

# BARTON

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*Dare to Know*

### War Comics

*Comics that feature military conflicts.*

This genre focuses on the brutality of war and the experiences of soldiers, civilians, and society in times of conflict. War comics originated in the 1930s. Following the Allies' victory over totalitarianism in 1945, war stories exploded into popularity with the American public, and comics of the "Golden Age" (1938-1956) and "Silver Age" (1956-ca. 1970) frequently featured military events in World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. By the late 1980s, though, many of the esteemed war titles were being canceled. New comics were introduced in the same decade, but the genre has since not regained its former stature. Throughout the genre's existence, the protagonist is often a soldier or civilian engaged in or trapped by the fighting, both of whom may face extraordinary challenges and hardships. Some titles glamorize war and the experiences of characters and depict traditional themes of duty and courage. Sometimes, plots run the risk of being unrealistic and jingoistic. Narratives may include exceptionally heroic soldiers, tragic battles, and appalling human suffering.

Drawing from themes in **psychological comics**, war comics can be a powerful medium for understanding the physical, emotional, and moral struggles faced by the protagonist and those around them. These works may also comment on social and political issues that affect soldiers and civilians alike. The genre can present perspectives ranging from pro-war to one conceding to its potential necessity to entirely anti-war. Stories may run the gamut from respectful depictions of those who have served in combat to addressing concerns through exaggeration, parable, or allegory. For those who have served in the armed forces, authors and artists can use their own experiences in battle zones to shape the story. Quality Comics' *Military Comics/Modern Comics* (1941-1950); Parents' Magazine's *True Comics* (1941-1950); Chuck Cuidera, Bob Powell, and Will Eisner's *Blackhawk* (1944-1984); William Gaines and Harvey Kurtzman's *Two-Fisted Tales* (1950-1955); Harvey Kurtzman's *Frontline Combat* (1951-1954); St. John Publications/Charlton Comics' *Fightin' Marines* (1951-1953, 1955-1984); Quality Comics/DC Comics' *G.I. Combat* (1952-1987); DC Comics' *Our Army at War* (1952-1977), *Star Spangled War Stories* (1952-1977), *Our Fighting Forces* (1954-1978) and *All-American Men of War* (1959-1966); Charlton Comics' *Fightin' Air Force* (1956-1966), *Fightin' Army* (1956-1984), and *Fightin' Navy* (1956-1966); DC Thomson's *Commando for Action and Adventure* (1961-present); Jack Kirby and Stan Lee's *Sgt. Fury and His Howling Commandos* (1963-1981); Warren Publishing's *Blazing Combat* (1965-1966) are classic examples.

### Common Elements

Camaraderie between comrades in arms
Courage
Sacrifice
Duty
Loyalty
Honor

Armed combat
Survival
Military hierarchy
Home front
The horrors of war and its impact on individuals and societies

## Graphic Novel Examples

<i>The Activity</i> (2012) by Nathan Edmondson and Mitch Gerads	<i>Onwards Towards Our Noble Deaths</i> (1973) by Shigeru Mizuki
<i>Anne Frank's Diary: The Graphic Adaptation</i> (2018) by Anne Frank, David Polonsky, and Ari Folman	<i>Pin-Up: Remember Pearl Harbor</i> (1994) by Yann and Philippe Berthet
<i>Blazing Combat</i> (2010) by Archie Goodwin	<i>The Reprieve</i> (2018) by Jean-Pierre Gibrat
<i>Buz Sawyer Volume 1: The War in the Pacific</i> (2011) by Roy Crane	<i>Safe Area Goražde</i> (2000) by Joe Sacco
<i>Charley's War: Underground and Over the Top</i> (2009) by Pat Mills and Joe Colquhoun	<i>Shooting War</i> (2007) by Anthony Lappé and Dan Goldman
<i>The Complete Battlefields Volume 1</i> (2014) by Garth Ennis, Russ Braun, Carlos Ezquerra, and Peter Snejbjerg	<i>Showcase Presents: The Haunted Tank Volume 1</i> (2006) by Robert Kanigher and Joe Kubert
<i>Enemy Ace: War Idyll</i> (1990) by George Pratt	<i>Showcase Presents: Our Army at War</i> (2010) by Anton Kawasaki
<i>Ernie Pike</i> (2003) by Héctor Germán Oesterheld and Hugo Pratt	<i>Showcase Presents: Sgt. Rock Volume One</i> (2007) by Robert Kanigher and Bob Haney
<i>Executive Outcomes</i> (2015) by Nick Bicanic, M. Zachary Sherman, Emmanuel Xerx Javier	<i>Showcase Presents: The Unknown Soldier Volume 1</i> (2006) by Bob Haney, Frank Robbins, and Joe Kubert
<i>Flight of the Raven</i> (2017) by Jean-Pierre Gibrat	<i>Showcase Presents: Weird War Tales Volume 1</i> (2012) by Robert Kanigher and Joe Kubert
<i>Frontline Combat Volume 1</i> (2008) by Harvey Kurtzman et al.	<i>The Speed Abater</i> (2003) by Christophe Blain
<i>Goddamn This War!</i> (2013) by Jacques Tardi and Jean-Pierre Verney	<i>Twists of Fate</i> (2018) by Paco Roca
<i>It Was the War of the Trenches</i> (1993) by Jacques Tardi	<i>Two-Fisted Tales Volume 1</i> (2015) by Harvey Kurtzman et al.
<i>Last Day in Vietnam</i> (2000) by Will Eisner	<i>U.S.S. Stevens: The Collected Stories</i> (2016) by Sam Glanzman
<i>Les Folies Bergère</i> (2012) by Zidrou and Francis Porcel	<i>Vietnam Journal Book One: Indian Country</i> (2009) by Don Lomax
<i>Lost Soldiers</i> (2021) by Ales Kot, Luca Casalanguida, and Heather Moore	<i>War-Fix</i> (2006) by David Axe and Steve Olexa
<i>The 'Nam Volume 1</i> (1991) by Doug Murray and Michael Golden	<i>War is Hell: The First Flight of the Phantom Eagle</i> (2008) by Garth Ennis and Howard Chaykin
<i>No Parsarán!</i> (2000) by Vittorio Giardino	<i>War Stories Volume 1</i> (2001) by Garth Ennis et al.
<i>Notes for a War Story Collector's Edition</i> (2007) by Gipi	<i>Willie and Joe: The WWII Years</i> (2011) by Bill Mauldin