

A Cartooning Life

Almost twelve years ago, on February 12, 2000, cartoonist Charles M. Schulz died. Schulz created several newspaper strips, two of which, Li'l Folks, and the sports cartoon, It's Only a Game, have been mostly forgotten. A third strip he created, however, became internationally famous, with the characters appearing in animated movies and on birthday cards, as well as selling insurance for MetLife, Inc. Schulz created Peanuts, home to the iconic characters Snoopy and Charlie Brown.

Many famous newspaper cartoonists use assistants, but Schulz, who began the strip in 1950, when he was 28, wrote and drew every single one—daily and Sundays—until his death, fifty years later. During that time, Schulz influenced a new generation of cartoonists, including Bill Watterson, the creator of Calvin and Hobbes.

Along with many books of Peanuts strips, the library has a couple collections of Schulz's other cartoons (It's Only a Game, and Schulz's Youth). If you've seen his cartoons and are interested in the cartoonist, we have several books you can read, also. Charlie Brown, Snoopy and Me and Charles M. Schulz: Conversations are largely in Schulz's own words. The biography Good Grief: the Story of Charles M. Schulz, by Rheta Grimsley Johnson, was written during his lifetime, with the benefit of his contributions and interviews. Peanuts: a Golden Celebration mixes information about Schulz in with his cartoons.

The library also has the more controversial book Schulz and Peanuts: a Biography, by David Michaelis. Michaelis's book came out after Schulz died, and is based on extensive research and many interviews. Nevertheless, many, including Schulz's family, say that it doesn't represent Schulz. They claim, not so much that the book is factually flawed, but that Michaelis puts too much focus on certain aspects of Schulz's life, and not enough on others, giving readers the wrong picture of what he was like. Michaelis has also written a biography of the painter and illustrator N. C. Wyeth, in the less controversial book N.C. Wyeth: a Biography.

Both of the Schulz biographies are in the library's Biography section, with the other books under the call number 741.5973 S. In that same area, you can find collections of other newspaper strips, including The Far Side, by Gary Larson; Dennis the Menace, by Hank Ketchem; and Calvin and Hobbes, by Bill Watterson.

Whichever cartoons you choose to read, I hope they do just what the cartoonists intended: to make you laugh. Have fun.

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