

= Calvin and Hobbes =

Calvin and Hobbes is a daily comic strip by American cartoonist Bill Watterson that was syndicated from November 18 , 1985 to December 31 , 1995 . Commonly cited as " the last great newspaper comic , " Calvin and Hobbes has evinced broad and enduring popularity , influence , and academic interest .

Calvin and Hobbes follows the humorous antics of Calvin , a precocious , mischievous , and adventurous six @-@ year @-@ old boy , and Hobbes , his sardonic stuffed tiger . The pair is named after John Calvin , a 16th @-@ century French Reformation theologian , and Thomas Hobbes , a 17th @-@ century English political philosopher . Set in the contemporary , suburban United States , the strip depicts Calvin 's frequent flights of fancy and his friendship with Hobbes . It also examines Calvin 's relationships with family and classmates , especially the love / hate relationship between him and his classmate , Susie Derkins . Hobbes ' dual nature is a defining motif for the strip : to Calvin , Hobbes is a live anthropomorphic tiger ; all the other characters see Hobbes as an inanimate stuffed toy . Though the series does not mention specific political figures or current events , it does explore broad issues like environmentalism , public education , philosophical quandaries , and the flaws of opinion polls .

At the height of its popularity , Calvin and Hobbes was featured in over 2 @, @ 400 newspapers worldwide . In 2010 , reruns of the strip appeared in more than 50 countries , and nearly 45 million copies of the Calvin and Hobbes books had been sold .

= = History = =

Calvin and Hobbes was conceived when Bill Watterson , working in an advertising job he detested , began devoting his spare time to cartooning , his true love . He explored various strip ideas but all were rejected by the syndicates . United Feature Syndicate finally responded positively to one strip called Critturs , which featured a side character ( the main character 's little brother ) who had a stuffed tiger . Told that these characters were the strongest , Watterson began a new strip centered on them . Though United Feature rejected the new strip , Universal Press Syndicate eventually took it .

The first strip was published on November 18 , 1985 , and the series quickly became a hit . Within a year of syndication , the strip was published in roughly 250 newspapers . Before long the strip was in wide circulation outside the United States . By April 5 , 1987 , Watterson and his work were featured in an article in The Los Angeles Times . Calvin and Hobbes twice earned Watterson the Reuben Award from the National Cartoonists Society in the Outstanding Cartoonist of the Year category , first in 1986 and again in 1988 . He was nominated again in 1992 . The Society awarded him the Humor Comic Strip Award for 1988 . Calvin and Hobbes has also won several more awards .

Watterson took two extended breaks from writing new strips , from May 5 , 1991 , to February 1 , 1992 , and from April 3 through December 31 , 1994 . In 1995 , Watterson sent a letter via his syndicate to all editors whose newspapers carried his strip :

I will be stopping Calvin and Hobbes at the end of the year . This was not a recent or an easy decision , and I leave with some sadness . My interests have shifted however , and I believe I 've done what I can do within the constraints of daily deadlines and small panels . I am eager to work at a more thoughtful pace , with fewer artistic compromises . I have not yet decided on future projects , but my relationship with Universal Press Syndicate will continue .

That so many newspapers would carry Calvin and Hobbes is an honor I 'll long be proud of , and I 've greatly appreciated your support and indulgence over the last decade . Drawing this comic strip has been a privilege and a pleasure , and I thank you for giving me the opportunity .

The final strip ran on Sunday , December 31 , 1995 . It depicted Calvin and Hobbes outside in freshly fallen snow , reveling in the wonder and excitement of the winter scene . " It 's a magical world , Hobbes , ol ' buddy ... Let 's go exploring ! " Calvin exclaims as they zoom off over the snowy hills on their sled , leaving , according to one critic ten years later , " a hole in the comics page that

no strip has been able to fill . "

= = = Syndication and formatting = = =

From the outset , Watterson found himself at odds with the syndicate , which urged him to begin merchandising the characters and touring the country to promote the first collections of comic strips . Watterson refused . To him , the integrity of the strip and its artist would be undermined by commercialization , which he saw as a major negative influence in the world of cartoon art .

Watterson also grew increasingly frustrated by the gradual shrinking of available space for comics in the newspapers . He lamented that without space for anything more than simple dialogue or sparse artwork , comics as an art form were becoming dilute , bland , and unoriginal . Watterson strove for a full @-@ page version of his strip , in contrast to the few cells allocated for most strips . He longed for the artistic freedom allotted to classic strips such as Little Nemo and Krazy Kat , and he gave a sample of what could be accomplished with such liberty in the opening pages of the Sunday strip compilation , The Calvin and Hobbes Lazy Sunday Book .

During Watterson 's first sabbatical from the strip , Universal Press Syndicate continued to charge newspapers full price to re @-@ run old Calvin and Hobbes strips . Few editors approved of the move , but the strip was so popular that they had little choice but to continue to run it for fear that competing newspapers might pick it up and draw its fans away .

Upon Watterson 's return , Universal Press announced that Watterson had decided to sell his Sunday strip as an unbreakable half of a newspaper or tabloid page . Many editors and even a few cartoonists criticized him for what they perceived as arrogance and an unwillingness to abide by the normal practices of the cartoon business . Watterson had negotiated the deal to allow himself more creative freedom in the Sunday comics :

I took a sabbatical after resolving a long and emotionally draining fight to prevent Calvin and Hobbes from being merchandised . Looking for a way to rekindle my enthusiasm for the duration of a new contract term , I proposed a redesigned Sunday format that would permit more panel flexibility . To my surprise and delight , Universal responded with an offer to market the strip as an unbreakable half page ( more space than I 'd dared to ask for ) , despite the expected resistance of editors .

