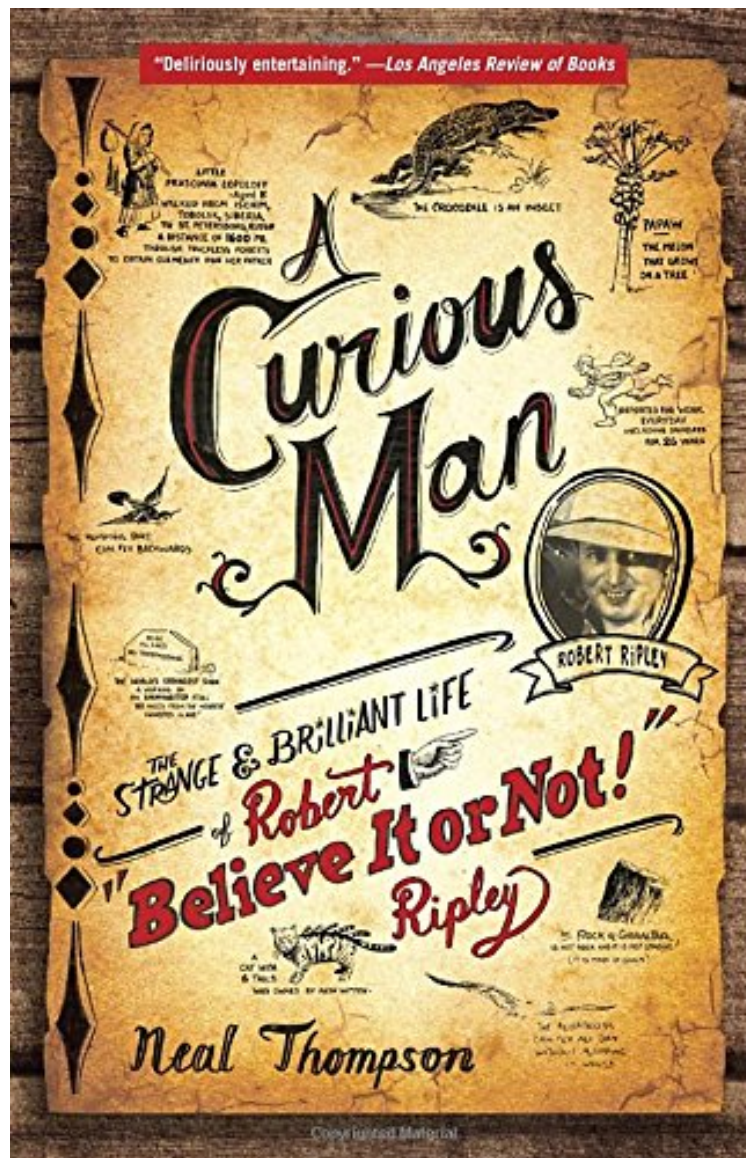


[Free read ebook] A Curious Man: The Strange and Brilliant Life of Robert "Believe It or Not!" Ripley

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Neal Thompson

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Neal Thompson : A Curious Man: The Strange and Brilliant Life of Robert "Believe It or Not!" Ripley before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Curious Man: The Strange and Brilliant Life of Robert "Believe It or Not!" Ripley:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Biography Lite By Carl E. Johnson Jr. I grew up in the 1940s and

