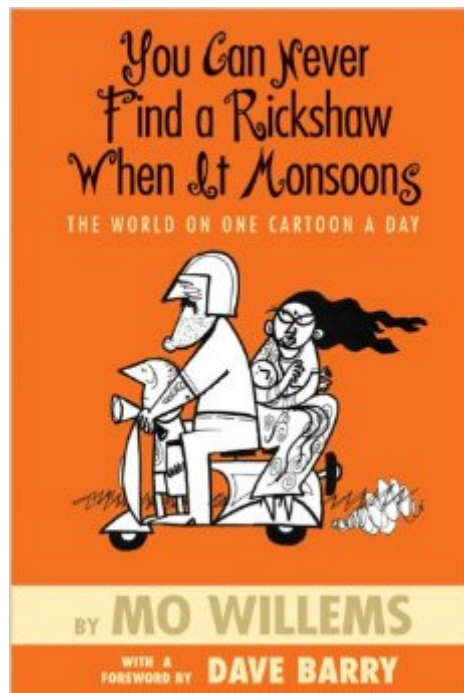


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# You Can Never Find A Rickshaw When It Monsoons - The World On One Cartoon A Day



## Synopsis

On June 1, 1990, less than a week after graduating college, Mo Willems embarked on a yearlong trip around the world. Traveling with only a notebook, pen and ink, and one change of clothes, he spent the next twelve months backpacking across more than thirty countries. At the end of each day, he drew the one event that stuck out in his mind the most from the sublime to the ridiculous. Recently annotated by the illustrator and featuring a foreword from best-selling humor writer Dave Barry, *You Can Never Find a Rickshaw When It Monsoons: The World on One Cartoon a Day* is a unique snapshot of an artist's coming-of-age as he tries to understand the world around him.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

When you think about it, picture book author/illustrators by and large do not suddenly come out with thick memoir-like tomes. Not even Maurice Sendak has done it. It just isn't done. So when I found myself hefting Mo Willems's handsome 396-page encapsulation of his time spent traveling around the world in 1990, I didn't quite know what to make of the idea. Willems is cute as a button and he pens a mean pigeon but can he ... (how shall I put this?) ... well, can he do a book that isn't five-year-old-centric? Apparently, yes. Yes and indeed and thank you kindly, m'am. Taking a concept for a book that could've easily ended up as a better idea than product, Willems has put together a thoughtful look at how we've changed in the eyes of the world, how the people of the world appear to us, and how difficult it is to cultivate an "us" vs. "them" mentality when you've just met the "them" firsthand. It was a kind of cartoon diary. When young Mo Willems, future cartoonist/author/Nickelodeon pawn, graduated from college he took his newfound freedom as an

opportunity to take the ultimate worldwide unguided tour. Patches in place on jeans and sideburns making their, "precipitous drop toward my shoulders", Mr. Willems chose to record his experiences in the form of a cartoon a day. These cartoons are of a wide and somewhat assorted variety. They may be illustrations of all the goatees seen that day, or a picture of a long skinny Mo reenacting a situation. They might even be just a view of something he found particularly touching or sweet, like a boy watering a public tree. There are some constants, of course. Each cartoon includes the date, a description, and where Mo was on that given date. Usually there is also an additional comment below this information at the bottom of the page. It's here that present day Mo gives a little context to what you are seeing. He might explain how the trip was going, the story behind the cartoon, or just riff a one-liner on what you see. Sometimes he won't even say anything at all, leaving his original comments and pictures to stand on their own. Each leg of the journey in this book is indicated by its own map. Those maps then give a convoluted but legible dotted line that shows where Mo done gone. I gotta say, fresh-outta-college Mo had a good eye and ear for his subject matter. It would be the height of narcissism to take something you created in your youth that wasn't funny and publish it for the masses to messily consume. The moral equivalent of printing your high school poetry, say. Fortunately for everybody involved, young Mo was a pretty funny cat. Captions like, "bad day for the hand crafted tribal blowdart salesman" and "the locals call him `Mr. Socks'", hardly even need pictures. They're funny all on their own. The young artist's consistency is also something to cheer on. Admittedly I haven't gone over all 300-some pictures in this book to make absolutely certain that he wrote every day. A quick scan, however, shows that no matter how crazy his last 24-hours or wacked out his company (both if he was lucky) the boy still managed to put pen to paper and get it down. Then there are the illustrations themselves. His style firmly in place, Mr. Willems' sketches are presented without so much as a smidgen of dirt or a crease about the edges. Good old Photoshop. There were some repeating images in this book that amused me especially. I liked how most of the women had breasts that looked like the lowercase letter "W" on its side. I liked the overly elongated hero and his shockingly clefted chin. Plus I loved the fact that there was a chicken in this book that did not look anything like the bird Willems would later draw for the illustrator compendium, "Why Did the Chicken Cross the Road". Every five years I write a letter to myself and then squirrel it away until it's time for them to be read. It's a fun way of meeting again and again my younger stupider self. Willems mentions experiencing something rather similar when he looked back at his old sketches. Of them, he says that they are, "my gateway to understanding the weird guy who occupied my skinny body back then". Part of what makes the book interesting is the tension between young smelly Mo and wise and successful I-think-I'll-live-in-Brooklyn Mo. Obviously old-Mo

