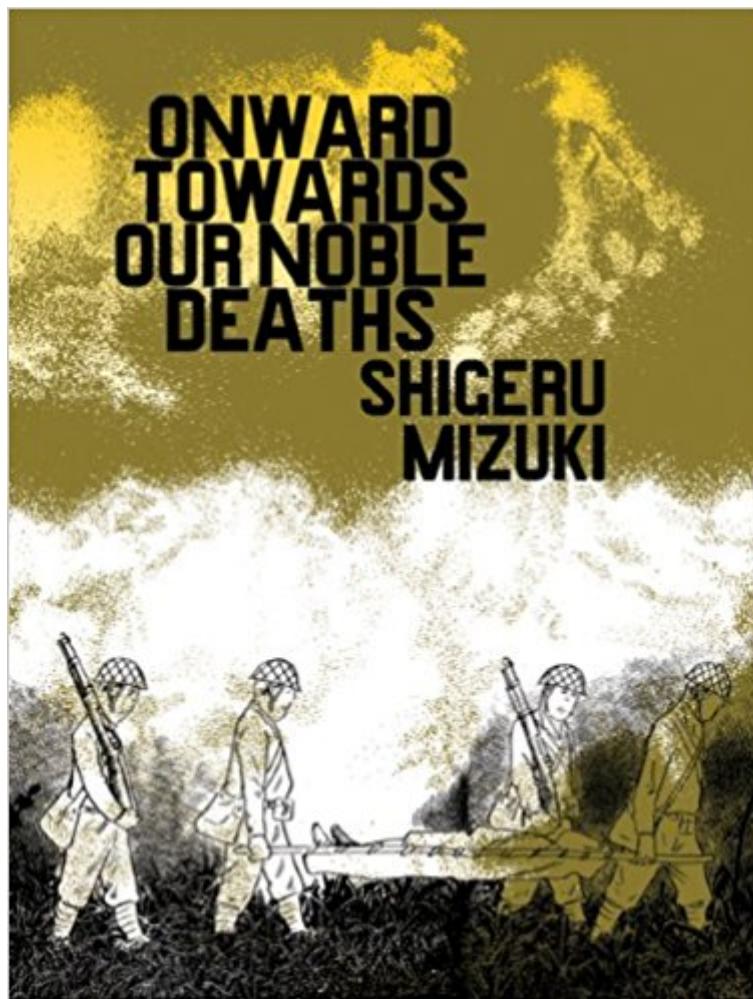


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# Onward Towards Our Noble Deaths



## Synopsis

A landmark publishing event of one of Japan's most famous cartoonists Shigeru Mizuki is the preeminent figure of Gekiga manga and one of the most famous working cartoonists in Japan today—âœa true living legend. *Onward Towards Our Noble Deaths* is his first book to be translated into English and is a semiautobiographical account of the desperate final weeks of a Japanese infantry unit at the end of World War II. The soldiers are told that they must go into battle and die for the honor of their country, with certain execution facing them if they return alive. Mizuki was a soldier himself (he was severely injured and lost an arm) and uses his experiences to convey the devastating consequences and moral depravity of the war. Mizuki's list of accolades and achievements is long and detailed. In Japan, the life of Mizuki and his wife has been made into an extremely popular television drama that airs daily. Mizuki is the recipient of many awards, including the Best Album Award for his book *NonNonBa* (to be published in 2012 by D+Q) and the Heritage Essential Award for *Onward Towards Our Noble Deaths* at the Angoulême International Comics Festival, the Tezuka Osamu Cultural Prize Special Award, the Kyokujitsu Sho Decoration, the Shijū Hosho Decoration, and the Kodansha Manga Award. His hometown of Sakaiminato honored him with Shigeru Mizuki Road—âœa street decorated with bronze statues of his *Ge Ge Ge no Kitaro* characters—âœand the Shigeru Mizuki International Cultural Center.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Born on March 8, 1922, in Sakaiminato, Tottori, Shigeru Mizuki is a specialist in stories of yokai and

is considered a master of the genre. He is a member of the Japanese Society of Cultural Anthropology and has traveled to more than sixty countries to engage in fieldwork on the yokai and spirits of different cultures. He has been published in Japan, South Korea, France, Spain, Taiwan, and Italy.

