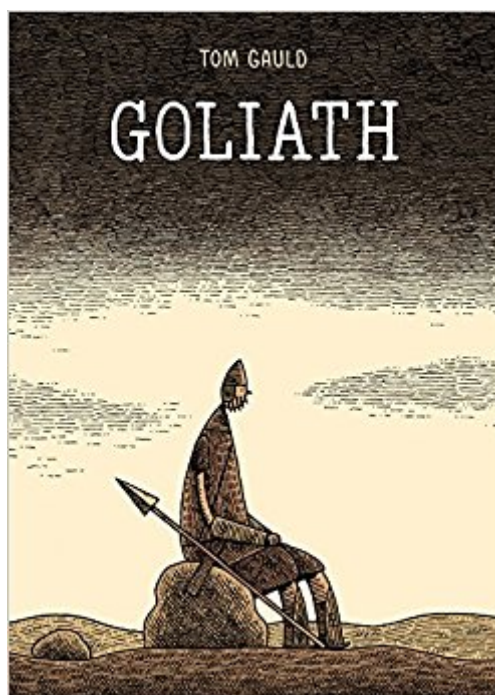


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# Goliath



## Synopsis

Tom Gauld's debut graphic novel retelling of a classic myth, now in paperback Since the 2011 release of *Goliath*, Tom Gauld has solidified himself as one of the world's most revered and critically-acclaimed cartoonists working today. From his weekly strips in *The Guardian* and *New Scientist*, to his lauded graphic novels *You're All Just Jealous of My Jetpack* and *Mooncop*, Gauld's fascination with the intersection between history, literary criticism, and pop culture has become the crux of his work. Now in paperback, with a new cover and smaller size, *Goliath* is a retelling of the classic myth, this time from Goliath's side of the Valley of Elah. Goliath of Gath isn't much of a fighter. He would pick admin work over patrolling in a heartbeat, to say nothing of his distaste for engaging in combat. Nonetheless, at the behest of the king, he finds himself issuing a twice-daily challenge to the Israelites: "Choose a man. Let him come to me that we may fight." Quiet moments in *Goliath*'s life as an isolated soldier are accentuated by Gauld's trademark drawing style: minimalist scenery, geometric humans, and densely crosshatched detail. Simultaneously tragic and bleakly funny, *Goliath* displays a sensitive wit and a bold line—a traditional narrative reworked, remade, and revolutionized into a classic tale of Gauld's very own.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A 2013 YALSA Great Graphic Novel for Teens Nominated for the Eisner Award and the British Comic Award "Gauld [uses] simple, clever visuals to explore the larger, more complicated issues of war and heroism."--New York Times "Gauld's *Goliath* is a master class in reduction...a celebration of

the Christian underdog becomes a subtle meditation on the power of spin and the absurdity of war."--The Times"Gauld's sparse style captures the encroaching ennui of Goliath beautifully...Gauld infuses a parable with new meaning for a modern world, with a helping of melancholy but sweet humour to boot."--National Post"Quick to read but easy to consider and reconsider, the humor and pathos in Goliath's worldview requires longer thought... An eminently discussable graphic novel."--School Library Journal"Tom Gauld's tragic, darkly funny retelling of David and Goliath from Goliath's perspective. Gauld's work is always quietly powerful and emotionally grabbing."--Boing Boing"Working with cartoony figures, silhouettes, and finely cross-hatched close-ups, Gauld captures the bleakness of the landscape, and how what looks like an insignificant pebble from far away can become hugely important when it's landing right between the hero's eyes."--AV Club"Gauld's stripped-down drawings, all boulders and blank faces, are perfect for his bittersweet tale, and the book itself is a lovely addition to any shelf."--Flavorwire"Tom Gauld's new comic-book, starring Goliath as an unassuming army admin clerk pushed into a situation he neither wants nor understands is a work of depth, pathos and beauty, with the sublime craftsmanship anyone who knows Gauld's work would expect."--It's Nice That EditCopy to TIEmail me

Tom Gauld is a cartoonist and illustrator. He has weekly comic strips in The Guardian and New Scientist and his comics have been published in The New York Times and The Believer. In addition to his graphic novels You're All Just Jealous of My Jetpack and Mooncop, he has designed a number of book covers. Gauld lives and works in London.

