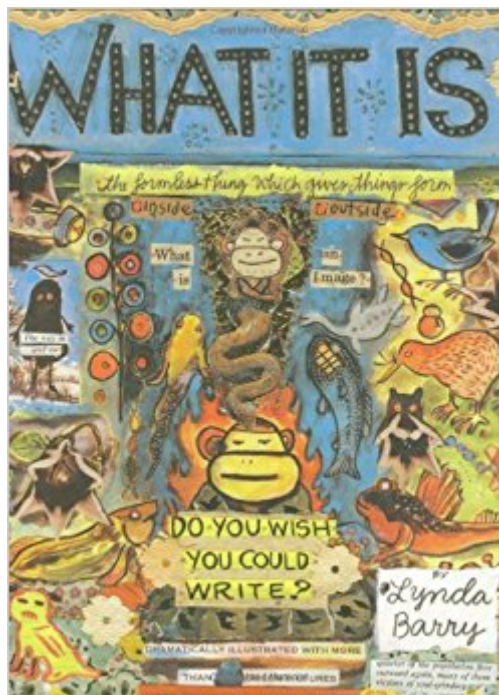


The book was found

## What It Is



## Synopsis

"Deliciously drawn (with fragments of collage worked into each page), insightful and bubbling with delight in the process of artistic creation. A+" -Salon

How do objects summon memories? What do real images feel like? For decades, these types of questions have permeated the pages of Lynda Barry's compositions, with words attracting pictures and conjuring places through a pen that first and foremost keeps on moving. *What It Is* demonstrates a tried-and-true creative method that is playful, powerful, and accessible to anyone with an inquisitive wish to write or to remember. Composed of completely new material, each page of Barry's first *Drawn & Quarterly* book is a full-color collage that is not only a gentle guide to this process but an invigorating example of exactly what it is: "The ordinary is extraordinary."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Grade 9 Up

Every so often a book comes along that surpasses expectations, taking readers on an inspirational voyage that they don't want to leave. This is one such book. Each page is a feast for the eyes with beautiful full-page collages of photographs, watercolors, ink drawings, and text, resulting in a gorgeous volume that explores and encourages writing in a combination of ways. The author challenges readers with philosophical questions to ponder, such as What is an image? Where are they found? Can we remember something we can't imagine? The volume also acts as a workbook that successfully encourages teens to explore their own creativity through writing. In addition, autobiographical glimpses of Barry's journey from childhood to adulthood appear throughout the book. The struggles and obstacles she faces while

following her path of becoming an artist and writer allow readers to believe in the possibility of writing themselves. This stunning book will appeal to those teens who are interested in delving into their creativity through words and art. The questions posed and valuable exercises that exist within its pages, along with the illustrations, could also make this book a valuable tool for English and art teachers in the classroom.

—Lara McAllister, Halifax Public Libraries, Nova Scotia Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Praise for Lynda Barry: "Barry is, underneath the wonky handwriting and the quirky, naive drawings, a great memoirist . . . Like [Tobias] Wolff and [Dave] Eggers, she finds a tone that accommodates self-criticism and self-irony without tipping over into self-loathing . . . but what she is particularly good at is resonance." --"The New York Times" "Barry is not just a storyteller, she's an evangelist who urges people to pick up a pen--or a brush . . . and look at their own lives with fresh, forgiving eyes." --"San Francisco Chronicle" "America's leading cartoon artist of childhood angst . . . The precise rightness of Barry's smallest observation puts TV's "The Wonder Years" to shame." --"Entertainment Weekly"