There are many reasons to read *Onward Towards our Noble Deaths*, and it's hard to pick which one to start with- a good problem to have. I'll start by approaching the "single volume aspect." I've read *All You Need is Kill* and *Uzumaki*, the two standalone omnibuses I see the most on people's shelves, and would place *Onward Towards Our Noble Deaths* solidly above them both. About 350 pages, but since it was originally published in 1973, it follows the older style of having more frames per page a lot of the time, so it's well filled, similar in that respect to the text-heavy stories of Ohba & Obata (the duo that wrote *Death Note* and *Bakuman*), although in a different way that doesn't have that same text-heavy feel. It's written by Shigeru Mizuki, and, as it says in the back of the book, is 90% fact (and then they tell you what exactly was changed from the actual happening). Shigeru Mizuki is one of Japan's most legendary mangaka, on the same tier as Osamu Tezuka, (although I found OTND a little more processable by the modern reader than Adolf) although he's only recently been introduced to the Western eye. He also happens to have been a soldier, who lost his left arm to the war, along with nearly dying to malaria, and those experiences form the basis of OTND. Mizuki's art style is hands down better than anything I've read pre-90s. There's a provocative contrast between the backgrounds, which are detailed on par with the best of modern artwork, and the characters, who use Mizuki's distinct stylistic "cartoonish" rendering that's reminiscent of *Ping Pong*, *Tatami Galaxy*, and other "unusual but better" styles (I haven't read *Oyasumi PunPun* yet, but I can imagine it's similar conceptually to how that plays out with the main character. As a side note, in Urasawa's *Manben* series about making manga, Mizuki gets mentioned a lot, and I think was referenced in the Inio Asano episode because of the similarities). Without spoiling anything, I think I can safely say that OTND is about the tragic absurdity of war, with all the weight of the historical "this really happened" aspect, and a man who suffered greatly from its first-hand perspective. In some ways the themes parallel the classic film *Bridge over the River Kwai*, only coming from the

Japanese soldier's viewpoint, with the conversations of the characters usually feeling more like Full Metal Jacket. That's really what's astounding about *OTND*- seeing what the atmosphere was like for the "other side," and the way that one senseless event led to another without anyone seeming to actually want to go down that path, you can't escape the nagging question, "why did this have to happen?" I want to keep this short, so let me just say that the omnibus is fantastically bound, and looks great on the shelf, as well as in your hands. It's also nice how when there is a big 2 page spread they usually broke it up with panels so you don't lose anything to the binding (there was once where they didn't, I'm not sure why). It's put out by Drawn & Quarterly, who I'd never heard of before, so they could probably use your support. I'll definitely be getting more of their *Mizuki* as soon as I can.

Very rare to find Japanese 1st person accounts of WWII, this unique style shows the humanity behind the barbarous behavior of the imperial armies

I've read the Marine account of the battle at Cape Gloucester. This book gave me the Japanese side of the same battle. This battle was the first combat engagement my dad was a participant before being killed on the first day of battle at Peleliu on September 15, 1944.

Beautiful book, heartbreakingly good

Excellent and frank account of the experiences of Japanese soldiers ordered to perform impossible tasks and then die a futile death.

Beautiful work! A shining example of manga storytelling and craft. Mizuki is a formidable talent. I'm thrilled that Drawn and Quarterly is introducing this kind of thing to the North American market.

Highly recommended, give it a read.

I have read John Toland's *The Rising Sun* a couple of times. This is a history which focuses on the Japanese side of World War II. I should point out that looking at events from the Japanese side does not mean sympathy for the Japanese militarism that lead to the Pacific War. Like the

Rising Sun, this graphic novel is told from the Japanese point of view. In this case, the point of view of enlisted soldiers fighting on the Pacific Islands. At this point Japan is losing the war and the Japanese soldiers are frequently drawn into what is literally a suicidal conflict. The graphic novel is a semi-autobiographical account. The author, Shigeru Mizuki was in the war. From the point of view of the Japanese grunts, the Japanese military was just as dysfunctional and crazy as the Allied military in Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*. The treatment of the newly enlisted soldiers was brutal. In this account the non-coms regularly ordered the new recruits forward so that they could slap them. The art in the graphic novel is a strange mix of detailed and realistic landscape with cartoonish soldiers. Since this is a translated Japanese Manga, the novel reads back to front. The blocks on the page also read right to left, which takes a bit of getting used to. In some ways this story could be seen as the Japanese side of Norman Mailer's masterpiece *The Naked and the Dead*. It is a moving and unforgettable narrative on the insanity of war and the organizations that wage it.

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