

Robin Williams

The Biography



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Introduction

I want to thank you and congratulate you for downloading the book, “*Robin Williams: The Biography*”

This book contains proven steps and strategies on how to focus in your life regardless of the challenges that may appear between you and your intended goals.

This particular book involves a detailed biography about a gifted comedian who is born from a middle class family, grows in a lonely world and later discovers that there is a lot more in him than just education.

Robin McLaurin Williams was a famous and gifted actor who has greatly influenced many young actors struggling to find their way in the comedy acting platform. He has also influenced dozens of professional viewers living in the United States and across the world at large who acknowledged his great performance on the stage. This was characterised by his ability to perform as a completely new character with ultimate professionalism and amazing skills.

The veteran creative genius was also able to use his career to engage in charitable activities which further earned him fame all around the world which enabled him to be voted as one of America’s famous idols.

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Chapter 1 Early Life

Robin McLaurin Williams was born on July 21, 1951 in Chicago Illinois. He was the son of Robert Fitzgerald Williams and Laurie McLaurin. He was a half brother to Todd Williams and Smith Williams. Robin was considered to be of mixed ancestry since he had English, German, French, Welsh, Irish and Scottish links.

Williams' father was a vice-president and a regional manager of the Ford Motor company in Indiana. He was born on September 10 1906 in Vanderburgh County in the United States. He was the husband of Laura Williams and an ex-husband to Susan NN. Williams' father later died in Belvedere Tiburon, California in the United States on October 18 1987.

Williams' mother Laura also known as Laurie was born in 1922. She was the daughter of Robert Forest Smith and Laura McLaurin Berry. She was a former model in Mississippi and practiced Christian Science. This kind of religious belief was practiced by scientists and believers of the first church of Christ. It (Christian Science) affirmed that humans and the universe collectively were spiritual and all positive deeds were real whereas all negative and evil practices were ideal and unreal. They also believed that this fact was clearly demonstrated through prayers and proper understanding of God.

Due to the profound Christian background, Williams grew up as an Episcopalian which later led him to author the comedic list "Top Ten Reasons to be an Episcopalian." In a TV interview in 2001, Williams gave thanks in recognition to his mother for her outstanding assistance in his developing a sense of humor noting that he often tried to make his mother laugh so as to gain her attention.

Young Williams started his school life in Gorton Elementary School and proceeded to Deer Path Junior School. Both schools were located in Illinois where he and his family resided. During this early period in school, Williams described himself as being a shy and quiet kid who found it almost impossible to overcome his bashful nature until he got to high school where

he became a member of the drama department.

In late 1963 when young Robin was 12, his family relocated to a 40 room house which lay in a 20 acre piece of land in the suburbs of Bloomfield Hills in Michigan.

He joined a County Day School named Detroit which was a private and secular school located in Oakland County, North of Detroit. The school was founded in 1914 and was instigated by a progressive educational movement known as the Country Day School Movement whose motive was to ensure that schools were located away from the polluted and crime filled cities. Williams' performance in the Detroit school was impressive.

He excelled in academics and took part in extracurricular activities which included being part of the school soccer team as well as wrestling. He also became a class president which clearly portrays his social excellence. Though a victim of consistent bullying, young Robin was able to fight the attitude of inferiority complex by recording outstanding academic achievements and learning the art of self dependence.

At his young age, Robin's main companion was their family maid since his parents spent most of their time away from home. When the maid was away, Robin would spend his time playing with his toys and even entertaining himself with funny imaginations. He was indeed a quiet child and in a TV interview in New York, he described himself as a quiet child whose characteristics were similar to those of his grandmother.

When he was 16, his father decided to take an early retirement which forced the family to move to Tiburon, California. As a result of the relocation, Robin was forced to transfer from Detroit to join Redwood High School. The school was located in Larkspur California and was about 11 miles north of San Francisco. Williams' performance at Redwood school was marked as impressive.

His acting talent was evident since he often entertained other students by narrating humorous stories. This led to his popularity in school and was voted the "Most Likely Not to Succeed and Funniest" character by his fellow students.

After high school graduation in 1969, Williams attended Claremont

McKenna College currently known as Claremont Men's College for a four year study in political science. He later dropped out of college to pursue acting where he joined the college of Marin to study theatre. Williams made an impressive performance in acting.

His acting talent was first evident when he was featured in the musical drama Oliver where he played as Fagin. According to Professor James Dunn, Williams was rapidly learning and understanding how to use different communication skills in acting and had ultimate creativity. At the time professor Dunn called his wife during a rehearsal at the theatre and told her that Williams was greatly gifted in acting and had a career in it.

In 1973, due to his inflated desire for acting, Williams won a full scholarship and was among the 20 students who attended the esteemed Juilliard School to study theatre. His impressive performance later granted him the opportunity to be among the two best students accepted by John Houseman into the advanced programme that year; the other student was Christopher Reeve. Mandy Patinkin and William Hurt were also his classmates. Reeve remembers Williams' first impressions in Juilliard and states that he was fond of wearing tie-dyed shirts and talked too much.

Williams and Reeve became close friends and were taught by Edith Skinner who was a proficient and experienced voice and speech teacher. Skinner would sometimes wonder where to place Williams in many of the scripts since he performed in nearly all the languages.

Michael Khan who was their primary acting tutor was also equally amazed by the outstanding creativity and proficiency of Williams' performance. Williams' teachers mostly thought that he was only perfect in performing stand-up comedy but Williams silenced these critics when he played the role of an old man in *The Night of the Iguana*. His perfect disguise as an old man was clear evidence that Williams was surely a creative genius. Williams and Reeve remained as close associates all through their acting career until Reeve's death in 2004 when he succumbed to paralysis. As a close friend, Williams paid most of Reeve's medical bills and offered financial support to Reeve's family.

Williams finally left Juilliard in 1976 while still a junior. This was after Houseman's suggestion that there was nothing more to learn in Juilliard. He

referred to Williams as a genius and was only wasting his time in Juilliard. Williams moved to perform in night clubs where he discovered there was more for him in the acting industry.

Chapter 2 Stand Up Experience

Williams' family later moved to Marin County where Williams started performing stand-up shows in San Francisco. This marked the beginning of Williams' acting career. In 1970, Williams first performance took place in Holy City Zoo where he started as a bar attendant and later moved onto the stage.

The Holy City Zoo was a tiny bar that could only accommodate a maximum of 78 people. It was located in Clement Street between 5th and 6th Avenue in San Francisco. The bar mostly sold beer and wine and had an option of soft drinks for those who didn't take beer. It also had a stairway that led to a balcony which made it an ideal destination for business people as well as music lovers.

The tiny club started as a Folk Music club before Jim Giovanni who was a comedian performed the first comedy on *Open Mike Night* in 1971. Since comedy was not popular at that time, Giovanni was successful and was able to perform comedy nights for a further 3 years. Later in those years, there was the emergence of young comedians who wished to build their career and have a strong base in the stand-up comedy arena. Most of them found the Holy City Zoo an ideal place to build their career which led to the replacement of Folk Music with fine comedy in the club.

Jose Simons who was a comedian and a musician approached Peter Reines who was the club's owner and suggested that the club should hold stand-up comedy instead of relying on music alone as a form of entertainment. This led to the rise of Open Mike Nights; a popular event that engaged a number of comedians which impacted the growth of comedy.

The club gained National and International recognition and was the centre for many comedians who later became stars. Robin Williams took advantage of the club and used it as his neighbourhood rehearsal place which further enabled him to perfect his acting career.

Robin Williams moved to Los Angeles and furthered his stand-up career in different clubs which paved the way for his move to the Comedy Club in

1977. While performing at the Comedy Club, Williams was spotted by George Schlatter, a TV producer who saw Williams' acting talent and realised he could use him in his television shows business. George approached the then unknown Williams and invited him on a revival of his Laugh-In TV show.

The show was aired in 1977 and became Williams' first ever TV show appearance. Though the Laugh-In show was not a success for Williams, he definitely got famous and his acting talent was exposed which led to a career in television.

After appearing in the Laugh-In show and being cast in the Richard Pryor show, Williams became popular and was discovered by Garry Marshall for the role of Mork in *Happy Days*; a 1978 high rated TV series. During an audition, Williams really impressed the producer Garry Marshall when he sat on his head when asked to take a seat. Garry was so impressed and said that Williams was the only person who auditioned for the role. This led to him being hired.

Happy Days was an American TV sitcom created by Garry Marshall. The series sitcom was set to reveal the kind of life which existed in the mid 1950s to 1960s in the United States. In the series we experience the appearance of Williams, who played the role of Mork from Ork.

Mork first appeared in the season 5 episode '*My Favorite Orkan*' which aired in 1978. In the series plot, we experience Mork the alien who wanted to take Richie back to Ork as a specimen but his plan is ruined by Fonzie. The amazing epic finally ended with Richie realising that the whole action was just a dream. It was later re-edited to show Mork erasing everyone's memory implying that the whole adventure was real and wasn't just a dream.

