

# WISCONSIN WOMEN MAKING HISTORY

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## LYNDA BARRY

1956-present  
City: Richland Center, Madison  
County: Richland, Dane

Lynda Barry, assistant professor of interdisciplinary creativity at the UW-Madison, is a celebrated cartoonist, author, speaker, and instructor.

Barry was born in Richland Center in 1956, but spent much of her childhood in Seattle, Washington. In her teens she worked as a hospital janitor, a subject that inspired her early poetry. She remained in Washington to attend Evergreen State College, where her work was influenced by the instruction of the painter Marilyn Frasca. Barry also met Matt Groening—creator of *THE SIMPSONS*—at Evergreen State College, and he became an early fan and supporter of her talent.

Barry graduated from college in 1978. The next year, she began writing a comic strip called *ERNIE POOK'S COMEEK*. The strip became wildly popular and ran for 30 years; at its peak it was published in 75 newspapers nationwide. As her popularity rose, Barry also published a number of book-length graphic works: these include her first novel, *THE GOOD TIMES ARE KILLING ME*, a coming-of-age story about a biracial friendship; the darker *CRUDDY, ONE! HUNDRED! DEMONS!*, which she calls an “autobifictionalography”; *WHAT IT IS*, about her creative process; and *SYLLABUS: NOTES FROM AN ACCIDENTAL PROFESSOR*, about her teaching process. She has been interviewed several times on National Public Radio and had her work published in *MOTHER JONES MAGAZINE*, *MADEMOISELLE*, *SALON*, and *ESQUIRE*. Barry is also a very popular speaker and teacher. Her creativity workshop “Writing the Unthinkable,” which fills up quickly, was featured in *THE NEW YORK TIMES* in 2011. In 2013 she became assistant professor of interdisciplinary creativity at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she encourages students to call her “Professor Old Skull.”

### LEARN MORE

Rueckert, Veronica. “Getting In Touch With Your Inner Artist.” Wisconsin Public Radio, March 27, 2014.

“Lynda Barry.” Wisconsin Institute for Discovery, <http://wid.wisc.edu/profile/lynda-barry/>.

“Cartoonist Lynda Barry Helps College Students Tap Innate Creativity.” NPR, May 29, 2013.

Kois, Dan. “Lynda Barry Will Make You Believe In Yourself.” *THE NEW YORK TIMES*, October 27, 2011.

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