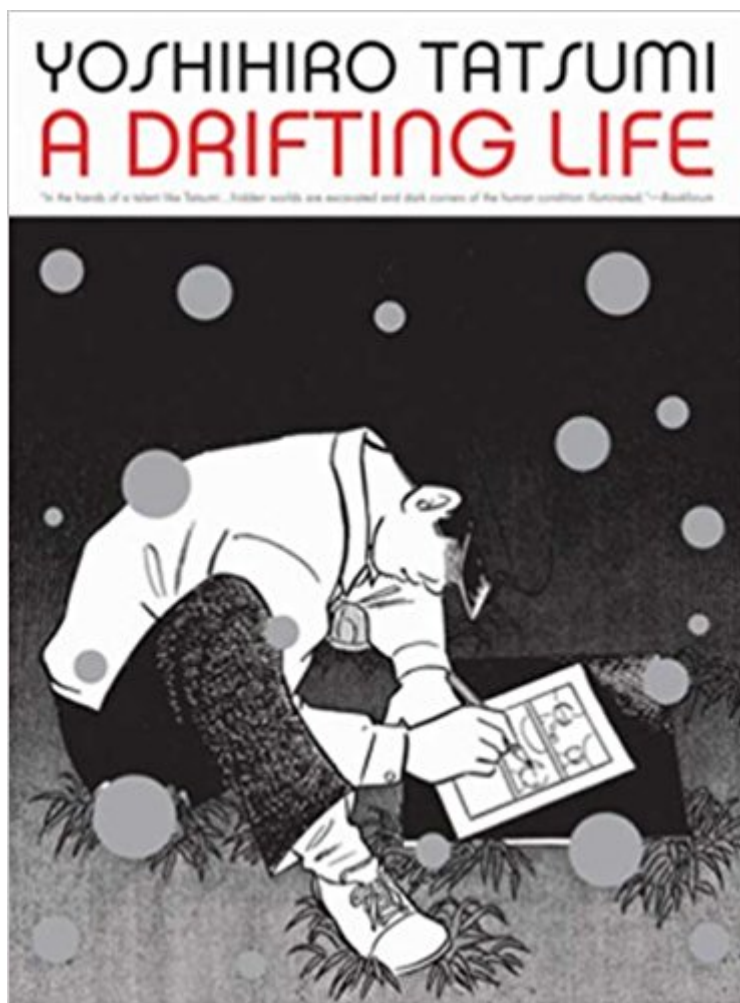


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A Drifting Life



Synopsis

The epic autobiography of a manga master. Acclaimed for his visionary short-story collections *The Push Man and Other Stories*, *Abandon the Old in Tokyo*, and *Good-Bye*—originally created nearly forty years ago, but just as resonant now as ever—the legendary Japanese cartoonist Yoshihiro Tatsumi has come to be recognized in North America as a precursor of today's graphic novel movement. *A Drifting Life* is his monumental memoir eleven years in the making, beginning with his experiences as a child in Osaka, growing up as part of a country burdened by the shadows of World War II. Spanning fifteen years from August 1945 to June 1960, Tatsumi's stand-in protagonist, Hiroshi, faces his father's financial burdens and his parents' failing marriage, his jealous brother's deteriorating health, and the innumerable pitfalls that await him in the competitive manga market of mid-twentieth-century Japan. He dreams of following in the considerable footsteps of his idol, the manga artist Osamu Tezuka (*Astro Boy*, *Apollo's Song*, *Ode to Kirihito*, *Buddha*)—with whom Tatsumi eventually became a peer and, at times, a stylistic rival. As with his short-story collection, *A Drifting Life* is designed by Adrian Tomine.

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Customer Reviews

Tatsumi revolutionized manga in the 1950s, inventing *gekiga*—seething, slice-of-life stories about emotional crises. In this elephantine memoir (in which he barely disguises himself as Hiroshi Katsumi), he tells the story of his early years in the comics business, from his teenage obsession with entering postwar magazines' reader-cartoon contests and poring over