What do we know about Goliath of Gath? Not that much if you'd asked Scottish cartoonist Tom Gauld, and with his new graphic novel, Goliath, from Drawn & Quarterly, he attempts to expand a bit on the story of this giant. Those familiar with the Bible story of Goliath will know him as a ruthless pagan, hell bent on blood, conquer, and challenging one to meet him on the battle field. Well we all know how that story ended, but Gauld isn't satisfied, and in this graphic novel he goes on a quest to explore the more human side of the giant who fell by stone. The first task Gauld sets to is stripping away the religious aspect of the story. The only mentions of it are quotations from the Bible that set up certain portions in the story. As this epic opens, we're introduced to our giant; more gentle than menace, Goliath spends his day doing administrative paper work and hardly seems the warrior type. In fact, as the story opens, Goliath is changing shifts so that he can do more paperwork. Soon, Goliath finds himself at the center of ending the conflict between the Philistines and Israel. He's measured for armor, given a shield bearer, and sent on a quest to challenge one Israeli warrior,

brave enough to take him on. He announces himself day by day, the reluctant warrior even considers abandoning his post at one point, until that fateful day when his opponent shows up and ends it in one fell swoop. Gauld's interpretation of history's most ruthless giant is heartbreaking and sympathetic, and in doing so restores Goliath to a more human status. He also slaps scripture in the face by having him fall backwards as he dies (In the Bible he falls forward, making for some dispute.). But it's the human aspect of Goliath's demise that really makes this story engaging; a misunderstood man amidst those that seek to use him for purposes that are unbecoming of him and that ultimately cost him his life. Grab a hanky, you'll be in for some water works.

Tom Gauld's single panel comics are as fantastic as this book is mediocre. He seems to be playing with a Christopher Ware type of storytelling, where the panels aren't a slave to the plot, but are convey other aspects of the story in a more meaningful way. The problem is Ware's panels always feel purposeful, whereas too many of Gauld's feel arbitrary or redundant. Probably, why Gauld can't pull off the effect he's going for is that his story and characters are way too thin. I really wish Gauld had spent more time fleshing out the story. His comics are great because he can find the absurdity in our chaotic, modern lives. Starting with such a simple story, that isn't complex, let alone chaotic, gives Gauld nothing to aim for. He is a David without a Goliath.

Goliath is a graphic novel of the story of David and Goliath, told from Goliath's point of view. I loved it, and I loved sharing it with my children (ages 10 and 12). This is a sturdy book, with drawings and type that feel like a bit of a throwback to my untutored eye. Stylistically, especially in the sparse landscapes, I'm reminded of Edward Gorey, whose work I know mostly from watching *Mystery!* on PBS as a child. Gauld's work has the same "cross hatch" style, which makes simple drawings seem quite complex. Goliath is done in three colors: black, white, and brown. The landscape, with boulders, hills, and a few scraggly leafless trees, is quite barren. The focus of Goliath is not on action, and indeed, there is almost no action until the final frames. It's the character of Goliath, the novelty of getting the giant's back story, and the questions it raises about point of view and truth, that propel the book. I was very impressed with Gauld's ability to convey so much story through minimal text and stripped down illustrations. That said, despite the somber tone, there are moments of wry humor in Goliath, especially in the bureaucratic muddle that is the Philistine army, and in Goliath's relationship with his shield-bearer, an eager, naive boy whose pointed questions reveal the absurdity of Goliath's situation. My one criticism of the book would be that on one or two occasions the humor veers into "cutesy" territory. You have to watch for the small things in Goliath. In the

opening pages, Goliath has gone down to the river for a drink. He absentmindedly picks up a rock. He looks at it, and lets it go. The "plop" it makes as it reenters the river is barely noticed by Goliath, but it's a strong dose of foreshadowing for the reader. Also notice how the type changes when scripture is quoted. The seemingly simple type and text are jarring against the force of the powerful, epic narrative most readers will know very well. This is a bleak book: a lot of waiting, for no apparent reason, then death. I was glad Gauld didn't pull his punches: David walking off with Goliath's head is the last image. It's not gory, but it's very powerful. Goliath isn't too sure what he's waiting for or why. If you didn't know the story, nothing in Goliath would clue you in as to why there is a battle in the first place. As Darth Vader would put it, the existential themes are strong in this one. I also like the questions the book raises about point of view and truth. Goliath sure does look bad from the point of view to which those versed in the Jewish, Muslim, or Christian traditions are accustomed (there's even a Greek version): a bloodthirsty, taunting giant (he calls the Israelites during their time of prayer), with super duper armor and a terrifying bronze spear and sword. Pit him against David, practically a child, with no armor, and a few rocks, and you have the makings of a huge upset victory. As a Jew, I read the story as revealing David's fitness to be king, and, more generally, as imparting a multitude of other lessons about hubris before God, etc. In our tradition, Goliath, once struck by David's rock, falls forward on his face, and rabbis throughout the ages have claimed this shows how right David was, that God didn't even make him walk too far to cut off Goliath's head. In Gauld's version, the dead Goliath is on his back. In my reading, this reinforces the theme we shouldn't be too sure about our own rightness, about our differences from those we deem wrong, or about the "one true version" of any story.

Four centuries, the story has been told and Goliath has been dehumanized. Now we've got a story told from his point of view. How exciting!

The illustrations are spare but the story made me think. Very fast read which is exactly what I needed.

Everything by Tom Gauld is great

Impossibly sad

This is genius of elegant simplicity. beautiful object too as a book.

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