

# ROBIN



DAVE ITZKOFF

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**From *New York Times* culture reporter Dave Itzkoff, the definitive biography of Robin Williams – a compelling portrait of one of America's most beloved and misunderstood entertainers.**

From his rapid-fire stand-up comedy riffs to his breakout role in *Mork & Mindy* and his Academy Award-winning performance in *Good Will Hunting*, Robin Williams was a singularly innovative and beloved entertainer. He often came across as a man possessed, holding forth on culture and politics while mixing in personal revelations – all with mercurial, tongue-twisting intensity as he inhabited and shed one character after another with lightning speed.

But as Dave Itzkoff shows in this revelatory biography, Williams's comic brilliance masked a deep well of conflicting emotions and self-doubt, which he drew upon in his comedy and in celebrated films like *Dead Poets Society*; *Good Morning, Vietnam*; *The Fisher King*; *Aladdin*; and *Mrs. Doubtfire*, where he showcased his limitless gift for improvisation to bring to life a wide range of characters. And in *Good Will Hunting* he gave an intense and controlled performance that revealed the true range of his talent.

Itzkoff also shows how Williams struggled mightily with addiction and depression – topics he discussed openly while performing and during interviews – and with a debilitating condition at the end of his life that affected him in ways his fans never knew. Drawing on more than a hundred original interviews with family, friends, and colleagues, as well as extensive archival research, *Robin* is a fresh and original look at a man whose work touched so many lives.

## Robin Details

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Author : Dave Itzkoff

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## From Reader Review Robin for online ebook

### Diane says

This was an entertaining biography of an incredible and unforgettable performer. I grew up watching Robin Williams' movies and TV antics and found him endearing.

Recently I watched the documentary "Robin Williams: Come Inside My Mind," which was a nice complement to this book because it showed footage of numerous scenes discussed in the text. I also recommend listening to the audiobook for "Robin," which was wonderfully performed by Fred Berman.

Highly recommended for fans of the late great Robin Williams.

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### Tucker says

While there will probably be other Robin Williams biographies published I can't imagine that any of them will be as comprehensive or well done as "Robin" by Dave Itzkoff. Although the book is rather long (550 pages) and uses footnotes extensively, it never lagged. Itzkoff did extensive research and conducted many interviews with Robin's friends, family, and co-stars in an attempt to understand this complex, driven, and extremely gifted man. Combined with those interviews and research, Itzkoff provided his own insightful analysis, and the result is a fully fleshed out portrait of this comedic genius and troubled soul.

Williams' first widely known role was as Mork in the television series "Mork and Mindy." In that role he was an actor like none I'd seen before with his amazing improvisations, frenetic behavior, and incredible comedic talent. That talent carried over to movies such as "Mrs. Doubtfire" and "Aladdin." William also became known for dramatic roles in the movies "Good Morning Vietnam," "Dead Poets Society," and "Good Will Hunting." His remarkable ability to perform both comedy and drama at such a high level made him a unique and beloved actor.

In one sense Williams was very open about his life - his addictions, depression, marriage and financial problems but he was also a cypher to those who knew him well. As Itzkoff writes in the Prologue:

"But who was he? Except for that one stray moment when he had spoken a few tentative words in his surprisingly stately voice and then metamorphosed into a French undersea explorer, Robin had never let the audience see his true self. Some part of him would be present in every role and stand-up set he would play over the next thirty-five years, but in their totality these things did not add up to him. The real Robin was a modest, almost inconspicuous man, who never fully believed he was worthy of the monumental fame, adulation, and accomplishments he would achieve. He shared the authentic person at his core with considerable reluctance, but he also felt obliged to give a sliver of himself to anyone he encountered even fleetingly. It wounded him deeply to think that he had denied a memorable Robin Williams experience to anyone who wanted it, yet the people who spent years by his side were left to feel that he had kept some fundamental part of himself concealed, even from them. Everyone felt as if they knew him, even if they did not always admire the work he did. Millions of people loved him for his generosity of spirit, his quickness of mind, and the hopefulness he inspired. Some lost their affection for him in later years, as the quality of his work declined, even as they held out hope that he'd find the thing—the project, the character, the spark—that had made him great before, as great as he was when he first burst into the cultural consciousness. And when

he was gone, we all wished we'd had him just a little bit longer."