To this day , my syndicate assures me that some editors liked the new format , appreciated the difference , and were happy to run the larger strip , but I think it 's fair to say that this was not the most common reaction . The syndicate had warned me to prepare for numerous cancellations of the Sunday feature , but after a few weeks of dealing with howling , purple @-@ faced editors , the syndicate suggested that papers could reduce the strip to the size tabloid newspapers used for their smaller sheets of paper . ... I focused on the bright side : I had complete freedom of design and there were virtually no cancellations .

For all the yelling and screaming by outraged editors , I remain convinced that the larger Sunday strip gave newspapers a better product and made the comics section more fun for readers . Comics are a visual medium . A strip with a lot of drawing can be exciting and add some variety . Proud as I am that I was able to draw a larger strip , I don 't expect to see it happen again any time soon . In the newspaper business , space is money , and I suspect most editors would still say that the difference is not worth the cost . Sadly , the situation is a vicious circle : because there 's no room for better artwork , the comics are simply drawn ; because they 're simply drawn , why should they have more room ?

= = = Animation = = =

Watterson did consider allowing Calvin and Hobbes to be animated , and has expressed admiration for the art form of animation . In a 1989 interview in The Comics Journal he said :

If you look at the old cartoons by Tex Avery and Chuck Jones , you 'll see that there are a lot of things single drawings just can 't do . Animators can get away with incredible distortion and exaggeration ... because the animator can control the length of time you see something . The

bizarre exaggeration barely has time to register , and the viewer doesn 't ponder the incredible license he 's witnessed .

In a comic strip , you just show the highlights of action ? you can 't show the buildup and release ... or at least not without slowing down the pace of everything to the point where it 's like looking at individual frames of a movie , in which case you 've probably lost the effect you were trying to achieve . In a comic strip , you can suggest motion and time , but it 's very crude compared to what an animator can do . I have a real awe for good animation .

After this he was asked if it was " a bit scary to think of hearing Calvin 's voice . " He responded that it was " very scary , " and that although he loved the visual possibilities of animation , the thought of casting voice actors to play his characters was uncomfortable . He was also unsure whether he wanted to work with an animation team , as he had done all previous work by himself . Ultimately , Calvin and Hobbes was never made into an animated series . Watterson later stated in The Calvin and Hobbes Tenth Anniversary Book that he liked the fact that his strip was a " low @-@ tech , one @-@ man operation , " and took great pride in the fact that he drew every line and wrote every word on his own .

= = Merchandising = =

Bill Watterson insists that cartoon strips should stand on their own as an art form , and has resisted the use of Calvin and Hobbes in merchandising of any sort . Watterson explained in a 2005 press release :

Actually , I wasn 't against all merchandising when I started the strip , but each product I considered seemed to violate the spirit of the strip , contradict its message , and take me away from the work I loved . If my syndicate had let it go at that , the decision would have taken maybe 30 seconds of my life .

Almost no legitimate Calvin and Hobbes merchandise exists outside the book collections . Exceptions produced during the strip 's original run include two 16 @-@ month calendars ( 1988 ? 1989 and 1989 ? 1990 ) , and the textbook Teaching with Calvin and Hobbes , which has been described as " perhaps the most difficult piece of official Calvin and Hobbes memorabilia to find . "

On July 16 , 2010 , the United States Postal Service released a set of postage stamps honoring five comic strips , one of them Calvin and Hobbes .

Uclick , the digital division of Andrews McMeel Universal , offers licensed prints of Calvin and Hobbes strips through its website .

The strip 's immense popularity has led to the appearance of various counterfeit items such as window decals and T @-@ shirts that often feature crude humor , binge drinking and other themes that are not found in Watterson 's work . Images from one strip in which Calvin and Hobbes dance to loud music at night were commonly used for copyright violations . After threat of a lawsuit alleging infringement of copyright and trademark , some sticker makers replaced Calvin with a different boy , while other makers made no changes . Watterson wryly commented , " I clearly miscalculated how popular it would be to show Calvin urinating on a Ford logo . "

= = Style and influences = =

The strip borrows several elements and themes from three major influences : Walt Kelly 's Pogo , George Herriman 's Krazy Kat , and Charles M. Schulz 's Peanuts . Schulz and Kelly particularly influenced Watterson 's outlook on comics during his formative years .

Notable elements of Watterson 's artistic style are his characters ' diverse and often exaggerated expressions ( particularly those of Calvin ) , elaborate and bizarre backgrounds for Calvin 's flights of imagination , expressions of motion , and frequent visual jokes and metaphors . In the later years of the strip , with more panel space available for his use , Watterson experimented more freely with different panel layouts , art styles , stories without dialogue , and greater use of whitespace . He also makes a point of not showing certain things explicitly : the " Noodle Incident " and the children 's book Hamster Huey and the Goopy Kabloobie are left to the reader 's imagination , where Watterson

was sure they would be " more outrageous " than he could portray .

