

What If?: Serious Scientific Answers to Absurd Hypothetical Questions

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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.

An Amazon 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

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 xkcd t-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 they're getting tired. Bring a tent. He lives in Massachusetts.

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