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Prison Island: A Graphic Memoir



Synopsis

McNeil Island in Washington state was the home of the last prison island in the United States, accessible only by air or sea. It was also home to about fifty families, including Colleen Frakes. Her parents - like nearly everyone else on the island - both worked in the prison, where her father was the prison's captain and her mother worked in security. In this engaging graphic memoir, a Xeric and Ignatz Award-winning comics artist, Colleen Frakes, tells the story of a typical girl growing up in atypical circumstances.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“This is a charming story that just goes to show that, no matter where you live, a family is a family. I think that Frakes has an endearing drawing style and great enthusiasm for sharing some slice-of-life observations. And she provides a positive and realistic portrait of living in close vicinity to a prison.” — Comics Grinder “Full of heart, humor and an interesting look at a typical teen living a not so typical life, Prison Island is a fun entry point into the memoir category. It’s also a great book to put into the hands of reluctant readers.” — Teen Librarian Toolbox “Frakes’s loose b&w cartooning and straightforward dialogue provide a solid sense of both McNeil’s history and the peculiarities of life on a prison island (such as having to lock up pool toys that could potentially be used in an escape). . . the overall tone of the book is nostalgic and melancholy, a highly specific example of the idea that one can’t go home again.” — Publishers Weekly “An interesting look into a pretty unique childhood, and it’s definitely worth a read for fans of graphic memoirs.” — Stacked Books — Colleen Frakes

was awarded a Xeric Grant to publish her book, *Tragic Relief*. Her graphic novel, *Woman King*, won the Ignatz award for Promising New Talent in 2009. "This is a charming story that just goes to show that, no matter where you live, a family is a family. I think that Frakes has an endearing drawing style and great enthusiasm for sharing some slice-of-life observations. And she provides a positive and realistic portrait of living in close vicinity to a prison."

• "Comics Grinder" "Full of heart, humor and an interesting look at a typical teen living a not so typical life, *Prison Island* is a fun entry point into the memoir category. It's also a great book to put into the hands of reluctant readers."

• "Teen Librarian Toolbox" "Frakes's loose b&w cartooning and straightforward dialogue provide a solid sense of both McNeil's history and the peculiarities of life on a prison island (such as having to lock up pool toys that could potentially be used in an escape). . . the overall tone of the book is nostalgic and melancholy, a highly specific example of the idea that one can't go home again."

• "Publishers Weekly" "An interesting look into a pretty unique childhood, and it's definitely worth a read for fans of graphic memoirs."

• "Stacked Books" "This memoir should appeal to middle grade and high school readers, especially those curious about different social structures and relationships and how the living environment influences them."

• VOYA Colleen Frakes was awarded a Xeric Grant to publish her book, *Tragic Relief*. Her graphic novel, *Woman King*, won the Ignatz Award for Promising New Talent in 2009. "I love any comic where Frakes herself is a character, because her self-caricature is so delightfully angular and delicately rendered. Her loose, feathery line glides across the page and takes the reader with it as she discusses the details of moving to the island"

• - Rob Clough, *High-Low Comcs* "Local cartoonist Colleen Frakes's comic is exactly what the title says: a series of stark black-and-white panels that somehow manage to illustrate the way we lose the places we're from, piece by piece."

• - Paul Constant, *The Seattle Stranger* Colleen Frakes was awarded a Xeric Grant for her book, *Tragic Relief* (2007), and an Ignatz Award for "Promising New Talent" for her book, *Woman King* (2009).

Colleen Frakes received an Ignatz Award for "Promising New Talent" for her book, *Woman King*. She has created comics for Mirage Studio's *Tales of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* and Dark Horse Comics.

Colleen Frakes has been creating some marvelous fantasy-fueled comix for years, but this first major dip into autobiography reveals a whole new dimension—and, despite her modesty, a pretty incredible "back story" for herself. *PRISON ISLAND* is memoir, yes, but it's also an

exploration of personal cartography: that we are not always the product of "where we grew up," because where she grew up was such a geographic anomaly and oddly (legally) State-prescribed time and place. Colleen folds us into the narrative and her journey with meditative generosity, and the time she spent is the time she invites us to spend in this emotional space, with her and her family. We've had so many grandiose, timely memoirs in graphic novel form; PRISON ISLAND is a rarer breed indeed, and most highly recommended!

I've read quite a few graphic memoirs over the last year. For this one, the idea sounded like it would be interesting, but the actual book was dull and about almost nothing. The most surprising thing was that she managed to make it so boring. If you're interested in this genre, I'd suggest *Tomboy* or *Honor Girl*.

What an interesting concept! Purchased for a family member who works in corrections and decided to breeze through it myself before wrapping it (call me selfish) needless to say, it was great!

Agree totally with another reviewer, Colleen could have revealed a lot more about life on prison island. Could have potentially been a lot more interesting read then.

Interesting from a historical point of view. This was my first try with this type of book. Great for fast reading. Not my favorite type of book.

Fantastic. Really engaging story about getting older and embracing change.

I realize my opinion reflects the bias suggested by having the same last name as the author, but I also bring the perspective of having played a bit part in the story line of Prison Island. I have long been impressed with Colleen's ability to tell so much story using a minimalist approach. Prison Island describes an experience known by so very few people, and one that is no longer available in America - growing up on island dedicated to housing convicted felons. If you are interested in corrections, living on an island, or the complexities of growing up in a very unusual place, Prison Island provides a unique perspective.

Bought these Prison Island: A Graphic Memoir for Christmas for my kids, who lived on the island for a while. Brought back a few memories, but this is mostly the author's short story written mainly

with cartoon pictures (kudos for those, they look very time consuming) but not many words. Could have fit more information in about the island, but I guess then it would be our story and not hers, lol. But since it's the only book about McNeil Island that I know about, I bought them so my kids could remember...

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