From the spin-off of *Happy Days*, a high rated TV series *Mork and Mindy* was produced. The reason for the spin-off was because of Mork's popular appearance which had a positive feedback from most viewers. This enabled the series to gain a high rating and was ranked top best TV series in the 1980s.

The series was set in Colorado as opposed to *Happy Days* which was set in the late 1950s in Milwaukee. With his quirky sense of humour, Williams was able to improvise most of his dialogue, physical appearance and spoke with a

high nasal voice which enabled him to entertain and captivate most of the viewers. *Mork and Mindy* stars Williams who played as Mork the alien who comes to earth from planet Ork in a large egg shaped spaceship. His mission as assigned by Orson is to observe human behaviour on earth. Orson (voiced by Ralph James) is Mork's mostly unseen superior whose intention is to come off Ork where he was suffering and lived a life of misery. During Williams' journey to earth, we experience his sense of humour when he wears the space suit backwards.

On his arrival to earth, he meets young Mindy a 21 year old girl who had engaged in a quarrel with her boyfriend. At first Mindy mistakes Mork for a priest due to his odd garb and is enticed with Mork's assistance and willingness to listen. They head to Mindy's apartment and all this time, Mork was closely observing Mindy's behaviour since that was his apparent mission. Afterwards, little Mindy discovers that Mork is not a priest and asks him to reveal his identity. Again we encounter Mork's sense of humour since he is unable to lie and reveals his true identity to Mindy who agrees to keep it a secret. It all ends with Mork and Mindy getting married and one of Williams' idols Jonathan Winters being brought in as their child. *Mork and Mindy* is actually a comedy series set to showcase and explain the concept of love and friendship. This is evident in some occasions when Richie and Fonzie both express their concern for Mork.

In the series, Williams' main idea was to try and explain the American culture as well as peoples' behaviours and lifestyle in the 1970s. This is explained by Mork's frequent returns to Orson at the end of every episode where he would give an outlined and detailed report about the observations he made concerning humans back on earth. -Mork's greeting was "Na-Nu Na-Nu" which was accompanied by a salute and a handshake.

The greeting became so popular in the 1970s hence contributing more to Williams' career and popularity. Unlike in *Happy Days* where Williams only featured in the 5th episode, he was the main protagonist in *Mork and Mindy*. The drastic success in the series marked the beginning of Williams' successful career in acting and he became famous for the use of his comic improvisational skills. During production, he would come up with humorous jokes leading to some scripts being intentionally skipped for him to perform freely. In some instances, Pam Dawber, who played Mindy would burst out

laughing and was forced to bite her lips to avoid compromising the take. *Mork and Mindy* was so popular during its first season, it was ranked 3rd by the Nielsen ratings behind *Laverne and Shirley* which was first and *Three's Company* which was second.

The series appeared on ABC which was the leading television network in the United States in 1978. The amazing fact was that *Mork and Mindy* received a higher rating as compared to its sequel series *Happy Days* which was voted fourth. The character Mork became so popular among different classes of people mainly children and was featured in different merchandise which included lunchboxes, t-shirts, colouring books, posters, among many more.

In March 12 1979, Williams was featured on the cover of Time Magazine which was the leading magazine in the United States for the drastic success of *Mork and Mindy*. The photo which was taken by Michael Dressler in 1979 was said to have captured Williams on both sides; the quirky comedic funnyman and a more serious and thoughtful image which appeared on a TV held in his hands.

The same photo was laid in the National Portrait Gallery shortly after his death to commemorate a heroic life well lived and to pay him his last special respects. Williams also appeared on the cover of the Rolling Stone Magazine in 1979, his photo was taken by a famous photographer named Richard Avedon.

From the late 1970s throughout the 1980s, Williams became more exposed in the stand-up comedy arena and was able to reach a wider audience including three successful Home Box Office comedies: *Off the Wall* (1978), *An Evening with Robin Williams* (1982) and *Robin Williams: Live at the Met* (1986). This same year (1986) Robin Williams together with Alan Alda and Jane Fonda co-hosted the 58th Academy Awards at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion in Los Angeles honouring the best actors, actresses, producers amongst other best in film categories for 1985.

The ceremony consisted of 38.93 million viewers. During the ceremony, Williams commented that the Hollywood writer was the only person who could blow smoke up his own ass. As a result Williams never hosted an Academy Award ceremony again.

Robin Williams' success and impressive positive feedback from his viewers

made him a regular guest in various television shows and talks amongst them being *The Tonight Show* hosted by Johnny Carson and *Late Night* hosted by David Letterman. Letterman who had known Williams for a period of 40 years admitted that Williams had a great talent in acting.

He further reveals that when Williams was a young and uprising actor in the comedy platform in Hollywood, he would bring the best of acting out of him. He had a firing passion in acting and his commitment really tempted Letterman who suggested him as a proper fit for show business. He quoted that Williams came in as a hurricane during his arrival in Hollywood's Comedy Store.

Williams' success in stand-up comedy rose tremendously and he became a star filled with stupendous brilliance in the entire Comedy Store. He performed his first one man show *Robin Williams: Live on Broadway* in 2002 together with a subsequent DVD. The show became so popular that tickets would be sold out within 30 minutes after going on sale.

In 2004, Williams was voted 13th on the Comedy Central's list of "100 Greatest Stand-ups of All Times." Williams together with other comedy actors appeared as guest stars in the 3rd season of *Friends*. He appeared in an episode of the series *Whose Line is it Anyway?* and also starred in an episode of *Law and Order: SVU*. In 2010, Williams appeared in a sketch with Robert De Niro on the Saturday Night Live Show. The show was an American night television sketch comedy. It was created and developed by Lorne Michaels and Dick Ebersol. The show's plot revolved around United States culture and politics and was performed by a larger cast. Each episode in the show involved a celebrity guest and a musical guest who delivered an opening monologue and performed sketches together with the cast. This kind of literary art was performed in theatres during plays and poems.

In 2012, Williams featured as a guest starring in two FX series *Louie* and *Wilfred*. CBS Broadcasting later aired a new series *The Crazy Ones* which starred Williams and Sarah Michelle as the main cast. In the series, Williams played the role of Simon Robert who was a prolific advertising executive in Chicago.

He was an expert in sales and marketing and his enticing tone in business made him "a guy who could sell anything." Despite his success in business,

Robert's marriage life was characterised with consistent breakups and divorces. He however had a daughter named Sydney whose mother had earlier divorced him. Sydney's improvements in her father's business enabled her to be appointed as the executive. *The Crazy Ones* consisted of 22 episodes. The series aired from September 26, 2013 to April 17, 2014 marking it as part of the 2013-2014 American television seasons. In October 18 2013, *The Crazy Ones* was given a full season order before its cancellation in May 10 2014. The series marked Williams' last piece of television work.

Earlier on, we read about Williams' success in performing stand-ups. When he played the role of Mork from Ork, he would improvise most of the dialogue and came up with rib cracking jokes which led to the character Mork's popularity. As a result, most of the shows which aired during this successful period featured Mork as a guest cast in some episodes. In others, we experience spin-offs in which Mork would exist as a fantasy in peoples' minds. Such experiences were seen in shows such as *The Dick Van Dyke* show where Van Dyke dreamt that aliens had come to earth to steal human thumbs and imaginations.

In *Happy Days* season five titled *My Favorite Orkan*, Richie informs everyone about his experience where he had seen a flying saucer. No one believes him and he is calmed by Fonzie who tells him that he was just imagining things. Later on the episode, Richie is visited by Mork who freezes everyone except him with intentions of taking him to Ork as a human specimen. *Laverne and Shirley* is another show which had connections with *Mork and Mindy*. The show which was also a spin-off from *Happy Days* casts Cindy Williams and Penny Marshall as Laverne and Shirley. Characters from both shows would make guest appearances from one show to the other. In a particular segment in *Mork and Mindy*, Mork informs Mindy about his trip to the 1950s in Milwaukee where Fonzie connects Mork with Laverne. Again in *Happy Days*, Mork returns in the episode '*Mork Returns*' where he informs Richie about the hardships that existed in the future and the advanced lifestyle which consisted of cars and girls which he further described as "both are faster."

In all the shows, Williams is credited with his immense contribution as a stand-up comedy expert for most of the attention revolved around his humorous creativity. Robin Williams was indeed a creative genius in the comedy platform. From 1982, the famous *Mork and Mindy* was involved in

subsequent spin-offs and adaptations which involved cartoons and airing of its different versions by other rising actors. In a TV show, Williams quoted and said that “stand-up is the only place where you can do things that you could never do in public. Once you step on stage you’re licensed to do that since it’s an understood relationship. You walk on stage, it’s your job.”

Williams’ successful performance in the stand-ups was not all straight. It was characterised with hardships and challenges which revolved from his personal life to his life on the stage. He stated that the stresses he had while doing stand-ups were the key factors that led to his early abuse of alcohol and drugs in his career. Though he never drank nor used drugs while on the stage, he occasionally performed while under a severe hangover from the previous night.