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I bought this book because I was fortunate enough to see Lynda Barry speak, and her message was so powerful and inspiring. This book is amazing, complex, and very nuanced as she guides the reader through her creative process through the lens of imagination and memory. Barry has spent the last 40 years of her career pondering the question, "What is an image?" and this book is a fabulous journey through her own creative process and how she accesses her own creativity. This book is particularly meaningful to me because I haven't drawn anything since I dropped out of graduate school about fifteen years ago; a sad death of my own creativity that was once integral to my self-image, and I haven't been able to reclaim. I feel like a cherished part of myself is still stuck somewhere in time, preserved like a fly in resin that has fossilized into amber, an artifact of an

earlier self that still feels alive in some respects. Barry's work explores these artifacts and how images and memory offer insight into our experience. When I was young, I loved art and images so much that I had dreams of becoming an artist. I discovered Barry's comics when I was 13 years old, and I found her work to be fascinating and something that I identified with very strongly. Barry's work, "What It Is", courageous and at times confessional in nature and raw, shows us that self-expression and creativity are fundamental to the human experience, and that it's accessible by ordinary people, too. At Barry's urging, I am drawing in the margins, during meetings at work, and reconnecting with the story that is mine alone to tell. With clarity and loving-kindness, she took her hand in mine and said, "Don't let the architecture bastards win." Her courage to connect with her own experience and earlier selves and memories, is a formidable example to others how our shared humanity can be accessed through images and the arts. Thank you, Lynda Barry.

The brilliant Lynda Barry, artist and author and my favorite as both, helps the reader to find (well rediscover actually) "what it is" that induces creativity and creation in us and how to recapture that process which came so easily to us as children but seemed to disappear as we aged. The book is subtitled "Do you wish you could write" and it was created to help HER students where she teaches in finding that magical space that allows one to write from unhindered, unedited and bountiful space BUT the process can be applied to any type of artistic or creative work you want to do but don't know how to channel your muse. It's the cure for those blank page/blank canvas/blank stage blues. Although her art is brilliant it can be a bit overwhelming with all of the tiny details so I do recommend getting the workbook "Syllabus" (recently published by Barry as well) to help guide you through the process. It's such an enjoyable way to reconnect with one's creative side and if for some reason her process is not for you well then, if nothing else comes of it, it is one hell of a coffee table art book.

This book screamed "Buy me!" when I saw it at the Drawn & Quarterly booth at San Diego Comic Con 2009. It is that good! With a brush in the right hand, and a pencil on the left, the multi-eyed monster on the back cover spoke, "Welcome to writing the unthinkable". That's the essence of this book created by Lynda Barry, putting vivid imagination onto paper. What It Is is a scrapbook that's filled to the brim with sketches, coloured illustrations, collages, comics, autobiographical writing, random thoughts and even a bit on creative writing. Every page is elaborately decorated, an exploration into the unknown realms of imagination. And every page is just fun to look at. This book is creativity and self expression, great for flipping through when you're feeling random or looking for inspiration. I'll give this book two thumbs (drawn with smiley faces) up. By the way, What It Is won the

2009 Eisner award for Best Reality-Based Work, but I didn't know that when I bought it. It's also one of the top 100 books picked by editors for 2008.(More pictures are available on my blog. Just visit my profile for the link.)

Loved this book. Bought it for a creative writing class and will be keeping it instead of selling it back to the bookstore. Great prompts, fun writing style, all the pages are interesting. Love it!

I ordered this after reading about it on Kelly Kilmer's blog, where she highly praised this repeatedly and made me think that I was missing out on something wonderful if I didn't buy it. So I bought it, and what I found out is that I had been missing out on something wonderful!!! I couldn't be more happy that I bought this book! First of all this book surprised me in that it is nicely sized 8.5 x 11 (approx) and it's much THICKER than I had imaged it, and it's HARDCOVER.(I was expecting a soft cover magazine type book) So, after I admired the outside, and opened it up, I was even more impressed and excited with what I found!! Yes, I thought I was in comic book/collage/art journal/writing prompt heaven!! With so much to look at, I just about wore myself out trying to look at/read everything. -Which is also a nice thing about this book, I am highly doubting that you'd run out of things to look at or read here. This is kinda like looking at one of your school friends notebook, or journal, except SO MUCH BETTER! There are comic book pictures, random thoughts, journal prompts, drawings, ideas, etc, etc, etc. This is an awesome and inspiring book. This tops the list of coolest books that I own!!

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