It's a tragic loss to his family, friends, and fans that he left too soon and in so much pain.

Readers don't have to be a Robin Williams fan or even have any knowledge of him to appreciate this book. Anyone who enjoys a well-researched and well-written biography of a one-of-a-kind individual will find "Robin" very worthwhile reading. Highly recommended.

Thank you to Henry Holt & Company and NetGalley for providing an advance copy of this book in exchange for my honest review.

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### **Stephen says**

detailed book outlining the comic actor life and interesting insight into his battles with depression and alcohol. enjoyed reading this book

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### **Elyse says**

PLEASE read my updated "ABOUT ME" profile. ....This is the last review I'm writing for the rest of 2018. This break has been brewing. Its time!

Audiobook.....read by the Fred Berman who was perfect for the task.

"Robin".....is as close to 'Robin Williams' as we're going to get. Author Dave Itzkoff gave us a thorough-all-encompassing \*Robin\*. I can't imagine anyone doing more.

I loved the meditative listening feeling I fell into at times while soaking in my pool...and or hanging out in our yard. 'Everything' Robin was just really nice to listen to.

To think Robin's High School classmates voted him most likely not to succeed. He wasn't just a well loved actor, he was also popular with the local residents in Paradise Cay in Marin County, California, here in the Bay Area, where he spent his final years. We can now drive through the "Robin Williams Tunnel".....which was formally called "The Rainbow Tunnel"....(very fitting with Robin's rainbow suspenders).

Love the guy.....The aroma of this Audiobook is delicious!

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### **Julie says**

Robin by Dave Itzkoff is a 2018 Henry Holt and Co. Publication.

After Robin Williams passed away, my daughter turned to me and said, "I grew up with Robin Williams".

After a moment, I realized that in many ways, so had I. I was in my mid-teens when Robin burst onto the scene in that iconic episode of '*Happy Days*' which led to '*Mork & Mindy*'. I loved that show and found Robin to be a fresh comedic talent who could pull off what appeared to be completely spontaneous dialogue and accompanied by high energy physical comedy. From that time forward I was a huge fan. I loved his stand -up routines and his movies.

For my daughter it was '*Hook*', then '*Mrs. Doubtfire*', then as she got older, '*Dead Poet's Society*' and '*Good Will Hunting*', while I loved '*Good Morning, Vietnam*' and '*The Fisher King*'.

While I seldom over react to a celebrity death, Robin's hit me hard. I was so shocked I'm not sure I ever really processed it outside of the grim aftermath, as lurid details emerged, and social media passed its harsh judgments.

Even though four years have passed, and much has happened in that time, I still feel a jolt of pain when I think of him. I wouldn't want to read just any old 'rushed to publication' book written about him and I'm sure there have been a few hastily thrown together 'cash grabs' which quickly faded into obscurity. This book, however, is professionally done, well- organized, insightful, informative, often very entertaining, and course poignant look back at the life and career of the one and only Robin Williams.

I personally had no knowledge of Robin's upbringing and was surprised by his childhood. I could relate in some ways as my father moved his family around nearly as frequently as Robin's did. I understood how isolating it can be, no matter what your personality type, to start over in a new town, in a new school, surrounded by unfamiliar faces, and once again face the enormous task of making new friends and trying to fit in.

The beginning of Robin's career was somewhat familiar to me, but I had forgotten a lot of the ups and downs in those early days. The drugs, alcohol, the sudden and intense success, followed by career fits and starts, with spurts of wide recognition followed by incredibly harsh critical bashing.

As a regular follower of Robin's career, I began to recall much of the ground the author covered, but as far as Robin's personal life went, I wasn't all that knowledgeable. I knew he had problems with drugs, that Belushi's death scared him straight, that Robin had been married and divorced, then remarried and had several children, but I was mostly in the dark when about the details behind his marriages and relationships with colleagues and friends.

