad no sirve para nada. Es curioso ver hechizos y objetos mágicos sustituyendo a la tecnología, un mundo de 1915 pero con fronteras similares a las de la Edad Media, criaturas mitológicas participando en la contienda, etc. Pero son todos elementos accesorios, si se quitaran y el relato se inscribiese en la verdadera I Guerra Mundial la historia sería exactamente la misma. No sé si esto podemos considerarlo un defecto, si era algo buscado por Busiek o si como parece tenía pensado continuar la historia y al final la dejó colgada, pero lo cierto es que la presencia de la magia no tiene ninguna incidencia en la trama.

Eso sí, vaya dibujazo de Carlos Pacheco. Yo creo que es el mejor trabajo de su carrera, más aún que Siempre

Vengadores. Vaya narrativa, vaya despliegue de recursos, vaya chulada de diseños, de fondos, de expresividad facial... Lo de la ambientación mágica merece la pena solo por ver sus dibujos.

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### **Michael says**

Not bad, but way, way too similar to Busiek's Shockrockets. Small-town hero, dreams of excitement and adventure, joins fantastic heroic team, finds romance, struggles to fit in, loses friend, accomplishes some big success, finds terrible secret.

Good work, but I feel like Busiek is just re-treading an old plot in a superficially different setting.

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### **Chompa says**

Wow, what a great book! I love the setting, the writing, the art, the story. Must find more!

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### **Václav says**

Arrowsmith is fantasy take on World War. The small town boys decided to join the air service - the bunch of guys who ride the skies thanks to magic spells, draining their flight energy from small dragons. The setting is quite interesting, got a steampunk feeling (but it is not steampunk - it's just the same era just with mythical names for the countries, where Europe is some kind of fantasy land with trolls, vampires, gnomes, dwarfs, dryads and so living alongside humans). Although the setting could be intriguing for me, the first third of the book rather annoyed me and I didn't really enjoy it. But then it turned good. Really good. If the point of the story is picturing the disillusionment from the glory of war, depicting it as something horrible where both sides are noble and cruel and it's an utterly pointless circle of attack-resist-attack back, it made that goal perfectly. I would expect that the "fantasy" element would soften that, so it was actually surprising. So even it didn't look promising on start, it was excellent and touching on the end.

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### **Raquel Laforet says**

Como ucronía es muy bonita: me gustan los dragones y los futuros/pasado alternativos, hasta ahí muy bien. El desarrollo de la historia también me gusta, aunque los personajes ya me parecen más típicos (y la historia también), pero bueno, está bien. Lo que ya no paso es que sea una historia inconclusa. A su manera, en cuanto a evolución del protagonista, podría decirse que termina, pero ni la historia, ni el mundo, ni nada más tiene un final y eso le quita mucho a la impresión que deja el cómic.

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### **Reyel2107 says**

one of the best alternative ww I ever , pure magic !!!!!

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## **Fizzgig76 says**

Reprints Arrowsmith Web Preview and Arrowsmith #1-6 ( ). Fletcher Arrowsmith wants to help the world. When a war with the Prussians breaks out in Europe, Fletcher leaves his Connecticut home on Lake Erie and joins the Overseas Aero Corps with his friend Jonathan Kerry. As the war rages, Fletch and Jonathan learn to use magic to fly and Fletch falls in love with the daughter of a millionaire named Grace Hilliard. As Fletcher and Jonathan enter the war, Fletcher learns that war is not what he expected and to win the war, sometimes ethics must be compromised.

Written by Kurt Busiek and illustrated by Carlos Pacheco, Arrowsmith: So Smart in Their Fine Uniforms collects the first (and so far only) Arrowsmith series plus a web preview. Arrowsmith was published by Wildstorm and was well received by the critics and fans.

Arrowsmith focuses on an Earth that is full of magic. Ogres, vampires, trolls, werewolves, and demons all exist in the world and that has changed some of the ways the world has developed. The United States has a completely different make-up, and Europe is different also. This adds an interesting twist to the story to determine the changes in Fletcher Arrowsmith's world versus our world. A map of the globe is contained at the back of the collection. It is also interesting to note that magic is highly looked down upon but at the same time admired by the public.

Carlos Pacheco's art is fantastic. The series is bright and has a bit of a steampunk feel to it with the technology/magic aspect. I love the character and dragon designs and I'm reminded of the late, great series Leave It to Chance (which I really wish had finished). The art does combine with Busiek's smart story to really feel like the start of something.