Watterson 's technique started with minimalist pencil sketches drawn with a light pencil ( though the larger Sunday strips often required more elaborate work ) on a piece of Bristol board , with his brand of choice being Strathmore because he felt it held the drawings better on the page as opposed to the cheaper brands ( Watterson said he would use any cheap pad of Bristol board his local supply store had , but switched to Strathmore after he found himself growing more and more displeased with the results ) . He would then use a small sable brush and India ink to fill in the rest of the drawing , saying that he did not want to simply trace over his penciling and thus make the inking more spontaneous . He lettered dialogue with a Rapidograph fountain pen , and he used a crowquill pen for odds and ends . Mistakes were covered with various forms of correction fluid , including the type used on typewriters . Watterson was careful in his use of color , often spending a great deal of time in choosing the right colors to employ for the weekly Sunday strip ; his technique was to cut the color tabs the syndicate sent him into individual squares , lay out the colors , and then paint a watercolor approximation of the strip on tracing paper over the Bristol board and then mark the strip accordingly before sending it on . When Calvin and Hobbes began there were 64 colors available for the Sunday strips . For the later Sunday strips Watterson had 125 colors as well as the ability to fade the colors into each other .

= = = Art and academia = = =

Watterson used the strip to poke fun at the art world , principally through Calvin 's unconventional creations of snowmen but also through other expressions of childhood art . When Miss Wormwood complains that he is wasting class time drawing impossible things ( a Stegosaurus in a rocket ship , for example ) , Calvin proclaims himself " on the cutting edge of the avant @-@ garde . " He begins exploring the medium of snow when a warm day melts his snowman . His next sculpture " speaks to the horror of our own mortality , inviting the viewer to contemplate the evanescence of life . " In later strips , Calvin 's creative instincts diversify to include sidewalk drawings ( or , as he terms them , examples of " suburban postmodernism " ) .

Watterson also lampooned the academic world . In one example , Calvin carefully crafts an " artist 's statement , " claiming that such essays convey more messages than artworks themselves ever do ( Hobbes blandly notes , " You misspelled Weltanschauung " ) . He indulges in what Watterson calls " pop psychobabble " to justify his destructive rampages and shift blame to his parents , citing " toxic codependency . " In one instance , he pens a book report based on the theory that the purpose of academic writing is to " inflate weak ideas , obscure poor reasoning , and inhibit clarity , " entitled The Dynamics of Interbeing and Monological Imperatives in Dick and Jane : A Study in Psychic Transrelational Gender Modes . Displaying his creation to Hobbes , he remarks , " Academia , here I come ! " Watterson explains that he adapted this jargon ( and similar examples from several other strips ) from an actual book of art criticism .

Overall , Watterson 's satirical essays serve to attack both sides , criticizing both the commercial mainstream and the artists who are supposed to be " outside " it . Not long after he began drawing his " Dinosaurs in Rocket Ships " series , Calvin tells Hobbes :

Calvin : The hard part for us avant @-@ garde post @-@ modern artists is deciding whether or not to embrace commercialism . Do we allow our work to be hyped and exploited by a market that 's simply hungry for the next new thing ? Do we participate in a system that turns high art into low art so it 's better suited for mass consumption ?

Of course , when an artist goes commercial , he makes a mockery of his status as an outsider and free thinker . He buys into the crass and shallow values art should transcend . He trades the integrity of his art for riches and fame .

...

Oh , what the heck . I 'll do it .

...

Hobbes ( rolling his eyes ) : That wasn 't so hard .

The strip for Sunday , June 21 , 1992 , criticized the naming of The Big Bang theory as not

evocative of the wonders behind it , and coined the term " Horrendous Space Kablooeie " , an alternative that achieved some informal popularity among scientists and was often shortened to " the HSK . " The term has also been referred to in newspapers , books , and university courses .

= = Main characters = =

= = = Calvin = = =

Calvin , named after the 16th @-@ century theologian John Calvin , is a six @-@ year @-@ old , whose last name is never mentioned in the strip . Despite his poor grades in school , Calvin demonstrates his intelligence through his sophisticated vocabulary and a philosophical mind :

Calvin : " Dad , are you vicariously living through me in the hope that my accomplishments will validate your mediocre life and in some way compensate for all of the opportunities you botched ? "

Dad : " If I were , you can bet I 'd be re @-@ evaluating my strategy . "

Calvin ( later , to his mother ) : " Mom , Dad keeps insulting me . "

He commonly wears his distinctive red @-@ and @-@ black striped shirt , black pants , and white @-@ and @-@ magenta sneakers . He also wears a light blue jacket when going to school or when playing in the snow . He is an enthusiastic reader of comic books and has a tendency to order items marketed in comic books or on boxes of his favorite cereal , Chocolate Frosted Sugar Bombs . Watterson described Calvin :

Calvin is pretty easy to do because he is outgoing and rambunctious , and there 's not much of a filter between his brain and his mouth .

I guess he 's a little too intelligent for his age . The thing that I really enjoy about him is that he has no sense of restraint ; he doesn 't have the experience yet to know the things that you shouldn 't do .

Calvin also has a sensitive side as well . This is displayed , for example , when he finds a dying raccoon and tries to save it but fails . The scene is made even more poignant by Calvin asking Hobbes not to " go anywhere " while Hobbes hugs him and promises him he won 't .

