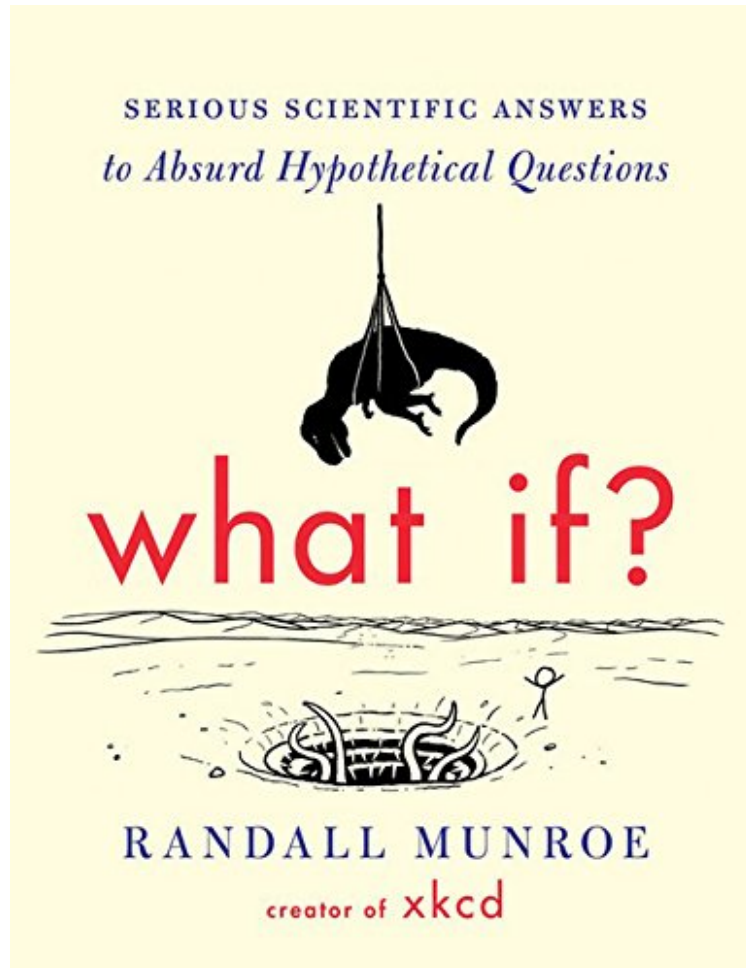


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# What If?: Serious Scientific Answers to Absurd Hypothetical Questions

Randall Munroe

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**Randall Munroe : What If?: Serious Scientific Answers to Absurd Hypothetical Questions** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised What If?: Serious Scientific Answers to Absurd Hypothetical Questions:

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Jr. About half (51%, according to the book, which seems about right) of the questions answered in this book are original, and have never been posted on the xkcd what if? website (<https://what-if.xkcd.com/>). Even though I'd already read the other 49%, I re-read them and was glad I did, as Munroe has added a few things here and there; plus, this stuff is just eminently re-readable. It's the perfect combination of irreverent, rigorous, technical, and fascinating. I look forward to every new "What If" (he posts them each Tuesday or Wednesday) and am always delighted to read the latest. Even if you've read every "What if" ever posted to the website, this book is still for you - it's especially for you! This is a great way to enjoy older questions and answers over again, updated, and to share them with new people, and the new questions and answers - never featured on the website - are delightful; I won't spoil it for you, but my favorite has to be the answer to "If a bullet with the density of a neutron star were fired from a handgun (ignoring the how) at the Earth's surface, would the Earth be destroyed?" If you have even a passing interest in science and ever enjoy daydreaming about the fantastic or the ridiculous, this book is for you. If you don't think that you enjoy those things, this book will prove to you that you do. Also, this is a really great gift idea for basically anyone in your life who can read. Kids will love it, adults will love it (I'm ordering a copy for my dad's birthday), and they will be hooked from the first page (who hasn't wondered what would happen if the Earth suddenly stopped spinning?) Gift season is coming up; thanks to this book my Christmas shopping will be a great deal easier. I don't usually write reviews, but I logged in and made an exception here. I cannot offer higher praise. Enjoy!

