

Evans, Kate. 2015. *Red Rosa: A Graphic Biography of Rosa Luxembourg*.
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In the graphic novel *Red Rosa: A Graphic Biography of Rosa Luxembourg* Kate Evans tells a captivating and accessible narrative of Rosa Luxembourg's life and work. While keeping the storyline grounded in quotes from Luxembourg's letters and other pieces of writing, Evans takes some creative license when it comes to several of the events and characters mentioned. However, she makes it clear that it is her intention to give an accurate, while also engaging, account of Luxembourg's life and she is careful to point out any instances where she has deviated from the historical narrative. Through this graphic novel Evans creatively and successfully makes the work and life of a radical, intellectual woman available to a wide audience.

The novel begins in Poland in 1871 with the birth of Rosa Luxembourg to Lina and Edward Luxembourg. Evans outlines Luxembourg's childhood, her family's move to Warsaw, her childhood illness, and her close relationship with her brothers. Because of anti-Semitic legislation, the family struggled with poverty and yet they always encouraged learning and education. Evans describes Luxembourg's adolescence and her first exposure to socialism and the ideas of Karl Marx through clever interactions among members of the Luxembourg family. Using Luxembourg's family as a backdrop for an intellectual discussion of *Das Kapital*, Evans outlines the fundamentals of Marx's work in a creative and easy to understand manner. In this way Evans sets the stage for the rest of novel. She demonstrates from the very beginning her ability to engage a wide audience and to make complex economic and social theories accessible to the general public.

Evans goes on to trace Luxembourg's journey from her home in Poland to Switzerland in 1889. In Zurich Luxembourg attends university to study philosophy, history, economics and politics. She becomes involved in the Socialist International and writes articles and speaks at conferences. She also falls in love. Evans describes Luxembourg's passionate relationship with Leo Jogiches vividly and in a such a way that humanizes Luxembourg and makes her more and more relatable to the reader.

Moving to Berlin in 1898, Luxembourg finds her home in Germany and even fakes a marriage with a German man in order to obtain German citizenship. She is invested in the socialist movement and is able to engage both intellectuals and the working class through her speeches and articles. When the Russian revolution breaks out in 1905 Luxembourg cannot resist the action and she leaves Germany for her childhood home. Once back in Warsaw, Luxembourg begins producing illegal newspapers and learning from those on the ground, the working class who have been organizing strikes,

struggling with unemployment, and achieving small victories. In this environment Luxembourg forms a new revolutionary theory, before her and Leo are arrested and thrown in jail. After she is bailed out by her supporters, who lavishly bribe the Russian authorities, Luxembourg returns to Germany alone in September of 1906. She struggles with the leadership of the German Social Democratic (SPD) party, as she continues to argue for revolution, not reform, and equal suffrage.

Throughout the narrative it is clear that, for Evans, Luxembourg's personal life and story cannot be told without the inclusion of her scholarly work and ideas. As such, there are various points at which Evans discusses Luxembourg's intellectual and theoretical work in depth, through the use of ordinary events in Luxembourg's life. For example, Evans uses Luxembourg's role as a teacher in the SPD party school in the fall of 1907 to further explain Luxembourg's thoughts and theories on political economy. In a classroom setting Luxembourg explains historical materialism, urkommunism, labour power, production and profit. At this point in the novel, Evans steps in and draws herself into the narrative in order to discuss and point out the relevance and significance of Luxembourg's work in our modern, capitalist world. In this way Evans successfully explains complicated theories in an easy to understand format without deviating from the storyline.

In the last half of the novel Evans demonstrates Luxembourg's fearlessness when it came to challenging the status quo, questioning everything, and continuing to stand up for what is right. Luxembourg is adamant that only a revolution will free the masses, and she splits with Karl Kautsky, a respected Marxist theoretician in the SPD, over her call for a republic. As the threat of a world war looms closer in 1913 Luxembourg begins speaking out publically against military violence and sending troops into war. She is arrested for her actions and she uses her trial as a podium to speak to the people about the barbaric nature of warfare. For Luxembourg, the act of war goes against the interests of the masses who are the ones sent off to die in the battlefields. When the SPD unanimously votes in favour of going to war in August of 1914, Luxembourg is not deterred and she continues to speak out against the war.

By 1918 the German public are tired of fighting and many take to the streets to protest the ongoing war. While Germany is declared a republic in November, it is not a republic of the people and Luxembourg's outspoken attitude against the SPD leadership eventually results in her assassination. On January 15, 1919 Luxembourg was shot and killed by the SPD Reichstag Regiment. Evans concludes her novel with a sketch of Luxembourg's final moments, alongside a retelling of her life. The final pages contain some of Luxembourg's quotes and a few sketches of modern uprisings and revolutions. Evans brings her novel to a close with a final representation of Luxembourg's continued relevance in today's society.

Through her use of captivating dialogue and creative drawings, Evans tells a story of a radical woman who was incredibly intelligent, courageous, and human. Evans not only explores Luxembourg's scholarly work in an easy to understand manner, she also demonstrates the relevance of Luxembourg's thoughts and ideas today. By doing this Evans is, in a way, continuing the work of Luxembourg by making her thoughts and ideas easily accessible to the public, the very working class to whom Luxembourg devoted her life to. In her storytelling, Evans also makes a point of humanizing Luxembourg. She does not describe Luxembourg as a saint or super woman, rather Evans points out Luxembourg's human experiences with love, illness, tragedy, and adversity. In this way Evans not only makes Luxembourg relatable, she also shows how one, seemingly ordinary and unimportant, individual can make a difference and become a leader. As someone who believed in the power of the masses and the necessity of revolution, Luxembourg, I think, would appreciate and value Evans representation of her life, work and legacy.