The thing about this biography, that really stands out, is that it gives the reader a clearer picture of the man behind the frenetic comedy. Robin's fears, his goals, his hopes, and the demons that plagued him, how he made it all look spontaneous and easy. But, in reality, it was much harder to pull off than anyone ever knew. I was struck by how harsh the movie critics could be, bordering on downright nastiness.

Still, while Robin certainly made his share of sub-par films, overall his body of work is pretty solid, and I have to say, I thought that his improvisations often saved otherwise dull roles, that may have fallen flat if not for Robin's putting his personal stamp on it. Of course, it backfired on him more than a few times, rather spectacularly. But, as harsh as the critics could be, the public often overrode their skepticism, making Robin's movie box office gold, time and time again.

I really enjoyed looking back on Robin's career, reminiscing about some of his great roles, his hilarious jokes, and his energy. His personal life is fraught with as many ups and downs as his career, suffering with health problems and substance abuse issues. His battles with alcohol eventually broke up his long- time

marriage to a woman who stabilized him in a way most others never could.

The concerns about Robin's third marriage didn't feel one hundred percent balanced and may have been the only place in the book where the author's personal opinion was made evident. Nothing wrong with being independent or having a life which is not defined by your husband's career. The subsequent estate disputes also painted her in a bad light, but I'm not sure the author approached these events in an entirely subjective manner.

The mystery surrounding Robin's health in the last years of his life is just plain frustrating. His diagnosis, which may not have been the right one, only makes his suffering more poignant. What he was thinking is hard to discern. Some think he was very aware of what he was doing, while others think he was under the influence of the illness, which despite not knowing him personally, I agree with the latter. Looking at his life up that point, the trials he faced and the odds he overcame, I can't help but think he was not himself at all at the time.

Reading about Robin's struggles with his mind was utterly heartbreakingly. By the end of the book as we relived Robin's final days, once again, I was struck by the tremendous loss of talent. I swallowed down a huge and painful lump in my throat, as the impact his death had on the world of entertainment finally sank in. But, that is nothing compared to the loss his family and friends endured, the pain seeping through the pages as they coped not only with the loss, the manner of death, but with the court of public opinion.

The days after being no less stressful, but with the help and support of friends and family, the way to healing was launched. Following the brave example of his children, we can all look back on Robin's life and career and remember him in the way he would want us to. Remember his compassion, the light he brought to those in need, the endless laughter, and hours of joy and entertainment he provided us with over the course of his life... and ours.

Personal note: The audio version of this book is very well done. If you have a chance to add it, it is worth it

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### **J.K. Grice says**

Ever since the tragic death of the American entertainment legend Robin Williams, I have been waiting to read the story of his life. I have always been fascinated by Williams because he was a man of incredible professional range. He was both a riffing force of nature as a stand up comic, as well as a quiet and incredibly skilled dramatic actor. I found those diverse talents to be extraordinarily intriguing, as I watched Robin evolve from MORK & MINDY to COMIC RELIEF to DEAD POET'S SOCIETY and even on to something like the film, ONE HOUR PHOTO. I'm not sure if we have witnessed any other entertainer with the skill set and range that Robin Williams possessed. The only other comedian that comes close to his style would have been Jonathan Winters, who was an idol and later a friend of Robin's.

Robin's personality was something of an enigma. He could be an extroverted wild man as a stand-up comic, and then a completely pensive and shy introverted man in his private life. In this book simply titled ROBIN by Dave Itzkoff, I really believe that the author has written the definitive biography of Robin Williams. This is a candid and engrossing look into the personal and professional life of this amazing man. It provided such tremendous insight into Robin's world and how he perceived himself and others. I will always admire Robin Williams and miss him greatly.

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### **Dave says**

When he was at the top of his form, Robin Williams was the craziest, most intense comedian. He was a bright light among a lot of dull bulbs in Hollywood. Itzkoff has presented us with a full complex biography of Williams that traces his path from childhood to his end when his flame blew out. From Williams' childhood among armies of toy soldiers to his adventures in the San Francisco comedy clubs, from his struggles with celebrity status and fears of the fleeting character of success, to his three marriages, and his final agonizing decline into dementia, it's all here. By the time you read about how this towering giant of comedy ended, even though you know it's coming, it still hits you like a shock.

