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# Picture This: The Near-sighted Monkey Book



## Synopsis

Book by Barry, Lynda

## Book Information

Series: Petits Livres

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## Customer Reviews

**Product Description** The creative-drawing companion to the acclaimed and bestselling *What It Is*. Lynda Barry single-handedly created a literary genre all her own, the graphic memoir/how-to, otherwise known as the bestselling, the acclaimed, but most important, the adored and the inspirational *What It Is*. The R. R. Donnelley and Eisner Award-winning book posed, explored, and answered the question: "Do you wish you could write?" Now with *Picture This*, Barry asks: "Do you wish you could draw?" It features the return of Barry's most beloved character, Marlys, and introduces a new one, the Near-sighted Monkey. Like *What It Is*, *Picture This* is an inspirational, take-home extension of Barry's traveling, continually sold-out, and sought-after workshop, "Writing the Unthinkable."

**Exclusive: A Q & A with Author Lynda Barry**

**Q:** You said in a Comics Journal interview that the book *What It Is* wasn't planned. But that you did fill in gaps once you had pages in a general order. Is this the same process you used for *Picture This*? And how is *Picture This* different from the prior book? **A:** For *Picture This* it was pretty much the same process. I start with a question--in this case it was "What makes us stop drawing?" and I make pictures while I think about the question and pretty soon the book just sort of starts to gel. The difference was with *Picture This* I had to have the pages up on a wall where I could see them. And there were a lot of pages so I had to create 'walls' to put the pages on in my studio--there isn't enough wall space to do it--and it turns

out the 4 x 8 sheets of blue styrofoam used for construction insulation worked perfectly. The sheets are long, lightweight, sturdy and really portable. So I could put about 40 pages on each sheet and drag the sheets all over the studio so I could move the pictures around until they started to interact with each other. I think my biggest challenge was accepting the fact that Picture This is a picture book. It was really hard for me to just put in pictures that weren't comics. I was worried about that. I've never been known for my drawing skills. I was worried that people would feel ripped off. Q: How has your perception of your audience changed as your work has become more widely known? A: Well a lot of the people who read my comics are getting older--not just the people who are my age, I'm talking about kids--especially the ones who started reading my work when they were little. I love meeting them now in their twenties and thirties and having them tell me about sneaking my books out of their parents' room, or running into them at the library. I love that. And I love the younger cartoonists I meet because of my work. So maybe my perception of my audience hasn't changed as much as my perception of my work as being something that moves reliably through time. But the biggest change has come because of teaching my writing workshop for the last ten or so years. It's changed my perception about people in general and the role that images play in our lives. I see people completely differently now because of it--my "audience" now is anyone who has had an urge to write a story or make a picture but is too confused about where to begin and worried about what the point of doing any of this might be. Q: Do you find any value in misreading of your work by reviewers or your readers? A: I don't read what people write about my work and when people talk to me about my work I do my best to change the subject as quickly and politely as possible. Sometimes though when people get the name of my books wrong I love it. I really love how "What It Is" became "What Is It" and "This Is It" and "Where Is It" and "What Is That." But by far my favorite mix up was when someone was telling me how much they liked my book "Cruddy" but they thought the name was "Crappy"--which still cracks me up. I don't correct anyone about such things and my hope is no one ever corrects them. I like that kind of "misreading" the best. Q: What would you say to someone who asks about the functionality of your books, their purpose? A: My goal is to make a book for someone who is sitting in the waiting room at the Jiffy Lube while they were getting their oil changed. I want to make books that are picked up by a bored or waiting person who starts to thumb through them and gets drawn in enough so that they stop noticing they are waiting at the Jiffy Lube and instead start to itch to make something with their hands. A picture, or a comic or anything at all. I'm devoted to the idea that the use of images can not only transform our experience of time and space, but also has an absolute biological function that is directly tied to an essential state of being which is this: the feeling that life is something worth living.

The creator of the weekly Ernie Pook's Comeek follows up *What It Is* (2008) with this equally inspiring and inspired guide to freeing the creative potential within even the most tightly buttoned reader. Barry introduces the Near-Sighted Monkey, who joins her beloved character Marlys in leading readers through imagination-loosening exercises in doodling and coloring as well as snippets of sly storytelling and fact revealing. At times the Near-Sighted Monkey channels Barry's presenting information about how the cartoonist approaches her own work and also offers very monkey-centric tidbits, such as when to talk about banana peels. Marlys fans will find plenty of satisfaction here, but adults and older teens who crave the opportunity to regain the pleasures they found in childhood creativity will also be thrilled with this volume. Although this book makes a good companion for *What It Is*, there is no need to be familiar with that title before cracking this one. --Francisca Goldsmith

Just thumbing through this book makes me feel like a kid again. The idea of painting and drawing on lowly 'binder paper' rocks my line art graphic mindset. There are a myriad of creative trails to follow and I've just begun the journey. There is such honesty in the pages, such a wonderful mix of spirit, technique, angst, and fun in a book about making art. Maybe "expressing ourselves" is a better term than "making art". Lynda Barry helps you open the door to expression. My favorite quote from the book so far is "The worst thing I can do when I'm stuck is to start thinking and stop moving my hands." I'm off to do a mood doodle and follow along with Marlys, Arna and the cephalopod.

This book is chock full of wonderful inspiration from Lynda Barry. It has lifted me out of my painting doldrums and put me back at ease in front of a blank sheet of paper. Actually, I've been painting on newspaper lately, a la Lynda. This book is rich in philosophy, inspiration, hope and wonder. I've bought multiple copies to hand out as gifts, and finally, one for myself. I had kept the library copy out past its due date and realized I needed to have my own copy to keep close at hand. Just had to buy it.

A book that inspires and supports honest creativity, even through the doubts that often come up, such as "that's not good enough" and "Copying CAN'T be creative."

You "want to write" ?? You "don't know how to start" ?? ...if you're serious, buy this book and get to work. Lynda Barry rules.

Fun, fun, fun!

Endlessly entertaining and filled with inspiring images and examples. No wonder everyone loves Lynda Barry so much. If you are a writer, a photographer, a painter, an artist of ANY sort, you will find something to like in this.

This is a great book. It asks the question- why do people stop drawing? It encourages you to rediscover your inner doodler and is great fun to look at and read. I would buy one for all my friends and especially for myself!

Everything was great! Super service!

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