Osamu Tezuka's comics to the brief late-'50s heyday of the gekiga workshop over which he presided. It's also a history of Japan in that era, filtered through Tatsumi's own experience—the sound of cicadas is a recurring symbol of portentousness—and packed with digressions on cartooning technique, the movies and prose fiction that inspired him, and his nervous flirtations with women; the passage of time is marked by illustrated factoids about each year's headlines. Tatsumi's visual technique is very much a product of an earlier generation—his characters' faces are simple, broad caricatures—but the mastery he's gained in half a century of cartooning comes through in his immaculate staging and composition. Readers curious about Japanese comics history may find the book's wealth of detail fascinating; for the most part, though, Tatsumi's vivid, graceful dramatizations of the period's shifting business and creative alliances don't quite justify the tedious, repetitive hybrid of bildungsroman and industry time line he's created. (Apr.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Grade 10 Up—This is a masterfully drafted autobiographical work by the creator of *Good-bye* (2008) and *Abandon the Old in Tokyo* (2006, both Drawn & Quarterly). Referring to himself as Hiroshi, Tatsumi begins his story with the surrender of Japan after World War II, when he was 10 years of age, and details the following 15 years of his life. Deeply passionate about manga at a young age, he chronicles the time from his start as an enthusiast to his rise as an influential and celebrated author/illustrator of the format. Although this book centers primarily on Tatsumi's writing career, the history of manga, influential writers and publications of the time, and the turbulent manga publishing industry, much more is revealed. Family life and dynamics influenced by his parents' troubled marriage, his father's financial difficulties, and his friendship and rivalry with his brother are explored, first sexual interests and experiences are considered, and relationships among fellow artists are skillfully portrayed. Historical political and cultural events are introduced throughout the story, giving readers a feel for Japan's climate and social landscape during the period. Black-ink images in a combination of detailed/realistic panels mixed with cartoon-style artwork enhance the atmosphere and bring the characters to life. This is a captivating autobiography, and one that should have high appeal to those interested in the history of manga and Japanese culture, and followers of Tatsumi's works.—Lara McAllister, Halifax Public Libraries, Nova Scotia END

The concept of "A Drifting Life" couldn't be simpler: The life story of one of the early masters of manga, told (of course) as a manga. But it ends up being far more than that. Among other things,

it's a panoramic action shot of postwar Japan, and a meditation (I know how pretentious this sounds, but it can't be helped) on the power of art to transform one's life. And it's gorgeously drawn, but more than that, it's drawn in ways that keep the narrative moving for hundreds of pages. It's long, and it can be a bit difficult (especially for those of us who aren't Japanese), but it's hugely rewarding. Highly recommended.

I have loved everything about this book. Deeply personal semi-autobiographical memoir chronicling a man's passion for manga and creating them while also revealing their history. All against the backdrop of post WW2 Japan and an often hard and dysfunctional life. Brutally honest, hopeful and heartbreaking. As real as it gets and GREAT art, and storytelling. Artists of all sorts should appreciate it, seeing him go through the same kinds of struggles and feelings and commitment is inspiring and comforting. I don't know what people are rating it low against? What standard? This book is a classic work that can sit next to any other intellectual comic. Meaty and ripped out of his heart, served on a silver gorgeously illustrated platter.

Although it has just come out and I've only read it once, I have no hesitation in saying that "A Drifting Life" is a manga classic. If you have read and enjoyed "Barefoot Gen," the more mature Tezuka works, or even newer manga like "Monster" or "Pluto" by Urasawa you need to check this out. The art is simple and easy to read. The story is engaging and interesting all the way through. It really left me wanting more - I read all 800+ pages in one weekend. You get to see how classic manga was made and get insight into the industry. This is not manga for kids. This is an intriguing story for adults. I would also recommend it to those who are new to manga/graphic novels because it is an extremely easy and intuitive read. Don't be intimidated by the page count. I read manga 5-10 times quicker than prose/regular books, and at least twice as quick as regular American comics. I hope he writes a sequel because I am interested to know what his life in manga was like after this book ends.

This book is a bit like Marjane Satrapi's "Persepolis" in terms of genre - autobiographical and set against a historic drawback (in this case, the socioeconomic and cultural evolution in a post-war Japan). But Tatsumi's narrative is less witty, impassioned or intimate in comparison. I think it's due to both personal and generational differences. Tatsumi's visual style in this book is particularly simple and modest. But I did enjoy reading it, particularly the "immaculate staging" (as Publishers Weekly put it) and interesting factoids of that period. I'm comparing the book to Persepolis only

because Persepolis has gained prominence in pop culture, not that it's the standard.

Tatsumi does not disappoint. Great story and artwork, an instant manga classic that takes us through the history of the artist, of comic book art in Japan and of the country itself. You all ought to read it.

This is a very nice story and memoir, especially for any cartoonist or aspiring artist. There is just one thing I want to point out for anyone who may have found this book listed on Drawn and Quarterly's website and are not familiar with Tatsumi or Manga. The image they have on the front page to promote the book[...] Osamu Tezuka's characters as envisioned by the character Hiroshi, and is not the style in which the book is illustrated. Tatsumi's art is more realistic, which is beautiful and fits the narrative, but it is not what I envisioned based on the D&Q ad. Not sure why they chose to use that picture, but either way its great read and I highly recommend it!!!

I've read it before and I loved it I had to buy it it's story worth reading?

I love this book, it is a great historical perspective on the early 50's Manga movement. Usually I breeze through graphic novels but this is actually taking me some time to read and digest.

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