Itzkoff is absolutely thorough in this biography, detailing all the twists and turns of Williams' career, including the various studio decisions about *Mork and Mindy* and each of Williams' movies. You tend to forget how few of them were really successful when you remember *Good Morning Vietnam*, *Good Will Hunting*, and *Jumanji*. It is, be warned, a lengthy volume of well over five hundred pages and there's probably more material here than a casual fan needs. But, it is well written and give a most revealing look at Williams' life.

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### **Avid says**

I have been absorbed in this book for a couple of weeks now. When i finished it this morning, i felt like i had some closure in a personal relationship with robin williams. I was so sad for him and his family, as if i had made his life's journey right at their side.

Itzkoff really benefitted from an obviously close and personal collaboration with robin williams' family and friends, particularly his eldest son, zak, and his wife, alex, and close family friend billy crystal.

An intimate and heartfelt biography that will stay with me for a long time. I'm so glad to have gotten to know robin williams through this fine piece of writing.

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### **Janelle says**

BIG thanks to Henry Holt for providing my free copy of ROBIN by Dave Itzkoff - all opinions are my own.

This book is incredible, but also a difficult one for me. Robin Williams has been one of my favorite actors for many years, so it was a shock when he passed away in 2014. He was such a gem in the acting world, flourishing in any genre from drama to comedy. He had a heart of gold and one could see the generosity in his eyes in every part he played. He moved so fast in his standup and television appearances, but knew exactly when to dial it back for movies like *Dead Poets Society* and *Good Will Hunting*. And even though he was his high-speed, brilliant self in one of my favorite films *The Fisher King*, there's that dramatic big reveal at the end that gets me every time.

This well-written, meticulously researched biography covers everything from Williams' career, to his friends and family life. Done through several interviews, I love that we see different perspectives of his life from the

people closest to him, giving a more accurate, well-rounded portrayal. In addition to including details from past interviews with Robin, Itzkoff interviewed plenty of people, including Robin's parents and children, Billy Crystal, Garry Marshall, and David Letterman to name a few. As a culture reporter for the New York Times, Itzkoff's occupation shines through on this piece. *ROBIN* chronicles Williams' life from childhood up until his passing and is a dense 544 pages, but well worth a read. We learn firsthand the anxiety he suffered, his successes, flaws, and the illness that ultimately led to taking his own life. But we also see the comedic genius, his larger than life talent, and the one-of-a-kind, quiet soul that was Robin.

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### **Valerity (Val) says**

I still remember how stunned I was when I heard that Robin Williams had died, and then even more shocked when it came out that he had likely died by hanging himself with a belt. It just seemed such a wretched ending for the beloved comedian who'd brought such a wonderful humor into our lives. It broke my heart and I cried for what he must have been going through. I highly enjoyed this extremely well-researched book on him.

I feel it did a great job of covering his life including his family and career. He became famous for *Mork and Mindy* in 1978 when I was 18, so I was quite aware of him and his show and he became one of my favorites comics. This book shares some of what was going on behind the scenes during many important times in his life and career versus what was coming out publicly.

After his death, I read more about what authorities found and I watched a show that discussed what actually killed him and was found during his autopsy. It seems he'd been misdiagnosed with Parkinsons and he was having all sorts of symptoms and health issues, including the depression he'd been bothered by off and on his whole life at times. I find the book an engrossing read as he was just so private even with those he seemed so close with and most people felt they didn't really know him well. An advance digital copy was provided by NetGalley, author Dave Itzkoff, and the publisher for my honest review.

Henry Holt and Co.

Publication date: May 15, 2018.

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### **Toni says**

We all knew Robin Williams was a genius; but most of us didn't know the intimate details that made up the man, and ultimately, his death. We knew he was an intellectual, studied drama at Julliard before he left after 3 years to devote his life to comedy and acting. Even Oliver Sacks, the renowned neurologist he portrayed in the film, "Awakenings," marveled at the workings of Robin's brain.