1950s, reading Ripley's "Believe It or Not!" cartoons, which as a young boy I thought were fascinating. In the early 1950s I also pestered my parents to buy me a ticket to a Ripley museum in Florida. But, until now, I never really knew who the guy was - and still don't in depth. Thompson's book is a quick, easy read - he did this, he went there, he had many girl friends, and so on, but mostly the book is filled general descriptions of Ripley's life. There's little detail, and virtually nothing to give you an idea of the inner Ripley. It may be that he was just such a private man, guarded in his feelings, that Thompson didn't have much to go on. What I missed most were Ripley drawings, for practical purposes completely absent from the book, and a discussion of his style and its evolution, if there was any. Maybe Thompson faced permission, copyright problems in using the cartoons. I think inclusion of the drawings and more discussion of Ripley's style would have boosted the book a star in my estimation.² of 2 people found the following review helpful. Good read
By Crzyoldone I love this book. The subject is quite and enigmatic man. Awkward and socially inept as a boy, he compensated for his shortcomings by being a very curious person. His curiosity brought him fame and fortune and a life he could never have predicted from his early beginnings. With the internet and instant information available at our fingertips now, I doubt he would have become so famous in our time. But he traveled where people only dreamed of going and brought back fantastic tales and objects that captivated his audience. The other benefit of not having lived in our times was that it was harder for people to question his veracity and the authenticity of his claims.²⁷ of 29 people found the following review helpful. Curious Is The Right Word
By Richard A. Root When I saw Mr. Thompson interviewed on The Colbert Report, Stephen Colbert asked, "Did you like Mr. Ripley?" At the time, I thought this was a strange question to ask. I don't think I've ever heard anyone ask a biographer ask this question. After reading the book, I totally understand the question. I really didn't like Robert Ripley. And, this makes for a pretty strange book. I don't necessarily have to like the subject of a biography to like the book (I've read several books on Adolph Hitler that were spellbinding), but this book was simply okay. Ripley did have a fascinating life, to a point. But, after you understand that he overcame a troubled childhood, and an exciting young life, he becomes rather boring. Yes, he has a lot of money. And, yes, he does travel a tremendous amount. But, in many ways, he does so in a superficial manner. He has no interest in really learning about the people of the lands in which he travels. He only wants to see the oddest, tallest, strangest, etc. of the area. He wants to see what he can (often to verify his pre-determined views) by 4:00 p.m., so he can get back to do his drinking. After a few pages, this gets to be boring. Like some others of the era, once he has his personal wealth, he becomes an extreme conservative. Of course, he continues to have his share of lovers throughout his life. This book is not awful, but not extremely good, either. As noted, it's just "okay".

*An Amazon Best Book of the Month *A Barnes Noble Booksellers' Pick *An NPR pick for 2013 *A Vanity Fair Hot Type pick *A Publishers Lunch Buzz Book 2013 *An iTunes/iBookstore Best Book of the Month *A Parade magazine 2013 Summer Read A Curious Man is the marvelously compelling biography of Robert Believe It or Not Ripley, the enigmatic cartoonist turned globetrotting millionaire who won international fame by celebrating the world's strangest oddities, and whose outrageous showmanship taught us to believe in the unbelievable. As portrayed by acclaimed biographer Neal Thompson, Ripleys life is the stuff of a classic American fairy tale. Buck-toothed and cursed by shyness, Ripley turned his sense of being an outsider into an appreciation for the strangeness of the world. After selling his first cartoon to Time magazine at age eighteen, more cartooning triumphs followed, but it was his Believe It or Not conceit and the wildly popular radio shows it birthed that would make him one of the most successful entertainment figures of his time and spur him to search the globes farthest corners for bizarre facts, exotic human curiosities, and shocking phenomena. Ripley delighted in making outrageous declarations that somehow always turned out to be true such as that Charles Lindbergh was only the sixty-seventh man to fly across the Atlantic or that The Star Spangled Banner was not the national anthem. Assisted by an exotic harem of female admirers and by ex-banker Norbert Pearlroth, a devoted researcher who spoke eleven languages, Ripley simultaneously embodied the spirit of Peter Pan, the fearlessness of Marco Polo and the marketing savvy of P. T. Barnum. In a very real sense, Ripley sought to remake the worlds aesthetic. He demanded respect for those who were labeled eccentrics or freaks whether it be E. L. Blystone, who wrote 1,615 alphabet letters on a grain of rice, or the man who could swallow his own nose. By the 1930s Ripley possessed a vast fortune, a private yacht, and a twenty-eight room mansion stocked with such oddities as shrunken heads and medieval torture devices, and his pioneering firsts in print, radio, and television were tapping into something deep in the American consciousness a taste for the titillating and exotic, and a fascination with the fastest, biggest, dumbest and most weird. Today, that legacy continues and can be seen in reality TV, YouTube, Americas Funniest Home Videos, Jackass, MythBusters and a host of other pop-culture phenomena. In the end Robert L. Ripley changed everything. The supreme irony of his life, which was dedicated to exalting the strange and unusual, is that he may have been the most amazing oddity of all. From the Hardcover edition.