The competitive comedy arena however had its own dark side. Some comedians falsely accused Williams of copying their jokes. Some comedians even threatened him. Such threats forced Williams to avoid going to some comedy events and performances to avoid such accusations. Robin Williams was among the cast filming Star Trek and was set to appear as a time traveller Professor Barlinghoff Rasmussen in the Star Trek trilogy. He was however involved in a schedule conflict that made him drop the role which was later given to Matt Frewer.

His long time friend Whoopi Goldberg however tried to convince Williams to seek a role in the movie. She was among the cast and played the role of bartender Guinan. Even after Williams passed through challenging moments, he still believed that he was strong enough to overcome those risks and challenges. He credited his father whom he said gave him self confidence telling him to never be afraid of facing and tackling those subjects which seemed to be too heavy to bear.

Chapter 3 Influence from Great Minds

Robin Williams has however credited other actors in the stand-up comedy platform for inspiring, influencing and being part of his success in his entire comedy career. Comedians such as Jonathan Winters, Peter Sellers, Nichols and May and Lenny Bruce became Williams' idols since they could attract and entertain a more intellectual audience with their high level of creativity.

Jonathan Winters who was an actor, comedian, author and artist was famous in the entire American television networks for his high level wit in the comedy arena. He has recorded hundreds of enticing comedy albums for over fifty years receiving eleven nominations in the Grammy Awards for best comedy album. In 1975, he was awarded Grammy Awards for best album for children when he contributed in the production of *The Little Prince*. In 1996 he won a Grammy Award for best spoken comedy album *Cranky Calls*.

With a career in acting for spanning over six decades, Winters appeared in many television shows, series and episodes which made him one of the greatest American idols. During this time, Williams' career in performing stand-ups was fast rising and with such famous figures lying on his path, he would bring out his best to be part of the next generation of famous comedians. Winters influence on Williams begun when Williams was a young child.

He would see his father Robert burst out laughing during the Winters' show on the TV. He developed partial interest and later became a fan of the show and started imitating Winters' dialogue to entertain his parents. Williams became a regular viewer of the *Jack Paar* which appeared on 'The Tonight Show' starring Winters. Young Williams recalled every word in the comic tale which marked his first steps in the long journey of performing stand-ups and later becoming one of America's funniest comedians.

With Winters' influence, Williams became unstoppable while performing and would deliver joke after joke with ultimate originality and freshness which left the audience shocked wondering how he did it. In 2008, Williams recognized Winters as his idol where he presented him with a Pioneer TV Land Award. He announced to the audience with a rare tone of seriousness

that “Jonathan Winters is my idol and he is a true pioneer.”

When Williams became famous in show business, he invited Winters to join him in the comedy sitcom *Mork and Mindy*. In the series, Winters emerged from an egg laid by Mork and was a son to Mork and Mindy. This art of role reversal shows a clever move and imaginative brilliance employed by two creative geniuses. Williams often paid homage interviews to Winters throughout his acting career and was greatly inspired by Winters ingenuity. Williams was also inspired by Jay Leno and Sid Caesar’s creativity in performing stand-ups.

In 2002, he told Sir Michael Parkinson who had hosted him in an interview that actor Peter Sellers really inspired him. His idea of playing as a multi character as seen in *Dr Strangelove* was an impressive art invented by a creative mind. Other British comedians who inspired Williams include Dudley Moore and Peter Cook.

Another comedian who influenced Williams was Richard Pryor. Pryor was known for his attempt to fight racism and discrimination against the black people in the United States. He was able to reach out a larger audience through his employment of creative storytelling art. He was widely regarded as an influential and mostly adored stand-up comedian of all times.

Pryor’s unique style of acting made him one of the best comedians in the 1950s. He won an Emmy Award in 1973 and further pocketed five Grammy Awards in 1974, 1975, 1976, 1981 and in 1982. In 1974, he was awarded two American Academy Humor awards and a writer’s Guild of America Award. In 1998, Pryor was further awarded with a Kennedy Center Mark award which was the first ever award to be given to a comedian. This enabled the exclusive comedian to be ranked first in the Comedy Central’s list of America’s greatest stand-up comedians.

Pryor’s ability to speak about his private life while performing and pointing out his personal challenges which included his addiction to alcohol and drugs influenced Williams and he too introduced the same ideas during his performance. Through speaking out his life in the stage, Williams admitted that it was one important way of relieving personal pressure and emotions.

Other actors who motivated Williams and whom he learnt a lot in the acting arena include Robert De Niro whom he appeared with in a sketch in 2010 on

Saturday Night Live. Robert De Niro and Robin Williams also featured in the movie *Awakenings* which was a big success and was among the best movies which advanced Williams career in acting.

Dustin Hoffman is another character who contributed a lot to Williams' success in his acting career. Hoffman co-starred with Williams in *Hook* where he played as Captain Hook while Williams played as Peter Pan. From Hoffman Williams learnt the skill of changing roles in a movie and playing as a completely different character. During Williams next generation of movies, he was able to play as a completely new character in every role he handled. Hook's producer Mike Medavoy told the movie's director (Steven Spielberg) that he intentionally teamed Hoffman with Williams because the pair always wished to work together.

Robin Williams highly benefitted from director Woody Allen who directed the movie *Deconstructing Harry* (1997) which featured Williams and Billy Crystal. Allen's Idea of merging the two together was because he knew Williams and Billy had worked together earlier and the two were able to produce a movie that would hit and add more positive remarks on their acting career profiles.

Chapter 4 A Real Creative Genius

Robin Williams' first movie was *Can I Do it Till I Need Glasses?* The movie was however classified as a low budget comedy. Williams' first acting performance was seen in the 1980 American musical comedy *Popeye*. The movie was able to showcase Williams' creativity as was experienced earlier in his television work.

Williams played the role of Popeye, a sailor who had been sailing with a mission to find his long lost father. He arrives in a small town along the coast named Sweethaven. He is feared by everyone and goes along to rent a small room in the Oyl's family boarding house. The Oyl's daughter is preparing for her engagement party since she would soon be married to Captain Bluto who is the town's governor and runs the town's activities in the name of the mysterious Commodore. On seeing Popeye, Olive calls off her engagement with Bluto and ends up eloping on the night of the event. She coincidentally meets with Popeye and together they come across an abandoned child. Popeye adopts the child and names him Swee'Pea. Bluto is filled with rage when he sees Popeye and Olive together. He brutally beats Popeye and destroys the Oyl's house subjecting them to pay high taxes.

After Wimpy overhears about Swee'Pea's gift of foretelling the future, he kidnaps the child and takes him to Bluto as a way of expressing his loyalty. Bluto's plan is to present the genius boy to the Commodore to impress him but the Commodore declines the offer saying all he wants is his lost treasure. When Popeye is informed about the child's whereabouts, he storms the ship where he meets the Commodore. To his amusement, he realises that the Commodore is his long lost father. The Commodore denies the remark and to prove it, he decides to feed Popeye with spinach which was the family's source of strength. However, Popeye rejects eating the raw spinach claiming that he hates it.

In the process, Bluto kidnaps Olive and sails to find the lost treasure in the Scrab Island which is a desolated and isolated island. Without wasting time, the Commodore, Popeye and the Oyl family follow in pursuit. When they catch up, Bluto and Popeye are engaged in a fight where Popeye is

overwhelmed by Bluto's strength. Swee'Pea and Olive are attacked by a giant octopus while the Commodore successfully recovers his treasures. When he opens the chest, he finds a collection of personal sentimental items together with Popeye's toys including some cans of spinach. The Commodore throws a can of spinach to the already overwhelmed Popeye who is forcefully fed with the spinach by Bluto and later thrown into the ocean. The spinach reaction revitalises Popeye and boosts his strength, enabling him to knock out Bluto with just a punch and swiftly dealing with the giant creature to save Olive and Swee'Pea.

In *Popeye*, we further experience the art of creativity being portrayed by Williams. The movie appeared as one of the best in the box office. It grossed 6 million dollars when it first aired and was able to gross 32 million dollars by the end of its first month. The movie earned a total of 60million dollars across the globe. The movie's gross was remarkable since it was double the firm's budget. Williams' outstanding creativity was experienced and he further boosted his acting career. The only problem with this film was that it didn't make it the hit that was expected by Paramount and Disney. This led to the movie being written off.

Williams was also featured as the main protagonist in *The World According to Garp* in the 1982 American comedy drama. The movie was based on John Irving's novel. It was mostly filmed in New York in Leewood Estate during the spring and summer of 1981. Most of the scenes in the movie were filmed at Rutgers University as well as the town's high school.

The movie was well rated according to Rotten Tomatoes which is a review website. It was however given a 78% score based on reviews from 14 critics. Critic Janet Muslin of the New York Times remarked that the movie's storyline was exactly similar to Mr. Irving's novel. It had appeared so enticing just like the novel and had gained a much higher score since Williams had further improvised it adding humour thus giving it a personalised taste. The movie was a great success for Williams and it further gained him fame and propelled him in his acting career.

