

Date: 5/19/23

Name of Podcast: Read. Return. Repeat. A ReadICT Podcast.

Episode Title and Number: Cult(ural) Studies (Season 3, Episode 4)

Episode Summary: In this episode, co-hosts Sara Dixon and Daniel Pewewardy get a little “culty” to explore category 11: a book about a secret or closed society! Joining them on the podcast is editor, publisher and cartoonist Robyn Chapman, who edited the graphic novel collection *American Cult: A Graphic History of Religious Cults in America from the Colonial Era to Today*, which comprises a collection of stories about various cults in American history, some that are older than the founding of this country! They talk about why cults fascinate us, the link between true crime and cult stories and where we draw the line between belief and brainwashing.

Guest Bio:



(Image credit: Center for Cartoon Studies)

Robyn Chapman is an editor, a publisher, a minicomics archivist, and (sometimes) a cartoonist. She is the proprietor of Paper Rocket Minicomics, and she has had many different jobs in comics. She spent five years at The Center for Cartoon Studies, initially as their first fellow and later as their program coordinator and a faculty member. During her time at CCS, she earned her MFA, having previously earned her BFA at the Savannah College of Art and Design. For a time, she worked at Brooklyn’s best comic shop, Desert Island. Previously she worked as an assistant editor at Graphic Universe, the graphic novel imprint of Lerner Publishing Group. Currently she is an editor at First Second.

She was the editor/publisher of the Tiny Report (a zine about comic micro-presses) and the author of Drawing Comics Lab (Quarry Books). In the spring of 2016 she debuted *Twin Bed*, her first solo comic in a long, long time. In 2021 she edited and co-published (with Silver Sprocket) the nonfiction comics anthology *American Cult*.

(Source: Paper Rocket Minicomics)

Topic Index:

Why cults? (1:50)

What's your criteria for a cult? (4:03)

The book as a collaborative process (10:09)

Cults continuing after tragedy (14:45)

Black and white as an artistic choice (16:00)

Seeing the humanity in cult members and leaders (17:49)

The insider perspective (22:43)

Why a graphic novel format? (26:37)

Pop culture references (31:38)

Celebrity connections (33:50)

Greed and power (35:18)

The internet and social media (37:08)

The line between cult and organized religion (40:27)

Why do cults fascinate? (47:12)

Robyn's upcoming projects (53:55)

Books mentioned in this episode:

Maus by Art Spiegelman

Banished: Surviving My Years in the Westboro Baptist Church by Lauren Drain

Books recommended in this episode:

The Rose Code, by Kate Quinn

The Clan of the Cave Bear, by Jean Auel

Code Girls, by Liza Mundy

The London Séance Society, by Sarah Penner

Women Talking, by Mariam Toews

Age of Vice, by Deepti Kapoor

The Westing Game, by Ellen Raskin

Cultish: The Language of Fanaticism, by Amanda Montell

I Have Some Questions for You, by Rebecca Makkai

The Collective, by Alison Gaylin

Unfollow: A Memoir of Loving and Leaving the Westboro Baptist Church, by Megan Phelps-Roper

Special Thanks to Wichita Public Library Staff and our reading community on Facebook for sharing their recommendations!

Resources & Links:

About Robyn Chapman

Facebook: [facebook.com/robyn.chapman.14](https://www.facebook.com/robyn.chapman.14)

Instagram: [@paperrobyn](https://www.instagram.com/paperrobyn)

[LinkedIn](#)

Books by Robyn Chapman

Drawing Comics Lab: 52 Exercises on Characters, Panels, Storytelling, Publishing & Professional Practices (Lab Series) (2012)

American Cult: A Graphic History of Religious Cults in America from the Colonial Era to Today (Editor and Contributor) (2021)

Other Resources

[Paper Rocket Minicomics](#)

[The Center for Cartoon Studies](#)

[First Second Books](#)

[The Nib](#)

[The Mini Memoir Project on Kickstarter \(2022\)](#)

[The Tiny Report](#)

[*Is it a cult or a new religious movement?* \(Penn Today\)](#)

[The Family: A Cult Revealed \(48 Hours\)](#)

[Religious Trauma Syndrome](#)

[*True crime sells, but fans are debating the ethics of their passion* \(CNN\)](#)

[*True crime has never been more popular. But is it ethical?* \(NPR\)](#)

[*The Sacrament* \(2013 film\)](#)

[*The relationship between social media use and beliefs in conspiracy theories and misinformation* \(National Library of Medicine\)](#)

[*Fringe on the net* \(U.S. Department of Justice\)](#)

[Origin of “Don’t Worry Be Happy”](#)

[*The Cheesecake Factory has bankrolled a huge temple in an unincorporated California town* \(Boing Boing\)](#)

[Manson Family Cult](#)

[NXIVM](#)

[Jonestown Massacre](#)

[Branch Davidians \(Waco, TX\)](#)

[FLDS](#)

[*Inside the Rise & Fall of a 1970s Upper West Side Cult* \(Gothamist\)](#)

[Westboro Baptist Church](#)

[Heaven’s Gate](#)

Full Transcript: https://wichitalibrary.org/BooksMore/podcast/Pages/rrr_s3e4.aspx

New to #ReadICT? Join the challenge! For more information visit wichitalibrary.org/readict.

Want to be featured on a future episode of our podcast? Check out our new book review hotline! Call 316-261-8507 to leave a review for one of our #ReadICT categories! *Please limit your recording to no more than 3 minutes. Please listen to the recording at the beginning for what category we are collecting reviews for. Be sure to state your name, location if you live outside Wichita, ReadICT category name, title and author of book and a few words of why you are recommending the book.*