has the hometeam advantage on this one. He can laugh and prod his younger self and there ain't nothing little young-Mo can do about it. Fortunately, you're on old-Mo's side. For example, there's a picture of young-Mo sitting awkwardly between two evil-eyed fellows with Saddam-like moustaches. The original text reads, "patriotic paranoia pops up: stuck between two iranian tourists". Old-Mo's response is apropos: "I shudder at the stupidity of my youth when I look at this sketch. These guys were quite happy to separate who I was from my government, but I was unwilling or unable to do the same for them. A wasted opportunity". Whether he's lamenting his own ignorance or merely commenting in hindsight on a mistake of some sort, it's nice to have two points of view from the same fella to bandy about. The book is remarkable for all these reasons, but here's the most important one. For his last few weeks, Mo continued to draw his observations while bumming around the United States. And for all the crazy kooky things that can happen to a guy overseas, it's funny to weigh the similarities and differences to what you see them here at home. Plus it gives the ending of the book a sense of resolution you wouldn't think to find in any kind of a diary, let alone a cartoon one. In his Epilogue, Willems says that this trip and this experience drove home for him the idea that what he sees on the worldwide news affects real people. "... they all really exist, and what they do affects us". One could say the same of this book too. It will affect you. A loving look at everything that is wonderful and horrible in having to live on "this big, wide, wonderful world". A book worth visiting.

This book is absolutely delightful. When the author was just out of school, he took a trip around the world, and each day he drew the one thing that stuck out in his mind. Fifteen years later, he added commentary and occasionally context to each cartoon, and publishes the whole darn thing. The things he records is what the rest of us usually remember the best when we come back from a trip. This book doesn't consist of pictures of landmarks and more landmarks. It's a true distillation of his experiences, and it bounces from funny to poignant to regretful and back again. His Dutch grandmother is distressed to discover that a year traveling around the world doesn't include 10 months visiting her in Holland, and he gets pickpocketed by one of three men, but he doesn't know which one. He regrets being wary of two Iranian men he met at the time, the Turks are offended when he tries to locate malaria pills in their country, and he gets embarrassed when someone fusses over the cold he got from partying too much in Pamplona. It's not geared towards kids at all--I never even heard of Mo Willems when I picked up this gem. It's a truly wonderful travelogue though.

Mo's newest book is a "page-turner" for the armchair traveler with a sense of humor. Each page has

a great cartoon of a unique time and place. I especially enjoyed Mo's impressions of places I have been; his graphics refreshed and enhanced my own memories. This is a great gift idea for the college graduate (unless, of course, you want them to go get a job instead of seeking adventure first!)

It seemed funnier when I read the excerpts, but it was clever and not too expensive. I was going to send it to someone in Asia, but decided to wait until they got home to give it since postage there is so high.

Before Mo Willems became a children's book author, he packed sketchbook and set out to explore the world. At the end of each day he drew a cartoon of a single event which stuck in his mind - and his sketch diary **YOU CAN NEVER FIND A RICKSHAW WHEN IT MONSOONS: THE WORLD ON ONE CARTOON A DAY** is the result. Each page holds a full-page black and white panel blending humor with observation. An excellent choice for cartoon fans and travelers alike, a foreword by Dave Barry adds to the package. Diane C. Donovan California Bookwatch

Great book. Lots of fun. Mo Willems for middle school on up. He draws a cartoon a day for a year while traveling. Some artistic nudity but if you/your kid can walk through an art museum without being offended it will be no problem. Great to map out where he goes while looking at the cartoons and comments.

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