Williams continued to be featured in smaller roles in different movies such as *The Survivors* in 1983 and *Club Paradise* in 1986 though he criticised the films saying that they were less successful and didn't help in advancing his acting career.

Williams' involvement as the main character starring in *Good Morning, Vietnam* which was directed by Barry Levinson, was his first major breakthrough in his acting career. The movie was set in Saigon in 1965 at a time when United States was involved in the Vietnam War. It stars Robin Williams who plays the role of Adrian Cronauer, a DJ in the Armed Forces Radio Services who was set to entertain the troops with comedy. The movie was partly based on the experiences of the radio DJ Adrian Cronauer.

Williams was once again allowed to perform his role without a script which enabled him to improvise most of the dialogue like he had always done. He would speak with different voices over the microphone. This high rated creativity possessed by Williams enabled the film to attain a critical and a commercial success. The producers like Mark Johnson and Williams remarked that they only left the cameras rolling and Williams would do the rest, filling it with humour and endless jokes. Williams' humorous communication skills in this war comedy takes us back to his childhood life when he was alone in the house and entertained himself by speaking with different voices.

His improvising skills as earlier seen in *Mork and Mindy* were further employed in this comic film making Williams a genius in the acting platform. Williams was nominated in the Academy awards as the best actor. The movie appeared at number 100 on the list of 100 funniest American films. It was also named by AMC as one of the 20 greatest war movies of all times. This further gave Williams the honour to be awarded the Golden Globe Award for the best protagonist in a motion picture. The movie was one of the most successful movies in 1987 and was among the four highest grossing movies of the year. *Good Morning, Vietnam* was welcomed with credible reviews from different critics. Review website Rotten Tomatoes awarded the movie an 89% score based on the positive remarks they had compiled from different movie reviews.

The movie's plot was a clear reflection of Williams' creative mind, his ability to entertain a larger audience and his great cinematic gifts. Rodger Ebert of the Review Show awarded the movie a four out four star feedback in the Chicago Sun-Times newspaper. Richard Corliss also honoured the movie and named it one of the best films of the year. Vincent Canby of the New York Times honoured Williams' creativity saying that "Williams' work was that of an accomplished actor." Most of the reviews and critics in the movie *Good*

Morning, Vietnam went to Robin Williams' exclusive performance which earned him fame, awards as well as growth in his acting career.

Later on in his acting career, Robin Williams was mostly featured in the comedy genre. He was recognised as one of the best supporting actors in *Good Will Hunting* where he played a therapist. The movie involved a 20 year old Will Hunting who was a South Boston labourer.

The young genius had been involved in a conflict with his friend and even assaulted a sheriff who had come to control the situation. Will becomes a patient to Williams who plays the role of Dr. Sean Maguire as a therapist. He also attends Skarsgard's class who is a renowned professor who discovers Will's intelligence and ability to factorise complex equations. Skarsgard is the same person who saves Will from the authorities during his encounter with the sheriff and he is set free under a prosecution agreement. Dr Sean later succeeds in his therapy since Will is able to re-evaluate his relationship with his best friend as well as his girlfriend.

The movie's storyline was well outlined and was able to receive positive critical acclaim and recorded a high financial success. It grossed a total 225 million dollars when it was aired fetching more than a hundred times its initial budget. *Good Will Hunting* was nominated for nine Academy Awards including two awards for best pictures, best supporting actor and best original screenplay.

Good Will Hunting had initially been written as a thriller by its initial writers. (Ben Affleck and Matt Damon) It was based on a young genius with superior intelligence living in the rough streets of South Boston who is targeted by the Federal Agency to be used as a Special Agent by the United States Government. Rob Reiner, a Castle Entertainment Chief Executive asked them to rewrite the script and drop the thriller aspect to focus on the theme of the relationship between Will Hunting and the therapist.

The movie however passed through a couple of challenges before it was produced. Castle Rock production aimed at buying the scripts from its original writers but Affleck and Damon's idea was to sell the script but retain the movie's sole writing credit. Castle Rock was not comfortable with the terms and this led to a conflict.

Kevin Smith, a Miramax producer was at the same time working with

Affleck and Damon in other films such as *Mallrats* and *Chasing Away* and was seeing the troubles that the two were having with Castle Rock. As a result, Smith brought the script to Miramax which was put into turnaround and was bought by Miramax. Affleck and Damon later chose Gun Van Sant as the movie's director after Kevin Smith declined the job.

Again in the movie we learn from Affleck's remark that Williams engaged in considerable improvisations during the script's rehearsal. Some parts in the film like Williams' last line as well as the psychologist's scene both came from his own creativity. The words were not included in the script hence taking everyone by surprise. Damon further added that Williams' humorous jokes while rehearsing the script at the time caused the cameraman to burst out laughing so hard that the camera swung while recording.

Good Will Hunting was highly rated in the movie review websites and received universal remarks globally. The movie received a 97% score based on 69 reviews making it one of the best rated films by the Rotten Tomatoes review website. Most critics commented that the movie was positive and its storyline had a motivational theme. Some said that the movie reflected back on Robin Williams' cinematic panacea. It reveals his great skills of improvising and coming up with his own jokes which flowed out of his own creativity.

Robin Williams was awarded an Academy Award for best supporting actor while Ben Affleck and Matt Damon were both awarded for best writing in an original screenplay. The movie was dedicated to the memory of Allen Ginsberg, a poet, together with William S Burroughs both of whom died in 1997.

Williams starred in different dramatic movies which cemented his acting career and enabled him to be awarded for playing various roles. In 1989, he featured in *Dead Poets Society* where he played the role of a poetry teacher in Walton Academy who greatly inspired and motivated his students through teaching poetry. The movie received different positive remarks from critics and Williams skills and ideas were highly credited. The movie was viewed as a smart entertainment and Williams was greatly praised for his outstanding performance.

In the movie, Williams speaks with different voices when reciting

Shakespeare. This skill grants him more credit and is regarded as a “gifted teacher demonstrating his skills.” The movie pocketed various awards and was listed among the top 100 most inspiring films of all times. Later on a novelist N.H. Kleinbaum wrote a novel based on this inspiring film.

In 1991, Williams starred in the movie *The Fisher King* where he played the role of a homeless man who is on a mission to find the Holy Grail. He comes across Jack Lucas who is a radio shock jock who attempts suicide after making on-air comments that provokes a caller to commit mass murder. He decides to help Parry (Williams) after learning that his wife was among the people killed during the mass murder. After experiencing his wife's death, Parry suffered from mental disorder for a few years. He also suffers from continuous hallucinations and is haunted by a Red Knight.

When he regains consciousness, he becomes the Fisher King, a condition charged by God to guard the Holy Grail. He is however asked by a concerned boy why he is troubled and tells the boy that he is thirsty. The simple minded boy not understanding Parry's words offers to bring him a cup of water. To his amusement, Parry believes that the cup is actually the lost Grail.

Jack offers to help Parry by finding him a lover and sets him up with Lydia; a shy woman who works in a Manhattan Publishing House. Jack and Anne later join them on a dinner date where Parry reveals his love to Lydia but is once again haunted by the Red Knight. As he attempts to free himself from the hallucinatory Red Knight, he is attacked by a gang of thugs and is brutally beaten and becomes mentally ill again. Without wasting time, Jack comes up with an idea where he wears Parry's clothes and rushes to the upper blocks of the castle where he gets a cup which acts as the Grail's replica to fool Parry. On seeing the “Grail”, Parry regains consciousness. He is visited in hospital by Lydia where they embrace lovingly and share a joyful moment.

The movie gained popularity and earned an outstanding success when it was aired. The movie's storyline was based on humour, heartbreak, and a ravishing romance which enticed most of its viewers globally. Robin Williams was nominated for best actor while Mercedes Ruehl won an Academy Award for supporting actress. Other awards include an American Academy Award, Golden Globe Awards and Guldbagge Awards where the movie was nominated for best foreign film. Williams' popularity in acting was highly known globally and he was always successful in every role he

featured either as an actor or a supporting actor. This is clearly seen due to his outstanding creativity which made his acting exclusive and perfect.

During the same year in 1991, Williams played as Peter Pan in the movie *Hook*. The movie acts as a follow up of J.M. Barrie's 1911 novel *Peter and Wendy*. It focuses mostly on Peter Pan who was a fully grown adult with a wife and two children and works as a corporate lawyer. Captain Hook, who is a pirate and a longtime rival to Peter, kidnaps Peter's two children as a form of seeking revenge against Peter. Peter is forced to return to Neverland to reclaim his childhood spirit so that he can face Hook and save his children.

Hook was developed early in the 1980s by Paramount and Walt Disney Productions but was abandoned by Spielberg in 1985. The movie's script was later re-developed by James Hart with director Nick Castle with Triciter Pictures. *Hook's* idea came when Spielberg was a young child. His mother would read him a bedtime story named *Peter and Wendy*.