= = = Hobbes = = =

From Calvin 's point of view , Hobbes is an anthropomorphic tiger , much larger than Calvin and full of independent attitudes and ideas . When the perspective shifts to any other character , readers again see merely a stuffed animal , usually seated at an off @-@ kilter angle and blankly staring into space . Watterson explains :

When Hobbes is a stuffed toy in one panel and alive in the next , I 'm juxtaposing the ' grown @-@ up ' version of reality with Calvin 's version , and inviting the reader to decide which is truer .

In more than one strip , Hobbes is shown being washed in a washing machine , a fact Calvin takes in stride and which Watterson has referred to as " one of the stranger blurrings of what Hobbes is . "

Hobbes is named after the 17th @-@ century philosopher Thomas Hobbes , who held what Watterson describes as " a dim view of human nature . " Hobbes ( the tiger ) is much more rational and aware of consequences than Calvin , but seldom interferes with Calvin 's troublemaking beyond a few oblique warnings . Hobbes is sarcastic when Calvin is being hypocritical about things he dislikes .

Although the debut strip shows Calvin capturing Hobbes by means of a snare ( with a tuna sandwich as the bait ) , a later comic ( August 1 , 1989 ) indicates that Hobbes has been with Calvin since Calvin was a baby :

Calvin : " The whole first half of my life is a complete blank ! What on earth did I know that someone wanted me to forget ? "

Hobbes : " I seem to recall you spent most of the time burping up . "

Another later strip featured Hobbes humorously claiming that Calvin 's mom " wanted another tiger " instead of Calvin , indicating that Hobbes was around before Calvin was born . Watterson eventually

decided that it was not important to establish how Calvin and Hobbes met .

= = = Calvin 's parents = = =

Calvin 's unnamed mother and father are typical middle @-@ class parents . Like many other characters in the strip , they are relatively down @-@ to @-@ earth and their sensible attitudes serve as a foil for Calvin 's outlandish behavior .

Watterson says some fans were angered by the way Calvin 's parents thought of Calvin . This is shown by the fact that Calvin 's father claimed that he wanted a dachshund instead of Calvin , and often tries to " deny " that Calvin is his biological son :

Mom : You 're not sorry we had Calvin , are you ?

Dad : Are you ?

Mom : I asked first . Besides , it wasn 't all my decision .

Dad : All I know is , I offered to buy us a dachshund , but no , you said ...

Dad : Someday I 'm going to get my DNA checked to see if he 's really my kid .

Mom : Take my word for it .

Dad : I just know some nurse switched the bassinets .

Calvin 's parents are not above some outrageous behavior of their own . For example , Calvin asks for a cigarette and his mother gives him one to teach him a lesson . Calvin 's father tells Calvin sarcastic lies when asked a straight question , and Calvin often believes them :

Calvin : Dad , how do people make babies ?

Dad : Most people just go to Sears , buy the kit , and follow the assembly instructions .

Calvin : I CAME FROM SEARS ? ?

Dad : No . You were a Blue Light Special at K @-@ Mart ; almost as good , and a lot cheaper .

Calvin : AAUUGHHH !

Mom ( out of frame ) : Dear , what are you telling Calvin now ? !

Watterson defends what Calvin 's parents do , remarking that in the case of parenting a kid like Calvin , " I think they do a better job than I would . " Calvin 's father is overly concerned with " character building " activities in a number of strips , either in the things he makes Calvin do or in the masochistic eccentricities of his own lifestyle . For example , Calvin 's father is shown coming home from an early morning run in the snow , which he follows with a bowl of plain oatmeal .

Calvin 's father is a patent attorney ( like Watterson 's own father ) and his mother is a stay @-@ at @-@ home mom . Both remain unnamed except as " Mom " and " Dad , " or pet names such as " honey " and " dear " between themselves . Watterson says , " As far as the strip is concerned , they are important only as Calvin 's mom and dad . "

Calvin 's father has a brother named Max , who lives out of state . Watterson introduced him in a week of strips but said he later regretted the idea . Although Watterson said the idea of having Max in the strip was to set up potential future storylines , he realized that his intent to have the parents remain nameless worked against him because Max could not refer to either one by name . This was cited as one of the main reasons Max never reappeared .

= = = Susie Derkins = = =

Susie Derkins , the only important character with both a first and last name , is a classmate of Calvin 's who lives on his street . Getting her last name from the pet beagle of Watterson 's wife 's family , she appeared early in the strip as a new student in Calvin 's class . She is polite and studious , and likes to play house or host tea parties with her stuffed animals . However , she is also depicted playing imaginary games with Calvin in which she is a high @-@ powered lawyer or politician and he is her househusband . Though both of them hate to admit it , Calvin and Susie have quite a bit in common . For example , Susie is shown on occasion with a stuffed bunny rabbit named " Mr. Bun . " Susie also has a mischievous ( and sometimes aggressive ) streak , which can be seen when she subverts Calvin 's attempts to cheat on school tests by feeding him incorrect answers , or clobbers Calvin when he attacks her with snowballs . Susie also regularly bests Calvin

in confrontations such as their water balloon and snowball fights , employing guile or force . Hobbes often openly expresses romantic feelings for Susie , much to Calvin 's disgust . Calvin starts a " club " ( of which he and Hobbes are the only members ) that he calls G.R.O.S.S. ( Get Rid Of Slimy Girls ) , and while holding " meetings " in Calvin 's treehouse or in the " box of secrecy " in Calvin 's room , they usually come up with some way to annoy or socially maim Susie , most of which backfire on them completely . In one instance , Calvin steals one of Susie 's dolls for ransom , only to have Susie retaliate by nabbing Hobbes . Watterson admits that Calvin and Susie have a nascent crush on each other , and that Susie is inspired by the type of woman whom Watterson himself found attractive and eventually married .

