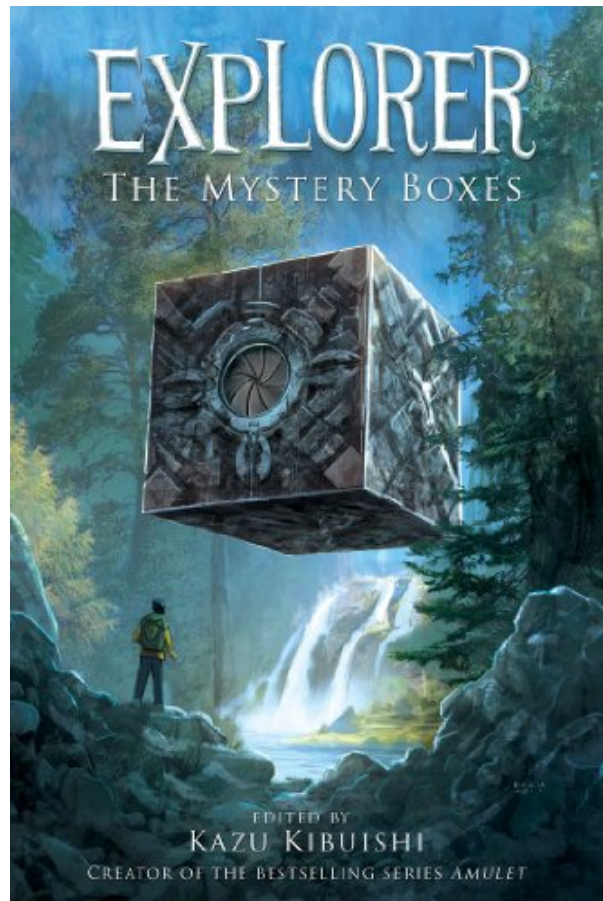
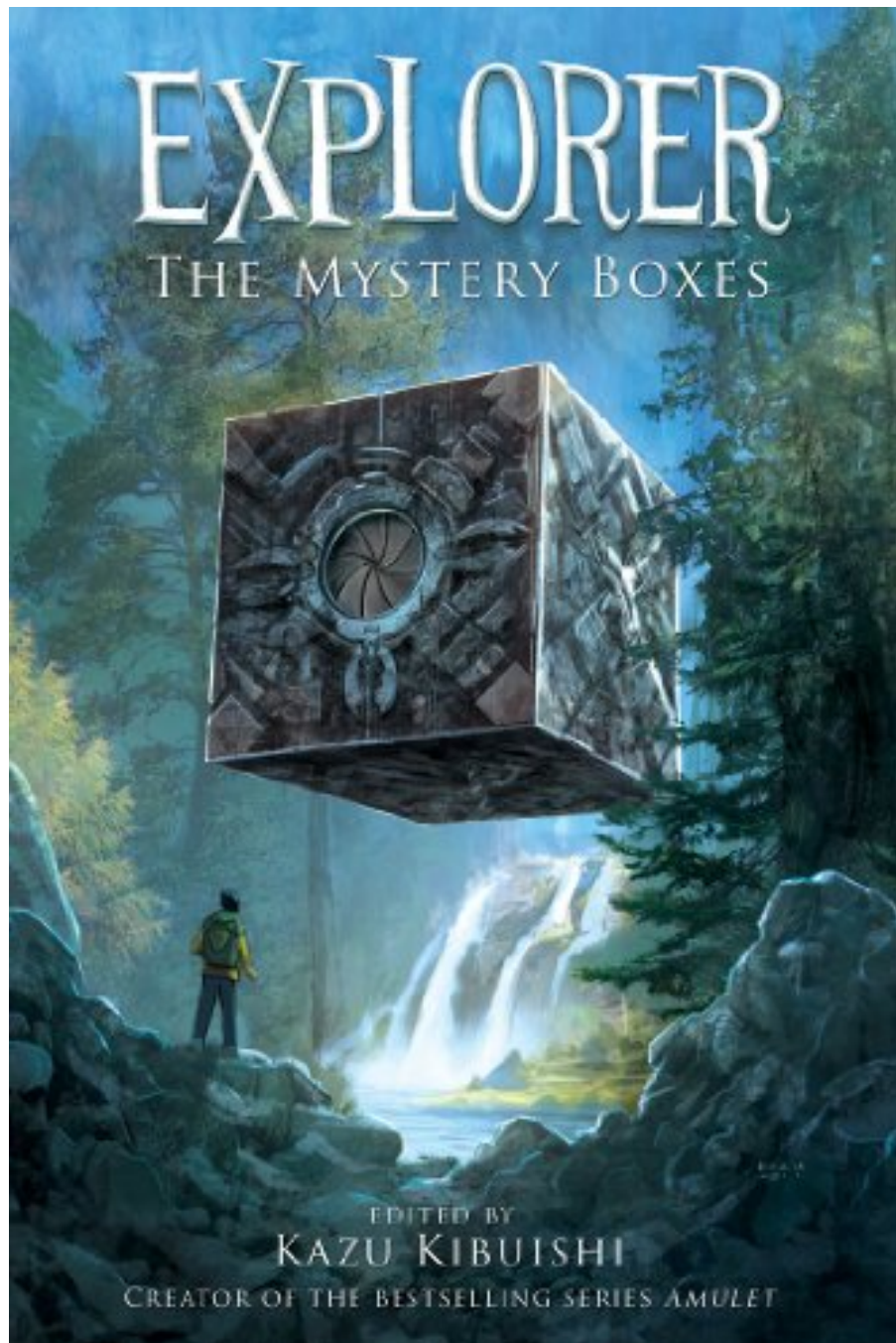