Spielberg always remembered the story since the adventure was one of the best he had ever read. In 1985, Spielberg rewrote the old adventure of Peter and Wendy to produce *Hook*. The movie received positive feedback from critics and was able to gross a total of 300million dollars across the globe making it the fifth highest grossing pirate movie behind all four *Pirates of the Caribbean*.

In 1995, Williams featured in a fantasy adventure film *Jumanji*. The movie was an adaptation of a children's book written in 1981 with the same name. The film revolves around 12 year old Alan Parrish (Robin Williams) who is accidentally trapped in *Jumanji*. Twenty six years later, he is released from *Jumanji* by two siblings while playing.

What follows is an exclusive adventure where the two siblings are forced to finish the game so as to save the world. *Jumanji's* performance was remarkable and again Williams' great acting career was further defined. The film was able to gross well and received positive remarks from critics.

In 1996, Williams starred in *The Birdcage*, a comedy drama where Williams plays the role of Armand Goldman who owns a famous drag club in Miami Beach. He is involved in a gay marriage with his 'wife' Starina. Their 'son' Val announces to them about his engagement with Barbara Keely who is the daughter of a United States senator. Barbara's family decides to go to Miami

to meet Val's parents. What follows is an exclusive comedy full of hilarious chaos.

In 1993, Williams featured in *Mrs. Doubtfire*, an American comedy film which was based on the novel *Alias Madame Doubtfire*. Williams played the role of Daniel Hillard a gifted voice actor whose wife divorces him after frequent quarrels. Due to Daniel's love for his children, he disguises himself as an English nanny named Mrs. Euphegenia Doubtfire.

After a successful interview where she provides impressive credentials, she is hired by Miranda who in a real sense is his ex-wife. The movie is however characterised by rib cracking action full of comic scenes. *Mrs. Doubtfire* was welcomed with positive remarks and made a total gross of 441 million dollars making it the second highest grossing movie behind *Jurassic Park* in 1993. The movie also gained dozens of awards including an Academy Award for Best Makeup.

Other dramatic films that Williams featured in his career include *Moscow on the Hudson* which is a romantic comedy drama released in April 6 1984. Williams played the role of Russian musician Vladimir Ivanoff who defects after going on a visit to the United States. The movie was successful and was awarded an 89% score by movie website Rotten Tomatoes.

Williams later starred in *Awakenings* in 1990 and *What Dreams May Come* in 1998. *Awakenings* was an American drama which was based on a true story about a British doctor Oliver Sacks who in the movie is fictionalised as Malcom Sayer (Robin Williams).

In 1969, Malcom discovers the positive effects of a drug L. Dopa which he administers to his patients as a preventive drug against a 1917-1928 epidemic of Encephalitis Lethargica. Robert De Niro plays the role of Leonard Lowe who is among the catatonic victims who have to find a way of dealing with their new lives after hopelessly suffering from the deadly disease for decades.

In the American fantasy drama *What Dream May Come*, Williams plays the role of a pediatrician who meets with a woman and they fall in love. They also marry and have two children. Their happy marriage life ends when their children die in a car crash.

The wife suffers a mental disorder which leads to a divorce. After suffering

and living a life of misery, they both end up dead and meet in the afterlife. The two lovers are however given a chance to reunite back on earth where they appear as young children and their love life restarts all over again. The movie was based on a novel that bears the same name written by Richard Matheson. The movie was welcomed with positive reviews and was awarded for best visual effects as well as best art direction.

In 2002 Williams was back in action and this time he plays the role of a killer in *Insomnia*. The killer is always on the run following a killing in Alaska where two Los Angeles Police detectives are sent to assist the local police with investigations. The movie is a remake of a Norwegian film which bears the same name. *Insomnia* featured Robin Williams as Walter Finch, Al Pacino as detective Will Dormer and Martin Donovan as detective Hap Eckhart.

The movie received positive remarks from critics and was marked as one of the best movies performed by Robin Williams and Al Pacino. The movie was well produced and the plot was even much better compared to the original Norwegian version. The producers together with the cast were credited for the movie's success. In May 2002, Alex published Robert Westbrook's novel which was based on the movie's screenplay.

In the same year in 2002, Williams played in *One Hour Photo*. He played the role of a photo technician who lives a lonely life and the only companion he has in life is his job and a hamster caged in his bedroom. He is however obsessed with a family who are his favourite and frequent customers and has developed their photos for a long time.

During the movie's preparation, Williams had to prepare for his role by studying photography where he visited a South California photo development lab for two and a half days. The movie inspired many of its viewers especially the lonely men from the 1970s. The movie received positive feedback from different critics and was marked a success in the box office receiving an 81% score from Rotten Tomatoes. Williams was awarded the Saturn Award for his role as Sy.

Williams' last movie in his acting career was *The Angriest Man in Brooklyn*.

Williams plays as Henry Altman, a mentally ill patient who after accidentally realising that he has 90 minutes to live, tries to redeem himself from all

wrongs he has ever done. He runs from hospital and meets his brother at the family's law firm where he breaks to him the news about his condition. His concerned brother asks for advice from the experienced clients where one of them advises him to go and make love to his wife and die in the arms of someone he loved. Henry approves the advice and buys some flowers to impress his wife before making love. On the contrary, they engage in a heated argument with Henry storming out of the house.

Henry continues to race against time in his quest for redemption. He decides to contact his son Tommy who studies dancing at the Brooklyn Dancing Academy. At the same time, Henry's doctor Sharon is desperately looking for him after discussing with her friend and discovering that Henry's death would ruin her career. After finding Henry trying to commit suicide by throwing himself from the Brooklyn Bridge suspensions, she tries to convince him but Henry accidentally slips off and falls into the East River. Sharon springs under the bridge into the icy water and saves Henry. They later set off to the Brooklyn school where he finds his son seated alone in the dance studio.

After a successful reconciliation with his son, he gets back to Sharon and informs her that he would wish to have a better life and find happiness by being together as a family. It all ends with Henry's death due to a brain aneurysm. He is cremated and his ashes are spread across the east river by his family. The movie was also a great success with a strong theme of life.

During Williams' acting career, he voiced in many animated films. In the animated musical fantasy film *Aladdin* (1992), Williams voiced the character of the Genie. Clements and Musker the film's writers however suffered a tough time since they had to convince Williams to take the Genie's role by voicing the already written script. Williams was the best fit for the comic Genie since they knew in him the role would come out perfectly and humorously.

Williams also impersonated several celebrity voices during his role as the Genie. Such celebrities included Robert De Niro, Peter Lorre, Arsenio Hall and Arnold Schwarzenegger among others. At first Williams rejected the role since the movie was a production of Disney Studios but after a successful negotiation he accepted the role with certain conditions.

The movie was a great success for Williams and he was able to pocket three awards which included Special Achievement Award, MTV Movie Award for best comedic performance and Saturn Award for best supporting actor. Williams' role as the Genie paved the way for other animated films which Williams voiced in different roles.

Williams was involved in other animated films including *Fern Gully: The Last Rainforest* which was aired in 1992. Williams voiced the character Batty Koda. The animated film involved strong environmental themes and did not take long during production since computers were highly used to create the animations. The release date was however delayed from 1991 to 1992 to avoid competition from Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*.

The movie received positive reviews and was a great success. In 2005, Williams voiced a computer animated science fiction film named *Robots*. It was created by Chris Wedge and William Joyce who are both children's books writers. The film was derived from Joyce's book *Santa Calls* and had to rewrite it to include robots with a comic storyline. Williams voiced the character Fender Pinwheeler, an old red robot. The movie was nominated for dozens of awards in the category of the best animated films.

In 2006, *Happy Feet* was aired and Williams was among the cast where he voiced the role of Ramon, Lovelace and the narrator. Though an animated film, the movie features some motion pictures of live humans in some scenes. The movie was originally designed to appear in IMAX 3D but due to financial reasons, it was produced in IMAX 2D resolution.

Despite the challenge, the movie was successful and was voted number one in the box office. The movie was rated third among the highest grossing animated movies behind *Cars* and *Ice Age: The Meltdown*. Different types of merchandise including videogames were developed which featured the main characters in the film.

In 2001, Williams voiced in *A.I Artificial Intelligence* as a holographic Dr. Know search engine. The movie is based on the future and features an android program designed to resemble a young boy. It was named David and had the ability to love. Williams also voiced in *The Time Keeper*, a circle-vision film that was presented at Disney Parks around the globe. It was the first circle-vision film ever aired that used the robotic animations as well as

visions of landscapes. The movie featured actors across Europe and was shown in circular theatres.

In 2006 Williams was the main character in the *Night Listener*. The thriller is about a radio host who develops a father son relationship with a child who was a victim of sexual violence at the hands of his parents. Determined to prove the boy's existence, Gabriel Noone (Robin Williams) decides to investigate the matter by visiting the boy's home. He finds Donna who was a blind woman and was the child's adoptee. The movie is characterised with suspense since Noone is left puzzled wondering if the boy truly exists.