In "Robin," Dave Itzkoff leaves no stone unturned. He spoke to everyone and anyone who knew or worked with Robin, including his family and especially his adult children. He researched every aspect of Robin's life from his childhood in Detroit to his family's move to San Francisco. Robin took to California lifestyle like a fish to water.

He started working locally acting in small plays, studying acting and carefully working with Improv groups. As he got better friends urged him to try the bigger comedy clubs in L.A. to try stand-up. His following grew which eventually led to a new show, "Mork & Mindy." Fame hit, then meteoric rise, drugs and alcohol, all while working constantly. Robin needed an audience, affirmation that he was good at his craft either comedy

or acting. He thrived on it like oxygen; and couldn't live without it.

Eventually, the physical toll caught up with him; he had major heart surgery to fix a faulty valve. After recuperation he wanted to tour again but different physical ailments began to surface. He was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. But Robin told a few close comedy friends, "he felt like he was losing his mind." For someone so brilliant, so quick, with an ardent memory; "if he didn't have his mind, then what was he?" We know that Robin took his own life.

What many of us may not know was the final findings of Robin's brain, done three weeks after his death.

"Diffuse Lewy body dementia (DLBD, aka diffuse Lewy body disease). Frequently presents with Parkinson's motor symptoms." "...documented the presence of a devastating brain disorder that accounted for much of what Robin was experiencing in his final years and had never been fully diagnosed in his lifetime."

Robin gave us his fans unending joy during his lifetime. I thank him for that. I also thank the people who had the sense to record his talents in various ways so I and others can pop in a DVD and watch and hear him whenever we want. (which I did!) What a concept!

Thank you NetGalley, Holt Publishing, and Dave Itzkoff.

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### **Amy Leigh says**

This book will be released on May 15, 2018.

When I got approved for an advanced copy I was ecstatic. I was also nervous that maybe the author won't do the man justice but that thankfully was not the case. This book is so thoroughly researched with a lot of cooperation from his family and friends. The author doesn't judge or take jabs at Robin but lays out the facts and lets you form your own opinions without being pushy.

It would be an understatement to say I got lost in this book. It was as engrossing as watching Robin perform. Robin Williams was not a perfect man. He had doubt and insecurities and health problems. He was upfront about his many addictions and got help. He was sober when he passed away by his own hand. He had an undiagnosed brain disease that may have caused him to take his own life without ever knowing he was doing so. Again my heart broke all over again.

Robin Williams was disputably the funniest man in the world. He could make anyone laugh and was so beloved but he didn't know how much. Since he wasn't a typical model type movie star he was very insecure and didn't see what the rest of the world saw, a comic genius that could make your heart swell and bring happy tears to your eyes. No one will ever be close to the stand up genius of comedy that he was. He had a magical way about him that as soon as you saw his face you smiled because you knew whatever he was about to do was going to be great.

I loved reading about how great of a dad and friend he always was and even though I knew he died at the end of this, I kept hoping it wouldn't happen. Robin made a difference in so many people's lives and I just wish he knew every person's heart he touched. He has kind of a Van Gogh quality to him. Though Van Gogh never saw that he was beloved because his art wasn't famous til much later, he suffered through life the same way Robin did. It just makes you ache.

This book is about Robin the man and I learned so much about his life I never knew. I would say this is going to be the best biography about Robin Williams that you will find. This author knew what he was doing. It's written so you are drawn in by Robin and you never want it to end.

Thank you to Henry Holt & Company and NetGalley for giving me an ARC of this book for a fair and honest review.

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### **Donna Davis says**

Where were you when you heard that Robin Williams had died?

I was so stunned and grieved at this loss that I honestly wondered if something was wrong with me. I had admired Williams since Mork “uncorked” in the late 1970s, and for decades I enjoyed his work, but after all, he was a complete stranger. I had never met him; why did my heart drop to my toes and stay there for a while when he left us? But as the internet exploded and friends also responded, I understood that it wasn’t just me. He was so raw, so vulnerable in so much of what he did on screen that he became, in a way unlike most entertainers, a part of who we were.

