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One! Hundred! Demons!



Synopsis

“You’ll wonder how anything can be so sad and so funny at the same time.”
Lev Grossman, *Time*
Inspired by a sixteenth-century Zen monk’s painting of a hundred demons chasing each other across a long scroll, acclaimed cartoonist Lynda Barry confronts various demons from her life in seventeen full-color vignettes. In Barry’s hand, demons are the life moments that haunt you, form you, and stay with you: your worst boyfriend; kickball games on a warm summer night; watching your baby brother dance; the smell of various houses in the neighborhood you grew up in; or the day you realize your childhood is long behind you and you are officially a teenager. As a cartoonist, Lynda Barry has the innate ability to zero in on the essence of truth, a magical quality that has made her book *One! Hundred! Demons!* an enduring classic of the early twenty-first century. In the book’s intro, however, Barry throws the idea of truth out of the window by asking the reader to decide if fiction can have truth and if autobiography can have a fiction, a hybrid that Barry coins “autobiofictionalography.” As readers get to know Barry’s demons, they realize that the actual truth no longer matters because the universality of Barry’s comics, true or untrue, reigns supreme.

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Customer Reviews

As anyone who’s read her comic strip *Ernie Pook’s Comeek* or novel *Cruddy* knows, Barry has a pitch-perfect sense of the way kids talk and think. Childhood’s cruelties and pleasures, remembered

in luminous, unsparing detail, have become the central topic of her work. The semi-autobiographical vignettes of this new work, originally serialized in *Salon*, follow the same basic format as the strip: blocks of enthusiastic first-person commentary at the top of each panel, squiggly, childlike-but stylized-drawings and dizzy word-balloon dialogue between the characters. Here, though, Barry gets a chance to stretch out, drawing out her memories and impressions into long, lively, sometimes sweet and sometimes painful narrative sequences on a seemingly endless list of curiously compelling topics: the scents of people's houses (one is "a combination of mint, tangerines, and library books"), dropping acid at 16 with a grocery bagger, the colors of head lice and the art of domesticating abused shelter dogs. The structure of the book is a drawing exercise that allows a hundred demons to flow out of the artist's pen onto paper. Barry's demons are the personal objects and effects that remind her of the in-between emotional states from her early life. The result is simultaneously poignant and hilarious-never one at the expense of the other-and so are her loopy, sure-lined drawings, which make both the kids and the adults look as awkward and scrunched-up as they feel. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Adult/High School-Barry uses an Asian painting exercise called "One Hundred Demons" to organize and connect 17 "autobifictionalographic" stories in which she meditates on a variety of demons that include pretentious boyfriends, lost childhood friends, family relationships, and even the 2000 presidential election. The author's keen observation and honesty draw readers to these sometimes painful, often poignant moments. In "Dancing," she explains that almost everyone in her family danced with great pleasure. Then a casually cruel comment from an admired neighbor made her self-conscious enough to stop. "Resilience" explores the mistaken belief of some adults that young children who have experienced a trauma will somehow forget and move past it. Here Barry allows speech balloons to fill in the gaps to which she alludes in her main text, with heart-wrenching effect. A more lighthearted story deals with the unique smells that permeate homes. Most of each story is told in text blocks at the top of the panel, while speech balloons convey specific details and characterizations. Barry's artwork is almost childlike, and the awkwardness of her drawings works well with the emotional tone her tales evoke. In the last few pages, she demonstrates the technique used for the original exercise and encourages readers to draw from their own experiences. This is an amazing collection, and those who connect with it will come away with a deep appreciation for Barry. Jody Sharp, Harford County Public Library, MD Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Unless you were that thin blonde with long glossy hair, perfect body, beautiful, self confident and popular you will relate to at least one demon in this book. I actually am only half way though it and can identify with so much of what Lynda Barry writes about. The cartoons, the bright colors and the size and feel of the book just draws you into each page. Remembering the shock of how it felt when you found out that how you saw yourself was not how others see you. The pain you felt not having friends and being made fun of by everyone. The confusion of becoming a teen and not knowing who you are or why you are so different and discovering that you just don't fit in. The moment when that feeling of regret over your past over powers you with guilt over how you treated a friend. I love this book. To me it is like cleaning out your closet and finding all those memories that you packed away in boxes that you forgot you had. It is not depressing it is exciting to see how all those demons made you who you are today and how the times that you thought your life was over were just part of growing up. One Hundred Demons made me feel that I wasn't so different, I wasn't the only one who looked strange dancing.

I had to read this book for a college class and I am so glad it was assigned. I really loved reading about Lynda's memories and right off the bat I was reliving some of my youth. I have many of the same demons and can identify with more things than I expected. I laughed at a few things that hit home and got a bit teary with some things. After each demon I had to keep reading to see what else was in there that I could recognize. She is a very talented writer and I hope to read more.

Lynda Barry has this really fresh, off-the-cuff feel that is pure, unprocessed entertainment. There is something very real and refreshingly sincere with her humor that is uniquely compelling. Most autobiographical cartoonists have a certain mechanical quality in how they formulate and relay their stories, whereas Lynda's stuff captures the moment. She moves her experiences right into your head. She's the best.

I bought this based on another reviewer who said it was her favorite book. I can see why, but I thought its appeal is for a narrow market because of its artwork....I felt it was more artwork than writing message. It is a different approach to memoir, and for this alone it is to be commended. But unlike that reviewer, it is not my favorite but deserves a look because of its approach to a popular genre: memoir.

Beautiful art and one of my favorites from the artist. Very real scenarios that are both funny and painful at the same time.

An insightful step backwards into childhood and the problems you may (or may not have) grappled with in the tough road to growing up! I loved this book. It has so many layers, from light hearted child's play to the dark complexities of a relationship with a not so affectionate parent. I really really enjoyed this book! It was a wonderful read, especially for me as a parent who sometimes is dangerously close to forgetting those little childhood moments.

This is Lynda Barry's best book. She is at the peak of her drawing/painting powers and storytelling. The last cartoon story is about reading the classified ads from the local paper as a kid and the flights of imagination that occur. She closes it with a poignant wish from her adult self. It is sublime. I am a big fan of hers and most of the cartoons herein are about growing up. Her great ear for language is on full display. Her love for her family and pals is what powers the book. She is alive to the mysteries of the heart. If you want to try out Lynda, buy this book. It towers over her other creations.

Creative, funny, and sad. I love her.

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