In 2006, Williams appeared in several movies which include *Man of the Year*, *Night Listener* among others. He also appeared as a surprise guest during the Nickelodeon Kids awards and later featured in an episode of *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*. Williams' exclusive skills in acting were greatly admired during his career. He was one of the top best actors whose roles in acting greatly impacted most of their viewers.

Before Robin Williams passed away on August 11 2014, he had appeared in four movies which were yet to be released. The movies were; *Night at the Museum: Secret of the Tomb*, *A Merry Friggin' Christmas*, *Boulevard* and *Absolutely Nothing*. The movie *Night at the Museum: Secret of the Tomb* is a sequel to the 2009 *Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian*. It is also the last movie for Mickey Rooney who played as Gus and Robin Williams who played as Theodore Roosevelt since both of them died before the movie was released.

A Merry Friggin' Christmas is an American black comedy that was released in November 7 2014. It was among Robin Williams' last performances after his death in August 11 2014. The movie however received negative feedback from critics, receiving a score of 17% on Rotten Tomatoes. *Boulevard* is another 2014 movie series which was the last of Robin Williams' performances. The movie stars Williams as Nolan Mark who is a banker who has spent 26 years of his career working in the same place. He is married to Joy and the two have strongly embraced their marriage. Life changes when Nolan meets a troubled young man while driving home and who forces him to break from his old life to deal with reality.

Absolutely Anything is a British comedy film that has not yet been released. It

features Robin Williams who voices the character Dennis the dog. The movie follows a disturbed school teacher who discovers that he has the ability to command nature. He is even more traumatised when he discovers that a group of aliens who are the source of his powers are closely watching him from space.

Williams' acting career was characterised with great success which enabled him to feature among the most famous and greatest people in the Hall Of Fame. His movies were characterised with different kind of themes among them being educational themes, influential themes and motivational themes, among others.

Chapter 5 Personal Life

Robin Williams married his first wife Valerie Velardi in 1978. The two first met in San Francisco where Williams worked as a bartender and at the same time was trying to 'feed' his young career in comedy.

On the other hand, Velardi was a waitress and was pursuing a degree at Mills College. Velardi persuaded Williams to leave the bartending job and this led to Williams' first show in ABC where he played as Mork. The two later married in June 4 1978 and divorced in 1988.

The divorce was settled out of court and the terms agreed included a shared custody of their son Zachary on a flexible and equal basis. When Williams was out of town, Zachary spent time with his mother. When Williams was around in his home which was at the side of the city, he would spend his time with Zac as well. Note that, whenever the child was with Williams in his home, Marsha who was assigned by Velardi as the child's nanny would also be around to take care of the child. This led to a relationship between Marsha and Williams.

On the other hand, Velardi's anger was due to Williams' infidelity since he had been involved in a relationship with Michelle Tish Carter who was a cocktail waitress. The two had first met in 1984. Williams' idea however was to transform his marriage with Velardi into a relationship in which both would only concentrate on their son's life by making him happy.

In 1989, Williams married Marsha who was already several months pregnant. Marsha gave birth to their first daughter named Zelda Rae Williams (1989). Later in 1991 she gave birth to a son Cody Alan Williams. The two enjoyed a successful happy marriage life together with their children. Marsha impacted Williams' acting career positively since she would assist him during production.

This led to the two forming a professional partnership besides being a husband and wife. Marsha has however assisted Williams in production of several movies including *Jakob Liar*, *Mrs. Doubtfire* and she's also listed as an executive producer of *Patch Adams*. Marsha was nominated for an Emmy

Award for best producer for Williams' *Live on Broadway*.

In 2008, the couple filed for divorce which was as a result of Williams' addiction to alcoholism. Even after Williams abstaining from alcoholism for twenty years, he still found himself getting back into the same problem. The divorce was finalised in 2010.

Williams married his third wife Susan Schneider on October 22 2011, whom he had dated for two years. The event took place at the Napa Valley Meadowood Resort in California. Most of the actors and celebrities in the entertainment industry joined Williams at the Napa Valley Resort to celebrate his marriage. The couple lived in Williams' house in San Francisco California.

Apart from his marriage life, Robin Williams was a member of the Episcopal Church. His mother introduced him when he was a young child and since then Williams was able to maintain his religious values until his death. In 2008 during Israel's 60th Independence Day, Williams together with other celebrities appeared in Times Square to wish Israel a happy birthday.

Williams was also a great fan of videogames. He named his daughter Zelda after an animated character from Legend of Zelda which was his favourite videogame series. During an interview in 2013, Williams announced that his son Zachary was also a great fan of the game.

In 2011, Williams and daughter Zelda appeared in a series of ads for the Nintendo game console. In 2007, Williams participated in the world wide Dragons Game Day in London and also performed in the Google annual trade show to entertain customers.

Williams was a fan of Rugby Union and a great fan of the New Zealand's All Blacks superstar Jonah Lomu. Though living far away from each other and each pursuing completely different and contrasting careers, the two stars were brought together due to Williams' great interest in the sport of Rugby Union.

The two first met when Williams had finished filming *Jumanji*. When Jonah opened his *Jumanji* book, to his amusement, he found that Williams had offered him the original *Jumanji* script. It was a great honour for Jonah as he pledged to always remember that day and loves to show his friends the script. Jonah further stated that at a time in San Francisco, they were to engage in a

30 minute talk but upon arrival, they ended up spending more than two hours laughing and talking.

Williams' loyalty to the All Blacks was demonstrated by a cap he always wore that was given to him by Jonah. Jonah also flew to San Francisco where he gifted Williams with an All Blacks signed jersey. Williams' recent visit to New Zealand at a national television show accepted another All Blacks jersey from Jonah and this time it had Jonah's number 11 at the back.

Robin Williams was also a great fan of the comedy *Monty Pythons Flying Circus* (1969). It was a British based comedy series which was composed of surreality, sight gags and humorous sketches. The show mostly targeted the British life both politically and professionally. The cast was made up of highly educated persons who were graduates in various Universities in Britain and the United States. After Williams' death, Michael Palin who was among the cast in *Monty Python's Flying Circus* remarked that "Williams' soul is up there with his all time mentors and heroes"

Williams was also a great fan of cycling and occasionally trained with Lance Armstrong. He was a regular cyclist in the United States Postal and Discovery Channel cycling team. Williams took to cycling since he found it to be a better substitute for drugs. He owned a large collection of bicycles and was a fan of professional road cycling.

Robin Williams' favourite books were the *Foundation Trilogy*. The science fiction series was written by Isaac Asimov. The trilogy consisted of *Foundation*, *Foundation and Empire* and *Second Foundation*. The series features a mathematician Hari Seldon who spends his entire life trying to invent a mathematical concept known as psychohistory.

He further explains that the concept can be effective through applying the laws of mass action so as to predict the future. Seldon foresees the impending fall of the Galactic Empire which consisted of millions of planets which had been inhabited by humans. A dark age would later follow which would last for thirty thousand years before another generation of great empires arises.

Seldon also foresees an alternative upon which the Dark Age period can be minimised to one thousand years. To provide a more favourable solution, Seldon creates a foundation of professionals in various fields who are sent to the furthest end of the galaxy to reproduce and form the next generation of

the Galactic Empire.

Robin Williams' favourite book when he was a child was *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis. The fantasy book was set in Narnia, a land inhabited by talking animals and mythical cultures. Williams shared the same book with his children during his marriage life.

Williams owned a residential house and a vineyard in North California. The Napa vineyard included a 20,000 square foot home and a luxurious vineyard. Williams' home was suited with a theatre, a library, six bedrooms with five being en suite, an elevator, art cellar and a bridge. Apart from the juicy fruits in the vineyard, there is a lake, a solar farm, a pool and a sculpture garden. He was a neighbour to Joe Montana who was a football legend and filmmaker Francis Ford Coppola both of whom own and run their own vineyards.

Robin Williams and Robert De Niro were the last people who visited John Belushi on that fateful night of his death in his hotel room. The 33 years old actor and musician had been involved in a cocaine and heroin overdose; a drug combination also known as a speedball. He was found by his trainer Bill Wallace who found him lying on the floor.

Two months later his wife Smith admitted that she was the cause of John's death since she was the one who actually administered the speedball shot to her late husband. The case was opened and she was charged with first degree murder. A plea was however forwarded which reduced the case to involuntary murder and she was detained for fifteen months in prison.

When Williams' best friend from High School Christopher Reeve was involved in a horse riding accident, Williams paid him a visit in hospital where he dressed in scrubs from head to toe and disguised himself as a Russian doctor with a surgical mask on. After pretending to be so busy in the hospital room, he took off the mask and revealed himself to Reeve, making it the very first time Reeve ever laughed since the tragic accident.

Robin Williams was a great supporter of the United States Democratic Party. He was among the people who outspokenly opposed the United States' step of sending troops to Iraq. When the troops left for Iraq, he was among the most active Hollywood celebrities who worked with USO to entertain the troops since the beginning of the war. He was also named the new *Bob Hope*

due to his regular involvement with USO.