Unfortunately, Arrowsmith: So Smart in Their Fine Uniforms is the only outing for Arrowsmith. Busiek and Pacheco have reported that they've wanted to do more, but almost ten years later, it has yet to happen. There has been rumor of an illustrated novel of Arrowsmith, but it too has never made it to press...maybe with the success of Peter and Max: A Fables Novel, we could still see Arrowsmith return in some form.

Arrowsmith is a fun collection but it is a downer that not more exists. I want to know the end to the war, I want to know if Fletch Arrowsmith makes it home. I want to see more of the world that he inhabits. You don't get it in Arrowsmith: So Smart in Their Fine Uniforms, but hopefully someday we will know.

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## **Brian Rogers says**

It took me a while to track this down, and while I'm happy I read it I also understand why it never caught on. The high concept - WWI in an alternate timeline with magic - isn't a natural one, and the book doesn't give enough depth to explain how the world ended up so like our own with the magic in place. The WWI setting is so intrinsically bleak, with characters being introduced to be killed off by the pointlessness of the war as our protagonist becomes increasingly disillusioned, keeps it from being really engaging. It doesn't manage to be a poignant meditation on the pointlessness of the war, nor does it manage to be an heroic war story, nor a mystery of unraveling the world's backstory and operating rules. As a result it generally falls flat, despite the obvious skill that went into it.

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## Tar Buendía says

A pesar de ser una trama típica a más no poder el debate de trasfondo me ha apasionado

La ambientación es una pasada.

Y bueno es que solo tengo cosas buenas que decir de este cómic.

Está muy en la línea de cosas que me gustaría hacer a mí. Ojalá lleguen a publicar la segunda parte.

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## Unai says

Supongamos un mundo alternativo donde las naciones no se corresponden exactamente con las del nuestro, pero donde aun así, hay una primera guerra mundial. Europa sufre los embates de Prusia y algunos jóvenes de los Estados Unidos de Columbia, deciden unirse a la guerra a pesar de la pasividad de su gobierno. Solo que estos jóvenes, en vez de ser escuadrón Lafayette de nuestro mundo, son el cuerpo de voladores transatlánticos, y no hacen la guerra en el aire montados en biplanos, sino a espada y ballesta, cuerpo a cuerpo con hechizos para volar conectados a sus pequeños dragones asignados.

Puestos a decirlo todo, Prusia no asola Europa tan solo con sus tropas regulares, sino también con trolls, vampiros, zombies, necromancia y magos de guerra capaces de provocar devastadores efectos en las tropas enemigas. Este es el telón de fondo de Arrowsmith, una historia de guerra con magia, magos, hechizos de poder destructivo impensable y ejércitos no exclusivamente humanos.

A esta guerra va el Joven Arrowsmith, dejando atrás su destino como herrero, atraído por el cuerpo de voladores, junto con un amigo y una joven de alta cuna que aporta su propia ambulancia. Magia y magos, duelos en el aire, trolls de las cavernas, escuadras de vampiros controladas por los magos para que no se coman a sus propios aliados, etc...

Pero es la guerra al fin y al cabo y aunque Busiek la vista de colores brillantes y bonitos uniformes con la ayuda de Pacheco, según vamos avanzando, es lo que nos encontramos, guerra cruda y deshumanizadora. Poco importa que en vez de gas alemán, tengamos niebla creada por magos de batalla prusianos, el efecto es parecido... caos, terror, barbarie y muerte. Y esto va para ambos bandos, como aprende el joven Arrowsmith.

Tebeo mas que disfrutable, en la linea escasa de las ucronías bélicas del siglo XX con magia o poderes como "The Royals", pero que es un tebeo que deja un regusto ácido, por no decir que te mete un buen palo. Quizás no está muy considerado porque no es muy conocido y tampoco tuvo mucho éxito en su momento, pero ahora que vuelve a estar reeditado, yo os lo recomiendo. Y si no estáis muy seguros, seguramente tengáis en las bibliotecas la anterior edición de Norma, así que no hay excusa para no leerlo y ver esta guerra mágica pero de horrores reales.

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## Frédéric says

Interesting "concept" idea (WWI fought with magic) filled with pleasant details but very dull story (coming of age of an idealist farmboy) full of all available stereotype and compulsory figure (best friend's death, heroic paternal figure's death, sex scene with rich girl, etc.)

On the other hand, the art of Carlos Pacheco (whose work I wasn't familiar with up till now) is beautiful and beautifully colored.

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