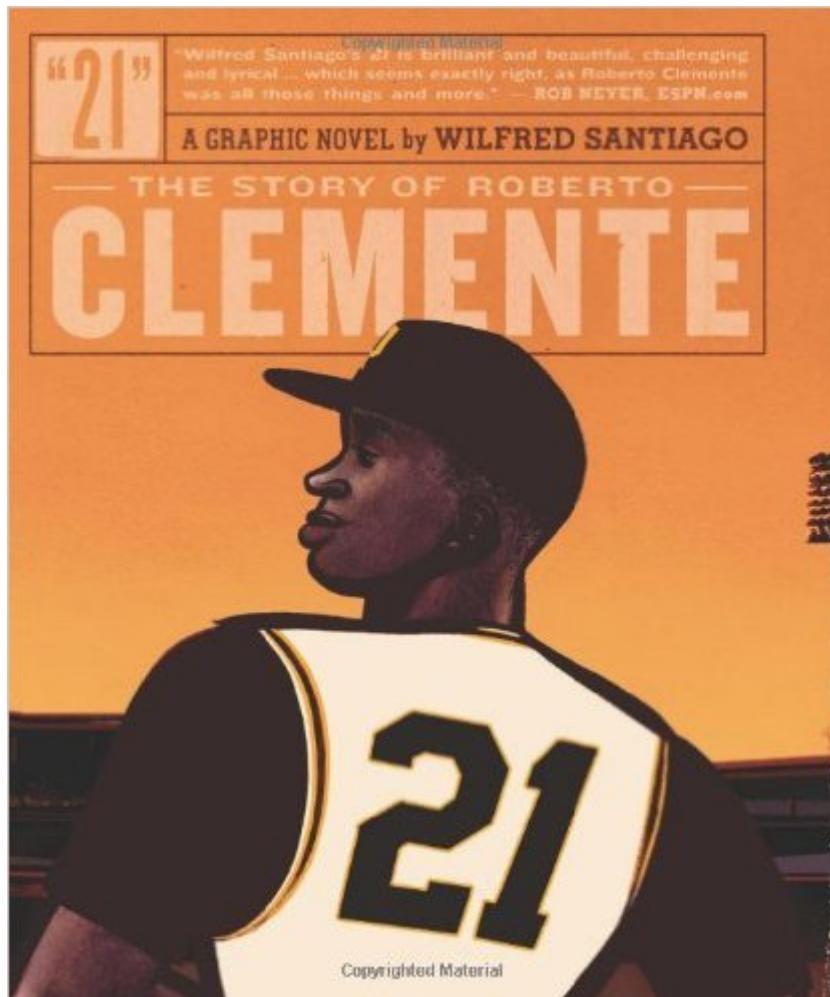


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## 21: The Story Of Roberto Clemente



## **Synopsis**

A graphic novel biography of Puerto Rico's greatest baseball star. 21 is an all-ages graphic biography of baseball star Roberto Clemente: No other baseball player dominated the 1960s like him and no other Latin American player achieved his numbers. 21 chronicles his early days growing up in rural Puerto Rico, the highlights of his career (including the 1960s World Series), the prejudice he faced, his private life and his humanitarian mission. Santiago captures the grit of Clemente's rise from his impoverished childhood, to the majesty of his performance on the field, to his fundamental decency as a human being, in a drawing style that combines realistic attention to detail and expressive cartooning.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

As an only very occasional reader of graphic novels, or graphic non-fiction, I have no real basis, nor any desire, to try to view this terrific little book in relation to other graphic works. All I can tell you is that I thoroughly enjoyed it. Not really a biography in any literal sense of the term, it does paint an interesting portrait of the life and times of this fascinating and admirable man. I also have never read a standard biography of Clemente (though I am more motivated now than I was before I read this), so I cannot say precisely how much liberty Santiago may or may not have taken. What I can say is that this is a lovely, lively and very idiosyncratic look at Clemente, his childhood, his growing up and his adult life as one of baseball's all-time greats and greatest symbols of its once status of more-than-a-game. Santiago's style is fluid, muscular and light at the same time. His pictures dance

and breathe and bleed from one frame, one page, to the next with grace and style. The book is a joy to look at. It's pretty good to read, too. My only real complaint is that, maybe by design, Clemente never quite emerges as a three dimensional person (no pun intended). For all the breath-taking artistry on display, this remains an essay, a sort of prose poem to Clemente. I admit this may be my problem, not the book's - it in no way claims, or seems to intend, to be documentary. But I still wanted just a little more flesh. The only thing that kept me from clicking five stars instead of four.

The art for Clemente is fantastic. Santiago does a beautiful job illustrating the characters of the stories and the images of baseball in action. The landscapes of Puerto Rico are wonderful and the page layout is modern and interesting. As a piece of art, this book easily deserves 5 stars and I would absolutely recommend it to any baseball fan, artist, or graphic novel enthusiast. My only complaint is that the story is overly fractured, and skips over pivotal moments in Clemente's baseball and philanthropic careers. Overall, a nice little book that would make an excellent addition to any graphic novel or baseball library.

I am giving this five stars because my 10 year old son is so hard to buy books for. He has not put this down for 45 minutes straight and still going. I will leave another review after I read it myself. ;-)

This is a story not only about baseball, but about Puerto Rico's absorption into the US and impact that had on Clemente and his friends and family. The graphic novel format lends itself to the many dimensional concept of life, and allows the reader to experience news papers, TV, letters, declarations, and conversations. Santiago really displayed how baseball is politics with this novel. Roberto Clemente was the first Latino player to be inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame. Parts of the story I found to be a little choppy and it was hard to keep track of the time frame of things. One moment Clemente was talking to his girlfriend, the next they were married and had children. That was the only downside about this book. I loved the sepia tones, as they are softer on the eyes than traditional black and white. I also appreciated how the author changed the color of the dialogue bubbles depending on whether the characters were speaking English or Spanish. That helps give the readers a clear understanding of when English was used vs. when Spanish was used. I'm glad also that the author took us back to Clemente's childhood, as that was an important set up to how he became a baseball player. And, of course, the discussion of race that is always present, especially in the South in the 1960s. One point to note on that is the difference between his drawings of white characters vs. characters of color; white people were all hard lines

and angles, while POC were drawn very flowing with lots of curves. I think that speaks to the roles and dynamics that were present between the white people and the POC. What is most touching about this story is that his dream was realized even after his death.

Wilfred Santiago's beautiful graphic novel of Roberto Clemente is not just another biopic of one of our country's most important heroes. Anyone familiar with Clemente knows his life story from the countless biographies, documentaries and tributes that have been created over the years. Yet, Santiago is able to capture the grace and movement of Clemente as a human being and as a hero unlike any previous book. If you love baseball, you will be amazed at the power and energy of the baseball scenes. If you love heroes, you will be inspired all over again at Clemente's sense of justice and honesty. If you are a fan of graphic novels and comics, you will spend hours marveling at the beauty of the illustrations. If you are American and/or Puerto Rican, you will be so proud of Santiago's tribute and of Clemente's unparalleled life. This is a book to treasure and return to again and again. My only regret, we need a Spanish version. There are hundreds of thousands of fans of baseball and Clemente in Latin America and the Caribbean, not to mention hispanoparlantes here in the United States who would apreciarlo mucho!

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