Robin Williams had two elder brothers who were Robert Todd Williams and McLaurin Smith Williams. Robert Todd Williams was born on June 14 1938 in New York City. He started pursuing his acting career straight from high school. He however applied for a course to study the Music Business so as to have a backup plan in life. After recording some remarkable success in acting, he dropped school to concentrate on acting.

Robert Todd featured in many movies and television series which received positive feedback from critics and were successful. Some of the TV series which cemented Todd's career in acting include *Teen Wolf*, *The Vampire Diaries*, *Crime Scene Investigation*, *Miami* and *Twilight Zone* among others. He also featured in videogames such as *Superman Returns* where he voiced the character Mongul and *San Andreas*. Just like his young brother Williams, Todd also had a great career in acting and was successful. He died on August 14 2007 due to heart complications. McLaurin Smith Williams on the other hand was a Physics teacher in Christian Brothers High School in Tennessee. He is currently 67 years old and is the only remaining son of the late Lourie McLaurin and Robert Fitzgerald Williams.

During the 2006 E3 Williams was invited by Will Wright to demonstrate the *Spore* videogame in the event. Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) is an annual trade show where all PC and videogame manufacturers present their latest videogames and hardware. The event is mostly held in the Los Angeles Convention Centre.

Williams was also a great fan of the Japanese animated series *Neon Genesis Evangelion*. His great interest in the series is expressed in the movie *One Hour Photo* where he buys a model kit bearing its animation to give as a gift. Williams is also a great supporter and fan of electric vehicles. He owned an electric Toyota Prius which is the latest Aptera 2-series electric vehicles and was eagerly waiting for its arrival.

In 1976 Williams was among the first contestants to compete in the San Francisco comedy competition. It was started in 1976 and some of the very first contenders included Robin Williams, Dana Carvey, Harry Anderson and A Whitney Brown. Williams finished second behind Bill Farley. The competition involved penalties if the performer compromised with time

through performing past the time given or not attaining the given time. Points were awarded according to the performer's material, stage presence, audience response and the judge's final remark about the performer.

Williams was also among the few actors who performed in the American Children's television series *Sesame Street*. The series was known for its educational content and included Muppets which communicated, short humorous films and cultural reference. All this was meant to captivate and educate children. Williams' work in the series won positive reviews from critics and was highly rated.

When Steven Spielberg was filming the movie *Schindler's List*, he would often contact Williams and put him on loud speaker so that he could entertain the movie's cast by telling them jokes. This idea from the veteran movie producer was an amazing step that led to a successful filming of the movie since the actors were always entertained and cheerful. Williams used the voice of the Genie while entertaining the movie's cast. Note that Steven Spielberg was a great friend to Williams and was one of the most influential figures in the acting platform. He is also one of the best known producers in Hollywood and is among the wealthiest filmmakers in the world.

In 1994, Williams was interviewed on the *Inside The Actors Studio*. The show is hosted by James Lipton and it involves interviewing famous actors, directors and writers. The interviewees give an outline about their career as well as personal life. When Williams was being interviewed, he was so humorous that a member of the audience suffered from a hernia due to laughing so much and had to be hospitalised.

Robin Williams was addicted to drugs during the late 1970s and early 1980s. His addiction resulted from the pressure he had during his early stand-up performances. He was a casual friend to John Belushi since they both featured in the comedy arena. The sudden death of Belushi due to drug overdose prompted Williams to quit drugs and alcohol. He decided to try cycling where he visited various events like the Tour de France. Cycling became a substitute to drugs which indeed had a great impact to him. Williams also stated that cycling really saved his life.

In 2003, Williams was once again addicted to alcohol when he was working on a movie in Alaska. In 2006, he decided to check himself into a

rehabilitation centre located in Newberg Oregon where he later publicised that he was an alcoholic.

In 2009 Williams was hospitalised due to a heart problem. He was operated on and had his aortic valve replaced at the Cleveland Clinic. The surgery was completed in March 13 2009, after which he was discharged and left under the care of his second wife Marsha Garces.

In mid 2014, Williams attended the Hazelden Foundation for his treatment against alcoholism. The Hazelden Foundation is a non-profit organisation which is based in Centre City Minnesota. It is well equipped with drug and alcohol treatment facilities. The Foundation offers treatment and assessment to both adults and the young.

Williams was greatly suffering from severe depression before his death. His third wife Susan stated that Williams was secretly suffering from Parkinson's disease though it was at its early stages. He was also not ready to share his condition publicly. Parkinson's disease is also known as paralysis agitans. It is a degenerative disorder of the central nervous system and the symptoms include shaking, rigidity, slowness and movement difficulty.

Robin Williams' death was announced on the morning of August 11 2014. His death occurred in his home in Paradise Cay California. The news about his death was released by the Marin County Sheriff who stated that the cause of the death was as a result of an apparent suicide. The final autopsy results were released in November 2014 which confirmed that Williams had hanged himself with a belt.

The report further stated that Williams' death was not as a result of drug abuse. This was due to samples of Lewy bodies which were revealed clumped on his brain tissue which signified that Williams might have suffered from Parkinson's disease. It was therefore alleged that the disease might have been the critical factor that led to Williams' suicide.

The shocking news about Williams' death brought grief and darkness to the entire world. The United States President together with celebrities, family members and the public all responded through media alerts. Fans from every corner of the United States assembled in different locations featured in Williams' TV and films career. Such locations included; the Public Garden in Boston on a bench featured in *Good Will Hunting*, at the Pacific Heights in

San Francisco where *Mrs. Doubtfire* was filmed, Boulder Colorado where *Mork and Mindy* was filmed and finally at his star in the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

During the 66th Emmy Awards event on August 25 2014, Billy Crystal who was Williams' closest friend referred to him as "the brightest star in the entire comedy galaxy." On September 27 2014, most of the Hollywood stars and celebrities in the entire entertainment platform gathered in San Francisco to celebrate Williams' life and career.

On August 12 2014 Williams' body was cremated and the ashes were spread on the San Francisco bay.

Chapter 6 Legacy and Influence

During the start of Williams' career, he was best known for his role and performance in stand-up comedy. However as time advanced on, Williams' career mutated and he was able to appear in different types of genres among them being dramas, series, thrillers and documentaries.

The gifted genius was able to disguise himself as a completely new character according to the role he would be given. This kind of acting skills were among the 'weapons' that Williams used to penetrate through the acting platform. He was considered as a 'national treasure' by his fellow celebrities in the entertainment industry at large as well as the public with the majority being his viewers.

Williams' performance in the stage and his ability to improvise were the key factors which led to the growth and expansion of the comedy platform across the United States. Williams' conversations were characterised with humorous scenes which apart from entertaining the audience, offered vital information which would either be educative, inspirational or informative.

Williams learnt the art of sharing his personal life on the stage from Richard Pryor. He said that through speaking out his personal life, he would feel relieved and to him the skill worked better than therapy. This particular style inspired many young comedians as well as big names in the acting industry.

Through sharing the dark part of his life in public, Williams influenced many people across the globe. Media scholar Derek A. Burrill remarked that Robin Williams' ability to speak openly and honestly, revealing his drug addiction as well as alcoholism was a major influence he made to many people's lives who were drug and alcohol addicts as well as the pop culture. Robin Williams' real life influenced more people as compared to his life on the stage.

Williams was highly gifted with the ability to improvise. During the filming of *Mork and Mindy*, Mork's parts would intentionally be skipped since the producers were acquainted with Williams' incredible proficiency in free form performance. During the filming of *Good Will Hunting*, Damon remarked

that Williams would even add his own jokes which were not initially written in the script.

He further said that the cameraman at one point laughed so hard that the camera shook slightly. A similar incident happened when filming *Mork and Mindy*. At one point, Pam Dawber had to bite her lip to avoid laughing due to Williams' jokes. Critic Vincent Canby was always amazed with Williams' performance. He said that he was always concerned about Williams' intense monologue since he was so creative such that one would think that he would suddenly go into a complete meltdown the next minute. This style of performing free form acting influenced most actors such as Jim Carrey who impersonated the character Mork during the early stages of his career.

Williams has been credited as the man behind the rapid growth of comedy acting careers across San Francisco. This has been attributed to his great performance on the stage as well as introducing new ideas from real life experiences. Most young comedians have really benefitted from Williams' outstanding performances.

Williams' ability to act as a completely new character is an important skill that Williams developed from Dustin Hoffman. This skill enabled Williams to pocket most of the awards he was given and made him famous. According to critics, Williams' improvisational style influenced and inspired most comedians since it really made him unique and an actor who was exclusive in his own way. This unique style of acting also enabled Williams to be awarded as the best character in different roles during the Emmy and Academy Awards events. Williams' jokes were so exclusive such that other comedians were unable to copy them.

Whenever Williams was given a role, he would apply all his energy to the role to try and bring out a real life experience which would sometimes involve the use of emotions so as to express and send an intended message to the viewers. Such skills credited Williams and made him an influential figure and an idol to many comedy actors as well as the world at large.