.com An Best Book of the Month, May 2013: Like some old uncle you run into at family gatherings, LeRoy Robert Ripley was both charming and odd. He was obsessed with the weird, the gross, and the silly pun (a favorite town in Iceland was pronounced "Hell," ergo lots of "Go to Hell" jokes). Born sometime in the 1890s (the record is unclear),

he grew into a wildly talented cartoonist and radio personality who became rich in the Depression, eventually turning his fascinations into the Believe It or Not brand that survives to this day. With wit and passion, Neal Thompson, an senior editor, has chronicled this interesting weirdo's life--just his amorous adventures could fill a book--and in the process come up with a portrait of early 20th-century America different from any youve read before. Trust us, which is 21st-century speak for: believe it or not! --Sara Nelson Jon Meacham interviews Neal Thompson Jon Meacham is the author, most recently, of Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power, a #1 New York Times bestseller that was named one of the best books of the year by The New York Times Book , the Washington Post, Entertainment Weekly, the Seattle Times, and the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. Meacham received the Pulitzer Prize for American Lion, his bestselling 2008 biography of Andrew Jackson.

J.M. - What led to the moment when you decided that this was the right book to do?
N.T. - Someday I need to buy Edward Rothstein a drink, or give him a hug. His 2007 New York Times story about a new Believe It or Not! museum in Times Square, and the man behind it a cross between the Coney Island barker and the cultural anthropologist set me on the five-year path to this book. From that article, I learned that Ripley was far more than a cartoonist. In his day, he was among the wealthiest men in entertainment, among the most popular and best-traveled men in America. And yet his over-the-top life story had never been fully told. I was instantly hooked, and my inspiration became an obsession. It was a life-changing moment, when I realized: this . . . this is my story.

J.M. - What surprised you the most in the research?
N.T. - I had a general sense of Ripley's appreciation for the so-called freaks that have anchored the Believe It or Not brand. But I was thrilled to learn that Ripley was hardly a Barnum-style exploiter. In fact, he was a compassionate champion of those whose weirdness defined them. As a shy and bucktoothed oddball, I found that his devotion to strange people and the strangeness of the world grew from his own sense of being a bit of a misfit. He was the underdog who celebrated underdogs. I was equally thrilled to learn that this passion for discovering the overlooked and the outcast made him fabulously rich and famous.

J.M. - What, if any, enterprise in our own time most resembles the role Ripley played in the culture in its heyday?
N.T. - It'd be impossible to find a modern equivalent, and I've often wondered if Ripley, who thrived in a pre-TV era, would find an appreciative audience in today's screen-centric, beauty-obsessed culture. He was a goofy looking dude, and not entirely comfortable as a public figure. Yet, remarkably, he was a multimedia pioneer, on radio and TV, usually thanks to his nerve-taming paper cups of gin or whiskey. Today, what most resembles Ripley is a mash-up of pop-culture personalities and phenomena: Anthony Bourdain, Andrew Zimmern, Oprah, Dr. Phil, The Amazing Race, MythBusters, and Fear Factor.

J.M. - What was the secret to Ripley's empire? Why did it thrive where and when it did?
N.T. - One thing I love about Ripley's life story is that this strange and restless guy turned his curiosity about the world into an empire: a syndicated cartoon, bestselling books, top-rated radio shows, lectures, museums, and some of the first episodic TV shows. And for most of his prime years, the rest of the nation was suffering the effects of the Depression. But it turned out that Ripley's dispatches from all corners of the globe were exactly what America needed at the time. And, I'd argue: today, we still do.

J.M. - What do you hope readers take away from the book?
N.T. - Mainly I hope people will be inspired by Ripley. In all of my books, the real-life characters share an underdog quality. Having grown up with a sister who had a disability (Down syndrome), I've always been drawn to those who overcome some hardship or setback, who challenge themselves and achieve something remarkable. In Ripley's case, he enjoyed life to the extreme and was constantly amazed by it. And I hope readers will enjoy the wild ride of Ripley's rambling life and eccentric, lavish lifestyle while also discovering (as I did) that Ripley's influence is all around us, sixty-plus years after his death.

Images from A Curious Man Young Ripley [View larger](#)