= = Secondary characters = =

Calvin also interacts with a handful of secondary characters . These include his babysitter , the school bully , his school teacher and the school principal .

= = = Rosalyn = = =

Rosalyn is Calvin 's babysitter . She takes advantage of his parents ' desperation to leave the house and the fact that no one else will babysit for Calvin by demanding advances and raises . She is also probably the only character in the strip whom Calvin really fears , as she does not mince words or actions to get Calvin to behave or go to bed on time . Watterson put her in a Sunday strip early on , never thinking of her as a regular character . But Rosalyn 's intimidation of Calvin surprised Watterson , so she came back several times . At one point she was Calvin 's swimming instructor , though he was only shown to attend one lesson . In Rosalyn 's last story , she is revealed to have in common with Calvin a sense of imagination , and the two of them play Calvinball with Hobbes .

= = = Moe = = =

Moe is , according to Calvin , a " six @-@ year @-@ old who shaves " and a stereotypical bully who picks on Calvin ( both physically and emotionally ) and calls him names . Moe is the only regular character whose speech is shown in an unusual font as his frequently monosyllabic dialogue is shown in crude , lower @-@ case letters . Watterson describes Moe as " every jerk I 've ever known . "

= = = Miss Wormwood = = =

Miss Wormwood is Calvin 's world @-@ weary teacher , named after the junior devil in C. S. Lewis ' The Screwtape Letters . She usually wears either a polka @-@ dotted dress or a brown dress , and is another character who serves as a foil to Calvin 's mischief . Calvin , when in his Spaceman Spiff persona , sees Miss Wormwood as a slimy , often dictatorial alien . Calvin refers to Miss Wormwood 's indigestion ( " It 's really gross how she drinks Maalox straight from the bottle " ) , her medication ( " I wonder if her doctor knows she mixes all those prescriptions " ) and her smoking habit ( " Rumor has it she 's up to two packs a day , unfiltered " ) . Miss Wormwood reacts to Calvin 's behavior by tightly shutting her eyes and thinking " Five years until retirement " repeatedly . Watterson describes her as " an unhappy person " due to her belief in the value of education .

= = = Mr. Spittle = = =

Mr. Spittle is the school principal to whose office Miss Wormwood threatens to send Calvin for his pranks . Susie also occasionally accompanies Calvin to the principal 's office . Though his name has only been shown in one story , he has appeared many times including the first story about Calvin 's duplicator .

= = = Uncle Max = = =

Uncle Max is Calvin 's paternal uncle . Uncle Max was originally meant as a character who could increase the possibilities of the strip : as Watterson noted , " Calvin could go visit Uncle Max ... " . However , Watterson dropped the character after finding it was awkward that Max could not address Calvin 's parents by name , and realizing that Max was redundant as far as the strip 's personality goes .

= = Recurring elements = =

There are many recurring gags in the strip , some in " reality " and others in Calvin 's imagination . These are as follows :

= = = Calvin 's roles = = =

Calvin imagines himself as a great many things , including dinosaurs , elephants , jungle @-@ farers and superheroes . Three of his alter egos are well @-@ defined and recurrent :

" Spaceman Spiff " is a heroic spacefarer who narrates his experiences in the third person . As Spiff , Calvin battles aliens ( typically his parents or teacher , but also sometimes other kids his age ) with a ray gun known as a " zorcher " ( later " frap @-@ ray blaster " , " death ray blaster " or " atomic napalm neutralizer " ) and travels to distant planets ( his house , school , or neighborhood ) , often crashing unhurt on a planet . Calvin 's self @-@ narration as Spaceman Spiff is frequently riddled with alliteration : " Zounds ! Zorched by Zarches , Spaceman Spiff 's crippled craft crashes on planet Plootarg ! "

" Tracer Bullet " is a hardboiled private eye , who says he has eight slugs in him ( " One 's lead , and the rest are bourbon . " ) . In one story , Bullet is called to a case in which a " pushy dame " ( Calvin 's mother ) accuses him of destroying an expensive lamp ( broken during an indoor football game between Calvin and Hobbes ) . Later , he is snatched by the pushy dame 's " hired goon " ( Calvin 's father having a talk with him ) . He made his debut when Calvin donned a fedora to hide a haircut Hobbes had given him . These strips are drawn in elaborate , shadowy black @-@ and @-@ white that evoke film noir . Watterson did not attempt Tracer Bullet stories often , due the time @-@ consuming way the strip needed to be drawn and inked .