Some of Robin Williams' movies where he featured as a completely new character include: *Good Will Hunting*. In the movie, Williams played the role of a therapist. The movie deeply influenced real therapists across the globe. His penetrative acting skills were clearly demonstrated in the movie which

won him an Academy award for best supporting actor. The movie was voted as one of the best motivational movies in the United States. In the movie *Awakenings*, Williams plays the role of a fictitious British doctor.

In the real sense, Williams played the role of Oliver Sacks who was a doctor and the original author of the book since the movie was based on a true story. Sacks revealed that Williams played the role of the doctor so perfectly that that it appeared as though he was a real professional doctor. He described him as a form of a genius.

In 1989, Williams starred in *Dead Poet Society* as a private school poetry teacher who motivates his students through teaching them poetry. The movie included an emotional scene which critics say influenced a lot of people and inspired a generation.

Terry Gilliam who directed *The Fisher King* and *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* (1988) noted that Williams had the ability to play as a completely new character and was able to stick to his role with ultimate professionalism. This can further be expressed in movies such as *Awakenings* where he plays as a real doctor, *Good Will Hunting* where he plays as an experienced therapist, *Dead Poets Society* where he plays as a professional poetry teacher determined to motivate his students and in *One Hour Photo* where he features as an emotionally disturbed photo technician.

In all the movies he ever acted, Williams was able to influence his viewers through his creativeness. Director Terry Gilliam added that Williams possessed one of the most unique minds. He was different and there was no one else like him out there.

Apart from acting, Williams also channeled his energy into charitable activities which benefitted the less fortunate people living across the United States.

In 1986, Robin Williams, Billy Crystal and Whoopi Goldberg teamed up to form Comic Relief USA, which is a non-profit charity organisation that raises funds to help the many homeless people in the United States. The fund raising events are continuous and televised by Home Box Office with actors Robin Williams, Billy Crystal and Whoopi Goldberg acting as the all time hosts. The events are attended by celebrities, actors and sometimes politicians.

Comic Relief USA is characterised with activities such as stand-up comedy, sketch comedy; speeches and live music all in order to entertain the audience, motivate and enlighten them. Other activities include the sale of t-shirts, sweatshirts, among other merchandise to raise funds. The organisation raises funds which are used in dealing with the challenges facing homeless people. According to the organisation's website, more than 80 million dollars has been raised since its founding to date. The organisation was able to open medical facilities. In Chicago Illinois, the organisation assisted an alcoholic woman by giving her responsibilities which enabled her to quit drinking and get a regular job.

In 2006 during Hurricane Katrina, the organisation played the role of rescuing pets and taking them back to their owners. Robin Williams' involvement in the organisation was like a way of thanking God since he was raised from a rich family and never passed through such a tough life. He always wished to see himself giving and supporting the less fortunate. Williams also offered himself to support women's rights and was among the donors who gave benefits to veterans.

Williams was also involved in the United Service Organization (USO). It is a non-profit organisation offering programmes, goods, services and entertainment to the United States troops. The organisation is non-government and relies heavily on private donors from corporate and individual contributions and operates worldwide. Williams has however travelled to thirteen countries to perform to over 100,000 troops. After Williams' death, the USO thanked Williams for the great support he offered to men and women in the armed forces.

Robin Williams and his wife Marsha Garces together founded the Windfall Foundation. It was a philanthropic organisation that was aimed to raise money for different charities including offering medical services and food supplies. The foundation also benefitted people living with AIDS. In 1991, Williams sang *The Rolling Stone's 'It's only Rock and Roll'* for a children's charity promise. He sang the song in French.

Williams has also helped the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. It is a pediatric treatment centre and also a research facility that lays its main focus on children suffering from catastrophic diseases.

In 2010, Williams was among the people who 'gave their all' in donations to help New Zealand during the Canterbury earthquake accident. The earthquake which was also named the Christchurch earthquake struck the southern Island of New Zealand with a high magnitude of 7.1. The aftershock was so intense and destructive that it led to the death of at least 185 residents. Mass deaths were not recorded since the area is usually not densely populated. The fact that the earthquake struck at night was another reason since most people were off the streets. Half of Williams' donations were given to the Red Cross while the other half was given to the New Zealand Mayoral Building Fund.

Robin Williams performed with the United Service Organization to entertain the troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. Sometimes they placed their lives in danger by performing under hazardous conditions but they still went to perform since they were eager to express their patriotism. The organisation also combined with the World Wrestling Entertainment that was recorded live in the battle field to entertain the troops together with their families.

In 2004, Williams was introduced to the Christopher and Diana Reeve foundation which raised funds for spinal cord injury research. Williams and Reeve were long time friends who met as students in the Juilliard School of arts in New York. They were still the two best students who were chosen by John Houseman to join his class. Reeve suffered from a spinal cord injury when he was involved in a horse riding accident which led to his death in 2004.

Most of Reeve's hospital bills during that tragic moment were cleared by Williams who also offered financial support to Reeve's family. Peter Wilderotter who was the Christopher and Diana Reeve Foundation CEO recalls Williams' moments where he said that Williams was a generous person. He would arrange for dinner events at least three or four times a year which would keep everyone cheerful and entertained. He also said that Williams would surprisingly appear all on his own, talk to everyone else and was free with everyone in the Foundation. Williams also lent his name to the Foundation. This was due to his close relationship with Reeve. The fund letters bearing Williams' name were more effective since he was among the big famous names in the United States. This enabled a positive feedback which greatly benefitted the Foundation.

Robin Williams' acting career had a great impact on other growing actors in comedy stand-up. Paul F Tompkins who was a comedy actor posted that *What a Concept* was the first comedy album he ever owned and from his childhood, he had grown up watching the famous television sitcom *Mork and Mindy*. He further added that during his childhood life, he would sometimes feel lonely and desolate but whenever he watched Williams performing on the TV, he would cheer up and feel whole again.

Louis C.K. remembers Williams for the outstanding comic acts he performed during his career. Louis was so moved by Williams' performance that he found it wise to feature the creative genius in one of the episodes in his comedy series *Louie*.

Jimmy Fallow who had hosted Williams in dozens of TV shows, including Saturday Night Live and the Tonight Show, said that Williams' effortless ability to perform as a completely new character was among the skills that captivated and motivated most of Williams viewers. It also influenced most actors who are currently striving to become the next Robin Williams in the comedy platform.

In an article, Josh Gad who is the actor that voiced the character Olaf in the animated film *Frozen*, joked when he said that through being influenced to take part in the Comic Relief Charity, he learnt new unique words for the male and female genitalia. The event was actually characterised with humour and endless jokes from the veteran comedian together with his long time friends Billy Crystal and Whoopi Goldberg. He however said that Williams' ability to speak in different voices had a great influence in his acting career.

He was particularly moved by the character Genie from the animated series *Aladdin* which he said inspired him and directly influenced him for it was from that point that Josh discovered and learnt how to create an enticing voice during animation acting. He was however able to voice the character Olaf the snowman in the movie *Frozen*. He paid special honour to Williams when he said that the character Olaf will never be compared to Williams' Genie for there is only one Robin Williams. The great joy and laughter the character Olaf gave to young children was a result of a creative genius who has left too soon.

Marc Maron, a standup comic and a popular podcast host, aired an interview

with Robin Williams at his home in Paradise Cay California. The conversation they had influenced Maron and also became the turning point of his podcast show. Williams also defined Maron's life in a lot of ways. He learnt how to impact people's lives and how to apply his energy to motivate and provide solutions to people's problems. He learnt a special lesson from Williams that apart from acting, Williams was a person living and struggling with his own personal problems. Part of his great performance and creativity on the stage was a result of the struggles he had in real life.

Mila Kunis, who worked with Williams in the 2013 film *The Angriest Man in Brooklyn* recalls her encounter with Williams and how he directly influenced her acting career. She said that she had met so many famous people and big names, but they have never impacted her life like Williams did. When she first met with Williams, he asked for her name and after introducing herself, he gave her words which really inspired the 31 year old actress.

Williams told Mila during the filming of the movie to always remember and treasure such a moment for it doesn't happen so often. When they reunited for the movie years later, Williams told Mila to reflect back on her life to the time they were filming the movie and compare it with her current life. Williams' words deeply moved Mila and became an inspiration to her acting career.

When Robin Williams was awarded an Oscar award for the best supporting actor in *Good Will Hunting*, he gave an inspirational speech to the young actors when he remarked that he still wanted to see more young actors and writers such as Ben Affleck and Matt Damon being listed among the nominees in the Oscars.

Conclusion

Thank you again for downloading this book!

I hope this book was able to help you to reflect back into your life and try to discover the unused talents which lie deep beneath your inner self.

The next step is to go against all odds and utilise the special gifts that lie within you to become the next big name in the list of the World's Famous People. The first step towards this great mission is to identify yourself and what you are capable of doing. The next step is to try and recognise famous and successful people in your field of interest. Just like Robin Williams, make that step of learning more about your mentors and how they came to succeed. From that perspective, work hard towards achieving your goals

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