Huge thanks go to Net Galley and Henry Holt for the review copy. This book is for sale now.

Williams grew up in a well-to-do family, an only child that didn’t learn he had half-brothers till adolescence. His invented characters began in private during childhood with his large collection of toy soldiers, for which he invented complex lives and scenarios; in middle school he began assuming the voices of invented characters as self-defense socially. From his school days all the way through his life, those that spent time with him personally or professionally said that he was unknowable, and he admitted in an interview that in many ways, he was “performing to avoid.”

But none of us knew that when he burst onto the airwaves; all we knew was that this actor was manic, hilarious, audacious, insightful, and unpredictable. Itzkoff deftly segues in and through each period in Williams’ life, through his marriages, parenthood, and friendships, and of course, through the enormous body of artistic work that he amassed over his lifetime. There are perceptive quotes by those that knew him, some wry, some surprisingly hostile, and many of them pithy, and it boggles the imagination to consider how many of these the author began with before he whittled them down to just the right size and number, to provide as complete an account as is possible without allowing the pace to flag.

My favorite parts have to do with behind-the-scenes vignettes from the Robin Williams movies I most enjoyed. One interesting anecdote concerns the making of *Dead Poets Society*. Disney deemed the title to be too risky; nobody wants to watch something dead, they figured, and so why not change the title to “The Amazing Mr. Keating”? Robin and other cast members laughed; the producers laughed; then they told the Disney people that production would stop immediately if such an attempt were made.

Although usually even well-known movie actors have to audition for Disney animation voice roles just like anyone else would, an exception of great proportions was made for Williams, and in fact, the role of the genie in *Aladdin* was written for him specifically. Try to imagine that movie without him. Impossible!

I tore voraciously through this absorbing biography of this truly brilliant performer, but as the end neared, the pace of my reading slowed, because I knew, more or less, how it would end. I would have liked the chance to change it, but nobody can do that. It’s a sad, rotten thing to see such a bright star fall so tragically.

Itzkoff’s sources are strong ones, and his tone is intimate without being prurient, affectionate but not fawning. I would read this biographer’s work again in a heartbeat.

Highly recommended.

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## **Martie Nees Record says**

Genre: Biography

Publisher: Henry Holt & Company

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The author, Dave Itzkoff, is a culture reporter who writes about film, television, and comedy for The New York Times. Itzkoff writes this book as a combination of straight reporting and insightful analysis. This is a bittersweet biography; the author portrays the artist, Robin Williams, not as a tormented soul who ends his own life, but more as a tender man desperate for talent validation.

We all know that Robin was a comic genius. But not many, including myself, know that he had a great memory (some would say photographic). He could show up on sets, late and hung-over, often in the same clothes from the night before, to discover that the writers made major script changes while he was out partying. While other actors struggled and fumbled to remember the new lines, Robin would just glance it over once and proceed to nail it. This skill flabbergasted many over the years. From his breakthrough television role on "Mork and Mindy" to his long movie career, his stage shenanigans fascinated his audiences, especially when he switched characters on a dime. He was the king of improvisation. In the author's (and my) opinion no other stand-up comedian came close. Just watching him perform, the man could exhaust you.

Like most biographies, the book begins when Williams was a child. The son of a well-to-do executive who had two older half-siblings who did not live with him growing up, Robin had a somewhat isolated youth, especially since his family frequently moved. He spent hours alone creating imaginary characters in his mind. It was in his teen years when the family moved to California, that he found acting. Over the decades, he learned to harness his manic talents and became a household name to be endeared by all. The author left me sadly wishing that Robin could absorb that his audience truly did love him.

According to the author, Robin was actually a sweet and shy man known for his caring nature. He was kind to people even while he fought his own darkness. He met Christopher Reeve when they both were studying acting at Julliard. Robin was politely asked to leave the school because there was nothing else that they could teach him. His style of improv was simply too bizarre for his teachers to understand. After Reeve's accident, Robin helped pay for his medical equipment. He remained a loyal friend. When the Reeve family went on their first vacation with Chris in a wheelchair, Robin joined them just to keep his dear friend's spirits from spiraling downwards as they often did.