As " Stupendous Man " he pictures himself as a superhero in disguise , wearing a mask and a cape made by his mother , and narrating his own adventures . While in character as Stupendous Man , he refers to his alter ego as a mild @-@ mannered millionaire playboy . Stupendous Man almost always " suffers defeat " at the hands of his opponent . When Hobbes asks if Stupendous Man has ever won any battles , Calvin says all his battles are " moral victories . " Stupendous Man 's nemeses include " Mom @-@ Lady " ( Calvin 's mom ) , " Annoying Girl " ( Susie Derkins ) , " Crab Teacher " ( Miss Wormwood ) , and " Baby @-@ Sitter Girl " ( Rosalyn ) . Some of the " super powers " of the villains have been revealed : Mom @-@ Lady has a " mind scrambling eyeball ray " that wills the victim to " do her nefarious bidding , " and Baby Sitter Girl has a similar power of using a " psycho beam " which weakens " Stupendous Man 's stupendous will " . The " powers " of Annoying Girl and Crab Teacher are unknown . Calvin often tries to pretend he and " Stupendous Man " are two different people , but it never seems to work . Stupendous Man has multiple " superpowers " , including , but not limited to , super strength , the ability to fly , various vision powers ( such as " high @-@ speed vision " ) and a stomach of steel .

= = = Cardboard boxes = = =

Calvin has had several adventures involving corrugated cardboard boxes , which he adapts for many different uses . In one strip , during which Calvin shows off his Transmogrifier , a device that transforms its user into any desired shape , Hobbes remarks , " It 's amazing what they do with



corrugated cardboard these days . " Calvin is able to change the function of the boxes by rewriting the label and flipping the box onto another side . In this way , a cardboard box can be used not only for its conventional purposes ( a storage container for water balloons , for example ) , but also as a flying time machine , a duplicator or , with the attachment of a few wires and a colander , a " Cerebral Enhance @-@ o @-@ tron . "

In addition , Calvin uses a cardboard box as a desk when he is attempting to sell things . Often , Calvin 's merchandise is something that no one would want , such as " suicide drink " , " a swift kick in the butt " for one dollar , or a " frank appraisal of your looks " for fifty cents . In one strip , he sells " happiness " for ten cents ; if one bought it , Calvin hit the person in the face with a water balloon , then revealed that he meant his own happiness . In another strip , he sold " insurance " , firing a slingshot at those who refused to buy it . In some strips , he tried to sell " great ideas " , and in one earlier strip , he attempted to sell the family car to obtain money for a grenade launcher .

The box has also functioned as a secret meeting place for G.R.O.S.S. , as the " Box of Secrecy " .

= = = Calvinball = = =

Calvinball is a game played by Calvin and Hobbes as a rebellion against organized team sports ; according to Hobbes , " No sport is less organized than Calvinball ! " Calvinball was first introduced to the readers at the end of a 1990 storyline involving Calvin reluctantly joining recess baseball . It quickly became a staple of the comic afterwards .

The only hint at the true creation of the game ironically comes from the last Calvinball strip , in which a game of football quickly devolves into a game of Calvinball . Calvin remarks that " sooner or later , all our games turn into Calvinball " , suggesting a similar scenario that directly led to the creation of the sport . Calvin and Hobbes usually play by themselves , although in one storyline Rosalyn ( Calvin 's baby @-@ sitter ) plays in return for Calvin doing his homework , and plays very well once she realizes that the rules are made up on the spot .

The only consistent rule states that Calvinball may never be played with the same rules twice . Scoring is also arbitrary , with Hobbes at times reporting scores of " Q to 12 " and " oogy to boogy " . The only recognizable sports Calvinball resembles are the ones it emulates ( i.e. , a cross between croquet , polo , badminton , capture the flag , and volleyball ) . Equipment includes a volleyball ( the eponymous " Calvinball " ) , a croquet set , a badminton set , assorted flags , bags , signs , a hobby horse , and enigmatic and never @-@ pictured " time @-@ fracture wickets " . Other things appear as needed , such as a bucket of ice @-@ cold water , a water balloon , and various songs and poetry . Players also wear masks resembling blindfolds with holes for the eyes . When Rosalyn asks Calvin the reason for the requirement , Calvin responds : " Sorry , no one 's allowed to question the masks . " When asked how to play , Watterson states : " It 's pretty simple : you make up the rules as you go . " Calvinball is a nomic or self @-@ modifying game , a contest of wits , skill and creativity rather than stamina or athletic skill , in which Hobbes ( and on one occasion , Rosalyn ) usually outwits Calvin , who takes it in stride , in contrast to his otherwise poor sportsmanship .

= = = Snow sculptures = = =

Calvin often creates horrendous / dark humor scenes with his snowmen . He uses the snowman for social commentary , revenge , or pure enjoyment . Examples include Snowman Calvin being yelled at by Snowman Dad to shovel the snow ; one snowman eating snow cones taken from a second snowman , who is lying on the ground with an ice @-@ cream scoop in his back ; a snowman house of horror ; and snowmen representing the people he hates . " The ones I really hate are small , so they 'll melt faster , " he says . There was even an occasion on which Calvin accidentally brought a snowman to life and it made itself and a small army into " deranged mutant killer monster snow goons . "

Calvin 's snow art is often used as a commentary on art in general . For example , Calvin has complained more than once about the lack of originality in other people 's snow art and compared it with his own grotesque snow sculptures . In one of these instances , Calvin and Hobbes claim to be

the sole guardians of high culture ; in another , Hobbes admires Calvin 's willingness to put artistic integrity above marketability , causing Calvin to reconsider and make an ordinary snowman .

