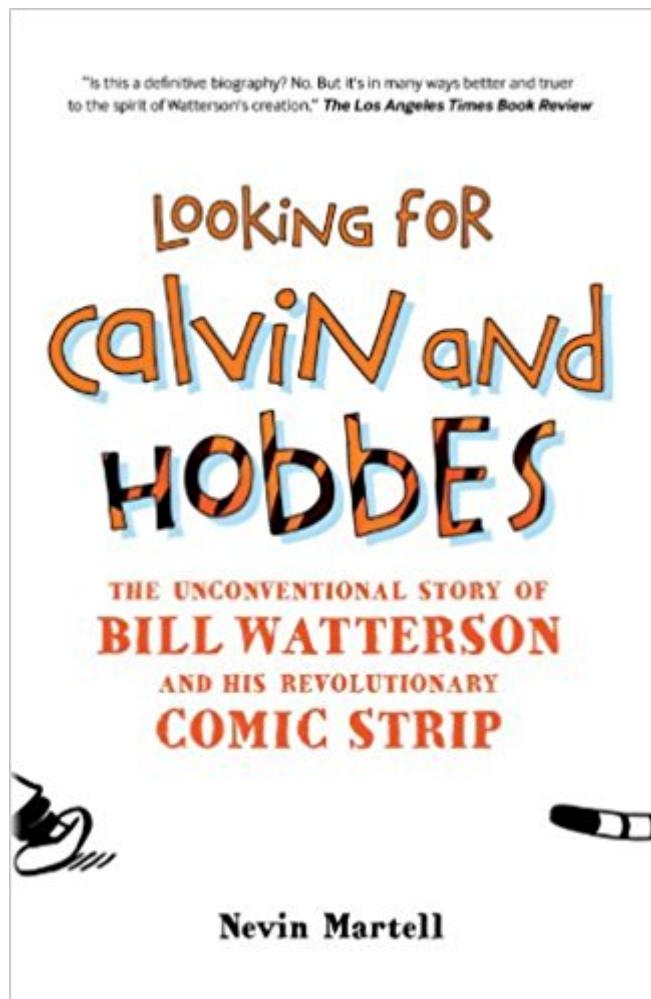


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Looking For Calvin And Hobbes: The Unconventional Story Of Bill Watterson And His Revolutionary Comic Strip



Synopsis

For ten years, Calvin and Hobbes was one the world's most beloved comic strips. And then, on the last day of 1995, the strip ended. Its mercurial and reclusive creator, Bill Watterson, not only finished the strip but withdrew entirely from public life. In *Looking for Calvin and Hobbes*, Nevin Martell sets out on a very personal odyssey to understand the life and career of the intensely private man behind Calvin and Hobbes. Martell talks to a wide range of artists and writers (including Dave Barry, Harvey Pekar, and Brad Bird) as well as some of Watterson's closest friends and professional colleagues, and along the way reflects upon the nature of his own fandom and on the extraordinary legacy that Watterson left behind. This is as close as we're ever likely to get to one of America's most ingenious and intriguing figures - and it's the fascinating story of an intrepid author's search for him, too.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

There are problems with Nevin Martell's book, *Looking for Calvin and Hobbes: The Unconventional Story of Bill Watterson and His Revolutionary Comic Strip*. While the title encourages the reader to think he or she will be reading the story of how Calvin and Hobbes came to be, what we get instead is one man's personal odyssey to score an interview with the elusive creator of the strip, Bill Watterson. It's true that we DO get to read the results of Martell's research (which include lots of tidbits regarding the aforementioned story), and it's often interesting. However, the book suffers from the plethora of personal asides about his wife, prior writing projects, and rock star interviews

Martell had done. Another problem rises due to the fact that Bill Watterson owns "Calvin and Hobbes" lock, stock and barrel. As a result, there are no comics printed in the book. Instead, Martell resorts to taking page upon page to describe individual strips, from first panel to last. While I acknowledge that this wasn't the author's fault, it adds a level of tedium to some sections of the book. And yet another issue with the book comes in the writing itself. Martell primarily writes for magazines, and that's how this book reads: as a series of magazine articles on the same subject, rather than as a coherent whole. He repeats quotes from earlier parts of the book, summarizes earlier chapters in later ones, and so on. This would be fine if we were reading the book one chapter at a time over several weeks or months, but it doesn't work in book form.

Apparently, we have moved through denial, anger, and bargaining; we have survived the deep depression and now have reached acceptance--there will be no more Calvin and Hobbes. It is no wonder that Bill Watterson wants us all to go away, he gave birth to a wonderful creation but it lived its natural life and passed on. It is not coming back and let's be honest, we aren't so much interested in Mr. Watterson as we are in somehow squeezing out more of the joy he brought to us with Calvin and Hobbes. To this end, Mr. Martell tells the story of his attempt to recapture the joy of Calvin and Hobbes by coming to understand something more about its creator. Intriguingly, the book ends up teaching us more about life than about either Mr. Watterson or his creation. Calvin and Hobbes, alas, is dead. I count myself as fortunate enough to have lived in a world where every morning brought a new Calvin strip. My children need not wait; they can merely rip through the complete work by taking down my well-thumbed books off of the shelf. I think it is unanimous that Calvin and Hobbes ranks as one of the great creations and it seems to annoy folks that the creator survives. Sure, we can always revisit Calvin, but the experience is fraught with a kind of ineffable sadness; rather like remembering happy times with a parent or friend who has passed away. As all great art does, Mr. Watterson's efforts have profoundly changed and affected all who encounter them and it is quite understandable that he has no desire to assist us in dealing with the emotions engendered by his unique exploration of life as Calvin and Hobbes spoke on so many different levels to so many people. The value of Mr. Martell's fine effort is found in the examination of how to deal with loss and change.

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