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A good book to read in occasional sessions. A scientific or engineering background is required to get the most out of it. By Arthur Zatarain Well written, funny, and a nice chapter-at-a-time book to have handy when idle time unexpectedly arrives. The scientific basis for the articles were always interesting and well-presented. I think reading them in batches helps keep the humor sharp and unexpected because more than a few phrases appear often in the varied stores. I read this as an e-book on a Samsung tablet, using the Kindle app. The format of this particular book relies heavily on diagrams and footnotes that don't transfer well to the Kindle app. Maybe I just don't use the app properly, but I have trouble clicking on a footnote to read it and then easily getting back to where I was in the text. Ideally, I could click the footnote and have it pop-up right there on the screen. But instead the app takes me to the end of the chapter where I can read the footnote with no easy return. So much of the footnote humor was lost on me.

From the creator of the wildly popular webcomic xkcd, hilarious and informative answers to important questions you probably never thought to ask. Millions of people visit xkcd.com each week to read Randall Munroe's iconic webcomic. His stick-figure drawings about science, technology, language, and love have a large and passionate following. Fans of xkcd ask Munroe a lot of strange questions. What if you tried to hit a baseball pitched at 90 percent the speed of light? How fast can you hit a speed bump while driving and live? If there was a robot apocalypse, how long would humanity last? In pursuit of answers, Munroe runs computer simulations, pores over stacks of declassified military research memos, solves differential equations, and consults with nuclear reactor operators. His responses are masterpieces of clarity and hilarity, complemented by signature xkcd comics. They often predict the complete annihilation of humankind, or at least a really big explosion. The book features new and never-before-answered questions, along with updated and expanded versions of the most popular answers from the xkcd website. What If? will be required reading for xkcd fans and anyone who loves to ponder the hypothetical.

.com An Best Book of the Month, September 2014: What if everyone on earth aimed a laser pointer at the moon at the same time? What if you could drain all the water from the oceans? What if all the lightning in the world struck the same place? What if there were a book that considered weird, sometimes ridiculous questions, and it was so compelling that you found yourself skimming its pages to find out what would happen if you threw a baseball at light speed? With What If, Randall Munroe has written such a book. As he does in his extraordinarily popular xkcd webcomic, Munroe applies reason and research to hypothetical conundrums ranging from the philosophical to the scientific (often absurd, but never pseudo) that probably seemed awesome in your elementary school days but were never sufficiently answered. It's the rare combination of edifying and fun. Jon Foro What If? is one of my Internet must-reads, and I look forward to each new installment, and always read it with delight. Cory Doctorow, BoingBoing Randall Munroe is a national treasure. Phil Plait For scientists, the price of progress is specialization. When the goal of any researcher is to lay claim to a tiny niche in a crowded discipline, it's hard for laypeople to find answers to the really important interdisciplinary questions. Questions like, 'Is it possible to build a jetpack using downward-firing machine guns?' Fortunately, such people can turn to Randall Munroe, the author of the XKCD comic strip loved by fans of internet culture. . . . For Munroe, who writes with a clarity and wit honed over eight years of writing captions for his webcomic, the fact that a question might be impossible to solve is no deterrent to pursuing it. Wall Street Journal Speakeasy blog "By speaking the language of geeks. . . while dealing with relationships and the meaning of a computer-centric life, xkcd has become required reading for techies across the world. The Internet has also created a bond between Mr. Munroe and his readers that is exceptional. They reenact in real life the odd ideas he puts forward in his strip." The New York Times "With his steady regimen of math jokes, physics jokes, and antisocial optimism, xkcd creator Randall Munroe, a former NASA roboticist, scores traffic numbers in NBC.com or Oprah.com territory. One

key to the strips success may be that it doesnt just comment on nerd culture, it embodies nerd culture." Wired, in an issue featuring "the people who have shaped the planets past 20 years" "Sometimes the beloved geek-chic webcomic xkcd is funny in a broadly accessible way. Sometimes its achingly poignant, sometimes its socially intelligent, and sometimes its esoteric humor that programmers or scientists have to explain to the rest of us. But at its most ambitious, it either packs massive amounts of interesting information into a small space, or engages in breathtaking experiments with the medium.[A]t its best [xkcd] isnt a strip comic so much as an idea factory and a shared experience." Onion AV Club

About the Author Randall Munroe is the author of the #1 New York Times bestseller What If?, the science question-and-answer blog What If, and the popular webcomic xkcd. A former NASA roboticist, he left the agency in 2006 to draw comics on the Internet full-time, supporting himself through the sale of xkcdt-shirts, prints, posters, and books. He likes candlelight dinners and long walks on the beach. Very long walks. Lots of people say they like long walks on the beach, but then they get out on the beach and after just an hour or two, they say theyre getting tired. Bring a tent. He lives in Massachusetts.