= = = Wagon and sled = = =

Calvin and Hobbes frequently ride downhill in a wagon , sled , or toboggan , depending on the season , as a device to add some physical comedy to the strip and because , according to Watterson , " it 's a lot more interesting ... than talking heads . " While the ride is sometimes the focus of the strip , it also frequently serves as a counterpoint or visual metaphor while Calvin ponders the meaning of life , death , God , philosophy or a variety of other weighty subjects . Many of their rides end in spectacular crashes which leave them battered and broken , a fact which convinces Hobbes to sometimes hop off before a ride even begins . In the final strip , Calvin and Hobbes depart on their toboggan to go exploring . This theme is similar ( perhaps even homage ) to scenarios in Walt Kelly 's Pogo .

= = = G.R.O.S.S. = = =

G.R.O.S.S. , which stands for Get Rid Of Slimy GirlS , is a club which consists of only two members : Calvin and Hobbes . The club was founded in the garage of their house . To clear space for its activities , Calvin and ( purportedly ) Hobbes push Calvin 's parents ' car , causing it to roll into a ditch ( but not suffer damage ) ; the incident necessitates changing the club 's location to Calvin 's treehouse . They hold meetings to attempt to annoy Susie Derkins . Notable actions include planting a fake secret tape near her in attempt to draw her in to a trap , trapping her in a closet at their house , and creating elaborate water balloon traps . Calvin gave himself and Hobbes important positions in the club , Calvin being " Dictator @-@ for @-@ Life " and Hobbes being " President @-@ and @-@ First @-@ Tiger " . They go into Calvin 's treehouse for their club meetings and often get into fights during them . The password to get into the treehouse is intentionally long and difficult , which has on at least one occasion ruined Calvin 's plans . ( Because Hobbes can climb the tree without the rope , he got to think up the password , which heaps praise upon tigers . ) An example of this can be seen in the comic strip where Calvin , rushing to get into the treehouse to throw things at a passing Susie Derkins , insults Hobbes , who is in the treehouse and thus has to let down the rope . Hobbes forces Calvin to say the password for insulting him . By the time Susie arrives , in time to hear Calvin saying some of the password , causing him to stumble , Calvin is on " Verse Seven : Tigers are perfect ! / The E @-@ pit @-@ o @-@ me / of good looks and grace / and quiet .. uh .. um .. dignity " . The opportunity to pelt Susie with something having passed , Calvin threatens to turn Hobbes into a rug.G.R.O.S.S. is one of the most common adventures that Calvin has .

= = Books = =

There are 18 Calvin and Hobbes books , published from 1987 to 1997 . These include 11 collections , which form a complete archive of the newspaper strips , except for a single daily strip from November 25 , 1985 . ( The collections do contain a strip for this date , but it is not the same strip that appeared in some newspapers . Treasuries usually combine the two preceding collections with bonus material and include color reprints of Sunday comics . )

Watterson included some new material in the treasuries . In The Essential Calvin and Hobbes , which includes cartoons from the collections Calvin and Hobbes and Something Under the Bed Is Drooling , the back cover features a scene of a giant Calvin rampaging through a town . The scene is based on Watterson 's home town of Chagrin Falls , Ohio , and Calvin is holding the Chagrin Falls Popcorn Shop , an iconic candy and ice cream shop overlooking the town 's namesake falls . Several of the treasuries incorporate additional poetry ; The Indispensable Calvin and Hobbes book features a set of poems , ranging from just a few lines to an entire page , that cover topics such as Calvin 's mother 's " hindsight " and exploring the woods . In The Essential Calvin and Hobbes , Watterson presents a long poem explaining a night 's battle against a monster from Calvin 's

perspective .

A complete collection of Calvin and Hobbes strips , in three hardcover volumes totaling 1440 pages , was released on October 4 , 2005 , by Andrews McMeel Publishing . It includes color prints of the art used on paperback covers , the treasuries ' extra illustrated stories and poems , and a new introduction by Bill Watterson in which he talks about his inspirations and his story leading up to the publication of the strip . The alternate 1985 strip is still omitted , and two other strips ( January 7 , 1987 , and November 25 , 1988 ) have altered dialogue . A four @-@ volume paperback version was released November 13 , 2012 .

To celebrate the release ( which coincided with the strip 's 20th anniversary and the tenth anniversary of its absence from newspapers ) , Bill Watterson answered 15 questions submitted by readers .

Early books were printed in smaller format in black and white . These were later reproduced in twos in color in the " Treasuries " ( Essential , Authoritative , and Indispensable ) , except for the contents of Attack of the Deranged Mutant Killer Monster Snow Goons . Those Sunday strips were not reprinted in color until the Complete collection was finally published in 2005 .

Watterson claims he named the books the " Essential , Authoritative , and Indispensable " because , as he says in The Calvin and Hobbes Tenth Anniversary Book , the books are " obviously none of these things . "

= = = Teaching with Calvin and Hobbes = = =

An officially licensed children 's textbook entitled Teaching with Calvin and Hobbes was published in a single print run in Fargo , North Dakota , in 1993 . The book , which has been " highly recommend [ ed ] " as a teaching resource , includes five complete Calvin and Hobbes multi @-@ strip story arcs together with lessons and questions to follow , such as :

What do you think the principal meant when he said they had " quite a file " on Calvin ?

The book is rare , sought by collectors , and highly valued . Only eight libraries in the world hold a copy of the book .

= = Academic response = =

In 1993 , paleontologist and paleoartist Gregory S. Paul praised Bill Watterson for the scientific accuracy of the dinosaurs appearing in Calvin and Hobbes .