Robin was also consistently honest about himself. While most celebrities go into a hospital for "exhaustion," Robin was truthful about his demons. Whether in his stand-up acts or during interviews, he openly discussed his troubles with depression and addiction. He eventually conquered his addictions, but his self-esteem remained low throughout his life. He thought of himself as an ugly man since he was not the epitome of a movie star. Robin had hair tufts throughout his body. He did indeed have a hairy body, which embarrassed him. I couldn't help but think his insecurities over his looks were so adolescent. But then again, in ways, the author shows that he never really grew up, preferring the company of children to adults. Off camera, he could play with his child co-stars endlessly. If he was in the company of a five-year-old, he became five-years-old. I confess, this reminds me of myself. Personally, I find it delightful to be able to connect with a

child on their level.

He might not have seen himself as a handsome man, but women sure did. He wasn't a faithful husband for two of his three wives. There were too many female temptations around him. He was a bit of a promiscuous player. However, he was an excellent father to his three children. After Robin's death, it was his adult children who insisted that it couldn't have been depression that caused their dad's suicide. They are confident of this since they knew that even at his lowest he would never hurt them in any way. They were all in constant contact with him, they adored him and he adored them. What his fans learn via his family, is that in the months before his death Williams was diagnosed with Parkinson's. He couldn't remember his lines while filming his last movie. Can you imagine how this must have felt for a man with a photogenic memory? However, not until the coroner's report, three months after his death, did we learn that he was actually suffering from a little-known but deadly brain disease, Lewy Body Dementia (LBD.) LBD is a neurological disease that is often misdiagnosed as Parkinson. It was LBD that was causing his paranoia and confusion.

The author's best writing moments are when he describes LBD symptoms. The last year of Robin's life, the actor suffered from tremors, insomnia, impaired senses, and extreme anxiety. He had difficulty reasoning and was often hallucinating. When coherent, he told many that he was losing his mind. Sadly, he was. The disease was eating away at his brain. Throughout all of this, Robin remained clean and sober while searching for a possible cure. Reading how this gentle and sensitive man suffered put tears in my eyes. Itzkoff wrote an in-depth, impressively researched biography on the life of Robin Williams. At times, I felt the book is packed with too much detail on his career. There are dozens of pages with footnote citations. I feel that the author was torn between writing a scholarly research paper or a compassionate book on the actor. He tried to do both and I believe that he mostly succeeded.

I received this Advance Review Copy (ARC) novel from the publisher at no cost in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Jennifer ~ TarHeelReader says**

**4 stars to Robin, a thorough and well-written biography of the life of one-of-a-kind Robin Williams! ?? ?? ?? ??**

This book came highly recommended by my friend, Toni. I'm so grateful I read it.

My earliest memory of Robin Williams includes my mom's hysterical laughter mixed with my own, while watching re-runs of Mork and Mindy. Robin's silly humor even translated to small children! My favorite memory of him is when he came to my college's campus to film Patch Adams, and I walked right by him and managed not to faint! Patch Adams remains my favorite Robin Williams' movie.

Robin is a biographical compendium of Robin Williams' life. This book is long on pages, but it does not feel that way when reading. Yes, there are tons of footnotes, but the author clearly did his job of interviewing and

researching most every aspect of Williams' full and varied life. I did not know much about his early life, or even his early career, so I soaked in all the details, and tried to put together the intricate pieces of the Robin puzzle.

Also included was information about his final diagnosis, Diffuse Lewy Body Dementia, which unfortunately, was not a diagnosis Williams' received when he was still alive. One can only hope it would have offered him some understanding of what was going on physically with his body and cognitively with his thoughts.

Robin Williams was in a league of his own. This biography is a must for any fan, and even if you were not a fan, this is a perfectly written biography full of heart.

Thank you to Dave Itzkoff, Henry Holt and Co., and Netgalley for the ARC. Robin is available now!

All of my reviews can also be found on my shiny new blog: [www.jennifertarheelreader.com](http://www.jennifertarheelreader.com)

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