EXPLORER (THE MYSTERY BOXES #1) FROM AMULET BOOKS



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About the Author

Kazu Kibuishi is the creator of *Amulet*, the award-winning middle school graphic novel series, and the editor and art director of eight volumes of *Flight*, the influential, Eisner-nominated graphic anthology. His earlier work *Daisy Cutter* was named a YALSA Best Book for Young Adults. He lives in Alhambra, California.

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Seven clever stories answer one simple question: what's in the box?

Funny, fantastic, spooky, and suspenseful, each of these unique and beautifully illustrated short graphic works revolves around a central theme: a mysterious box and the marvels—or mayhem—inside. Artists include middle school favorites Kazu Kibuishi, Raina Telgemeier (*Smile*), and Dave Roman (*Astronaut Academy*), as well as Jason Caffoe, Stuart Livingston, Johane Matte, Rad Sechrist (all contributors to the groundbreaking comics anthology series *Flight*), and upcoming artist Emily Carroll.

Praise for *Explorer: Mystery Boxes* **STARRED REVIEW** "An outstanding out-of-the box anthology from renowned comics veteran Kibuishi. With eye-popping full-color art and palettes ranging from candy-colored to ethereal earth tones, this is both a visual feast for the eyes and a healthy helping of thought for the soul. Superb." –Kirkus Reviews, starred review **STARRED REVIEW** "Coherent for all its variety, there will be something here for most readers." –School Library Journal, starred review

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Most helpful customer reviews

35 of 38 people found the following review helpful.

A little bit of lesson but a lot of fun

By Andrew C Wheeler

So, first there was the series of *Flight* anthologies, edited by Kazu Kibuishi -- they showcased mostly younger cartoonists, mostly people working in and around animation, and weren't officially for younger readers, though they were almost entirely young-reader-friendly. *Flight* ran eight annual volumes, and ended last year.

There was a spin-off anthology, *Flight Explorer*, which was specifically targeted to younger (roughly tween) readers -- though with pretty much the same crew of creators, very similar or the same main characters, and not much difference from the main *Flight* volumes. That was published in 2008, and was billed as "Volume One," though a second volume hasn't yet appeared.

And now there's *EXPLORER: THE MYSTERY BOXES*, which smells a whole lot like a themed *FLIGHT EXPLORER, VOLUME TWO*: seven graphic stories, edited by Kibuishi, all about mysterious magical/scientific/marvelous boxes and the people that open them, also aimed at middle-grade readers. Now, my major problem with the big *FLIGHT* anthologies is that they were each three hundred pages of stories that were all mostly the same kind of thing: young or otherwise naifish protagonists wandering through big, visually exciting worlds, learning Important Lessons, being Nice, and probably saving something along the way. *FLIGHT EXPLORER* was better: it focused on adventure, not so much on lessons, though it also seemed to be trying to launch each of its main characters as the hero of a series of separate graphic novels. (And the moderate success of that might be why we haven't seen a second volume.)

