



Graphic Novel Study Group
Study Guides

The Complete Crumb Comics Volume 5: Happy Hippy Comix Study guide by Dane Martin

1. Most of the satire in this period of Robert Crumb's work could be considered dated, since it deals primarily (although not entirely) with the "hippie" culture prominent during the time the work was produced. Do you feel as though the humor behind these strips still holds up today, or is it irrelevant? Explain.
2. Crumb experimented with several different formats for his strips during the short period covered in this book. There are the one-page East Village Other strips, the Zap and Motor City stories that run for several pages, the two-tier sketchbook comics, the physically small short comics and drawings for Snatch, and the longer, 16-page Fritz the Cat story. Describe differences between the different formal approaches, and how Crumb approached each style of comic strip.
3. Even this early in Crumb's career, he experimented, to some degree, with different drawing styles. Describe the differences between styles found within the book.
4. What do you think are some of Crumb's influences? Compare an element of Crumb's work, specific or unspecific, that reveals this influence.
5. Discuss page 35's Fritz the No-Good, the most ambitious story in the collection, lengthwise. Describe a scene that you feel is a good example of Fritz's slightly disturbing characterization.
6. What makes using the animal characters in Fritz the No-Good effective? Why not just use humans? Explain.
7. Although it may seem a little over-discussed at this point, no analysis of Robert Crumb's comics would be complete without bringing up the unsettling sexual and racist themes that pop up again and again in the work, particularly in this period. Do you feel that these elements detract from the stories for you, or are you able to cope with them? Discuss.
8. Much emphasis is put on Crumb's drawing, often without really mentioning or discussing his writing. Choose a story that has particularly effective writing, be it the dialogue or storytelling.
9. The Motor City story Lenore Goldberg and her Girl Commandos on page 112 features a Crumb style that is slightly more "realistic" than that of the rest of the stories in the collection. In many ways, it is a sort of precursor to Crumb's brush-drawn stories that appeared in Weirdo two decades later. How effective do you think this style is in comparison to the more "cartoony" style featured in most of the book's other stories? Does the art work for the story? Explain.
10. Choose a story or page in the book that you find particularly interesting. Discuss its formal elements, its narrative, its dialogue, and its drawing. What is it that makes it stand out? Explain.