In her 1994 book When Toys Come Alive , Lois Rostow Kuznets says that Hobbes serves both as a figure of Calvin 's childish fantasy life and as an outlet for the expression of libidinous desires more associated with adults . Kuznets also looks at Calvin 's other fantasies , suggesting that they are a second tier of fantasies utilized in places like school where transitional objects such as Hobbes would not be socially acceptable .

Political scientist James Q. Wilson , in a paean to Calvin and Hobbes upon Watterson 's decision to end the strip in 1995 , characterized it as " our only popular explication of the moral philosophy of Aristotle . "

Alisa White Coleman analyzed the strip 's underlying messages concerning ethics and values in " ' Calvin and Hobbes ' : A Critique of Society 's Values , " published in the Journal of Mass Media Ethics in 2000 .

A collection of original Sunday strips was exhibited at Ohio State University 's Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum in 2001 . Watterson himself selected the strips and provided his own commentary for the exhibition catalog , which was later published by Andrews McMeel as Calvin and Hobbes : Sunday Pages 1985 ? 1995 .

Since the discontinuation of Calvin and Hobbes , individual strips have been licensed for reprint in schoolbooks , including the Christian homeschooling book The Fallacy Detective in 2002 , and the university @-@ level philosophy reader Open Questions : Readings for Critical Thinking and Writing in 2005 ; in the latter , the ethical views of Watterson and his characters Calvin and Hobbes are discussed in relation to the views of professional philosophers . Since 2009 , Twitter users have

indicated that Calvin and Hobbes strips have appeared in textbooks for subjects in the sciences , social sciences , mathematics , philosophy , and foreign language .

In a 2009 evaluation of the entire body of Calvin and Hobbes strips using grounded theory methodology , Christijan D. Draper found that : " Overall , Calvin and Hobbes suggests that meaningful time use is a key attribute of a life well lived , " and that " the strip suggests one way to assess the meaning associated with time use is through preemptive retrospection by which a person looks at current experiences through the lens of an anticipated future ... "

Jamey Heit 's Imagination and Meaning in Calvin and Hobbes , a critical , academic analysis of the strip , was published in 2012 .

Calvin and Hobbes strips were again exhibited at the Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum at Ohio State University in 2014 , in an exhibition entitled Exploring Calvin and Hobbes . An exhibition catalog by the same title , which also contained an interview with Watterson conducted by Jenny Robb , the curator of the museum , was published by Andrews McMeel in 2015 .

= = Legacy = =

" Since its concluding panel in 1995 , Calvin and Hobbes has remained one of the most influential and well @-@ loved comic strips of our time . "

? The Atlantic , " How Calvin and Hobbes Inspired a Generation , " October 25 , 2013

Years after its original newspaper run , Calvin and Hobbes has continued to exert influence in entertainment , art , and fandom .

In television , Calvin and Hobbes are depicted in stop motion animation in the 2006 Robot Chicken episode " Lust for Puppets , " and in traditional animation in the 2009 Family Guy episode " Not All Dogs Go to Heaven . " In the 2013 Community episode " Paranormal Parentage , " the characters Abed Nadir ( Danny Pudi ) and Troy Barnes ( Donald Glover ) dress as Calvin and Hobbes , respectively , for Halloween .

British artists , merchandisers , booksellers , and philosophers were interviewed for a 2009 BBC Radio 4 half @-@ hour programme about the abiding popularity of the comic strip , narrated by Phill Jupitus .

The first book @-@ length study of the strip , Looking for Calvin and Hobbes : The Unconventional Story of Bill Watterson and His Revolutionary Comic Strip by Nevin Martell , was first published in 2009 ; an expanded edition was published in 2010 . The book chronicles Martell 's quest to tell the story of Calvin and Hobbes and Watterson through research and interviews with people connected to the cartoonist and his work . The director of the later documentary Dear Mr. Watterson referenced Looking for Calvin and Hobbes in discussing the production of the movie , and Martell appears in the film .

The American documentary film Dear Mr. Watterson , released in 2013 , explores the impact and legacy of Calvin and Hobbes through interviews with authors , curators , historians , and numerous professional cartoonists .

The enduring significance of Calvin and Hobbes to international cartooning was recognized by the jury of the Angoulême International Comics Festival in 2014 by the awarding of its Grand Prix to Watterson , only the fourth American to ever receive the honor ( after Will Eisner , Robert Crumb , and Art Spiegelman ) .

= = = Grown @-@ up Calvin = = =

A number of artists and cartoonists have created works portraying Calvin as a teenager or an adult ; the concept has also inspired writers .

In 2011 , a comic strip appeared by cartoonists Dan and Tom Heyerman called Hobbes and Bacon . The strip depicts Calvin as an adult , married to Susie Derkins , with a young daughter named after philosopher Francis Bacon , to whom Calvin gives Hobbes . Though consisting of only four strips originally , Hobbes and Bacon received considerable attention when it appeared and was continued by other cartoonists and artists .

A novel entitled Calvin by CLA Young Adult Book Award @-@ winning author Martine Leavitt was published in 2015 . The story tells of seventeen @-@ year @-@ old Calvin ? who was born on the day that Calvin and Hobbes ended , and who has now been diagnosed with schizophrenia ? and his hallucination of Hobbes , his childhood stuffed tiger . With his friend Susie , who might also be an hallucination , Calvin sets off to find Bill Watterson , in the hope that the cartoonist can provide aid for Calvin 's condition .