MYSTERY BOXES is the most circumscribed of the books: all of the stories have a mysterious box, which then opens to reveal something wondrous, unpleasant, or otherwise surprising, and then the heroes have to deal with that situation in eighteen pages (or, in one case, only sixteen). The resulting stories are pretty varied, though -- the unpleasant box-dwellers range from the creepy, in Emily Carroll's "Under the Floorboards" to the Warner-Brothers-inspired goofy, in Johane Matte's "Whatzit," and the lesson stories -- like Jason Caffoe's "The Keeper's Treasure," "The Soldier's Daughter" by Stuart Livingston with Stephanie Ramirez, and Kibuishi's own "The Escape Option" -- at least teach slightly different lessons from each other. And the sheer fun-mayhem level is high, in "Whatzit" as well as Dave Roman and Raina Telgemeier's amiable cartoony "Spring Cleaning" and Rad Sechrist's *Littles*-inspired "The Butter Thief" (which has a muted moral of its own).

As usual, the art is all excellent and very colorful -- even the creators that don't come out of animation embrace mostly bright palettes ("Butter Thief" uses muted tones in pursuit of a similar aim, and "Under the Floorboards" has a softer, scratchier feel) and clean black lines to define spaces. These are fun stories -- with a hint of spinach in the lessons most of them teach -- that should be enjoyed by tweens and viewed favorably by those tweens' gatekeepers (parents, teachers, librarians), who will be happier at those lessons that the target audience probably will be.

15 of 17 people found the following review helpful.

A great, kid-friendly graphic novel!

By S. O'Donnell

This is a fantastic compilation of short graphic novel stories, put together by eight top comic creators. Seven different stories and fabulous color graphics will keep middle grade readers engaged for hours. Both my 10-year-old son and 7-year-old daughter LOVED it. In fact, I had to steal it from my daughter in order to write this post.

My son's favorite thing about these stories was the endings. He told me he loved the way they kept the mystery alive, even at the end, and then insisted on reading three of the endings to me. Both kids loved the recurring theme of the mystery boxes in every story. I love the graphics.

If you like kid-friendly graphic novels, I highly recommend picking up a copy of this one.

21 of 28 people found the following review helpful.

Tales of the boxes.

By EA Solinas

Boxes. Boxes with mystery contents. They may have treasure, or a demon, or an alien creature, or even a demonic wax doll. Each of the seven stories in "Explorer: The Mystery Boxes" revolves around a... well, a mysterious box that changes the life of whoever handles it. A couple of the stories are too goofy for me to really get into them, but the others are simply sublime -- bittersweet, hopeful, charming and/or creepy.

The stories, in order, are:

- A girl finds a box with a wax doll inside. But while the doll initially helps her with her chores, it also begins to cause trouble... and refuses to leave.
- While cleaning his closet, Oliver finds a strange puzzle box -- and is immediately swamped by greedy wizards who want to buy it from him. However, Oliver has his own plans for the box.
- A young treasure-hunter ventures into a vast labyrinth, and finds a mysterious box with the help of a horned creature. What is inside? And can it match the horned creature's dreams?
- After her grandmother claims to have caught a butter-stealing spirit in a box, a curious girl digs it up and checks inside... and ends up being transformed into a teeny-tiny spirit herself. How can she get back?
- After her father is killed, Clara sets out for vengeance against the man who killed him. But when she meets a stranger with a glowing box, she learns the true price of war.
- Alien worker Deets is assigned to organize thousands of boxes... only to discover that something very destructive is inside one. Will it ever come in handy?
- While James is hiking, he is drawn up into a vast floating box. Inside, an alien tells him that the Earth is doomed, and that he has been chosen out of all humans to be taken to another world.

The only story that didn't truly grab me was "Whatzit" -- it's not a BAD story per se, but it's very slapsticky and cartoonish. In those ways, it seems out of sync with the other lighter stories in this collection, such as the charming "Spring Cleaning" or the frenetic Japanese-themed "Butter Thief. The remaining four stories are truly entrancing, ranging from quiet horror to haunting sci-fi, from a misty meditation on revenge to a fantastical ode to the imagination.

And every story's artwork matches the narrative. For instance, Kazu Kibuishi's is misty, shadowed and quietly graceful (especially the outdoor scenes); Emily Carroll's is very simple and slightly sinister; Jason Caffoe's is filled with luminous blue light and glowing gold; and Johane Matte's looks kind of like an adapted story from a Cartoon Network show, very jagged and colorful.

"Explorer: The Mystery Boxes" is a good showcase for some very talented comic artists -- beautiful art and stories that range from heartbreaking to kooky. A couple didn't quite grab me, but even the lesser stories aren't too bad.

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