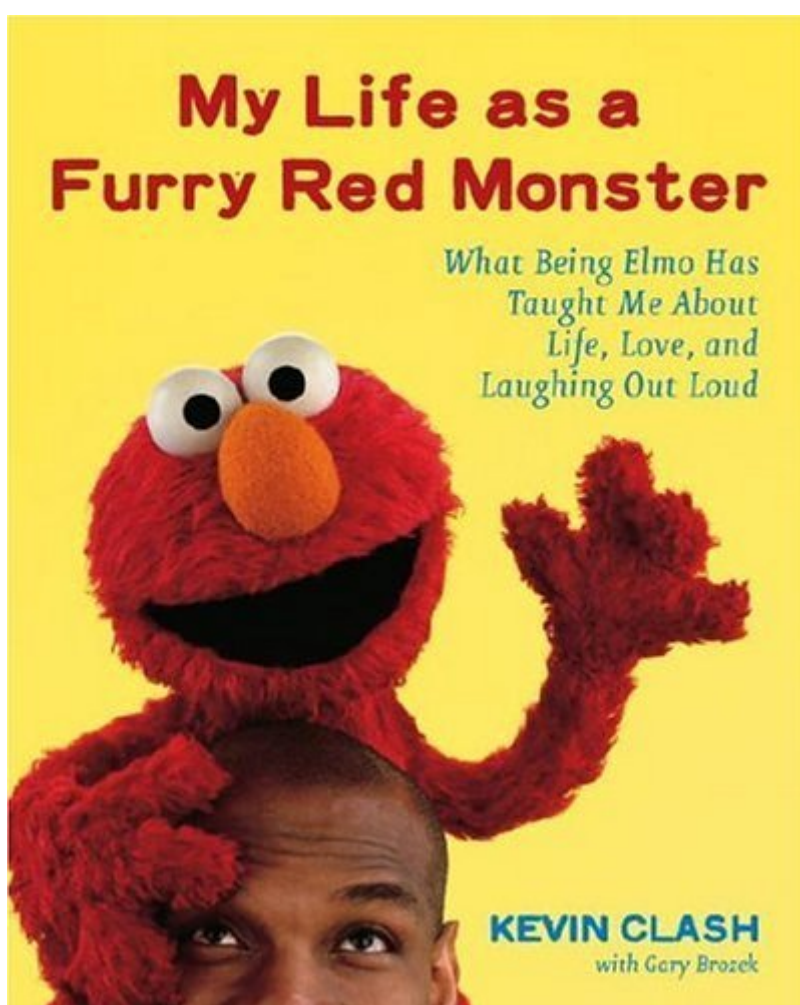


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# My Life As A Furry Red Monster: What Being Elmo Has Taught Me About Life, Love And Laughing Out Loud



## Synopsis

Hello, Everybody! The furry red monster known as Elmo has charmed his way into hearts and homes throughout the world with his unmistakable laugh, over-the-top enthusiasm, and boundless love. Elmo's appeal is nothing short of magical. Kids adore him, and parents find him irresistible. What is it about this little monster? Meet Kevin Clash, the man behind the Muppet and the unassuming heart and soul of Elmo. At last, the puppeteer who has performed Elmo for nearly twenty years comes out from behind the stage to share his story. Weaving together his memories of growing up with the life lessons gained from his furry red alter ego, Kevin reveals himself to be as caring, and as eager to grow and learn and love, as the very special character he brings to life. You will discover how young Kevin honed his talent entertaining the kids in his mother's home day care with puppets he made from slippers and coat liners; how, as a struggling young artist, he realized his dream to meet and then work for his idol, Muppet creator Jim Henson; and how each and every day of performing Elmo reinforces for him what is most important in life. As Kevin has been inspired by Elmo, now we can all learn from his furry red ways. Kevin's (and Elmo's) thoughts on love, creativity, friendship, and optimism remind us of life's simple truths and ultimately encourage us all to be a little bit more like Elmo •to live with joy, to love more easily, and to laugh more often.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I am, at heart, a child. A bitter, sarcastic child, yes, but a child nonetheless. I love animation. I like playing in the dirt. I adore the Muppets. I have absorbed Muppet trivia and information like a sponge. You tell me the Muppet (even a vague description) and I can spout back the puppet's name, puppeteer, and filmography. It was precisely for this reason that I finally picked up the autobiography of Muppeteer Kevin Clash, the voice of Elmo. Born and raised outside of Baltimore, Clash grew up building puppets out of his mother's slippers and the lining of his father's Sunday coats. By the age of 12, he was making money as a puppeteer, and by the time he was a teenager, he and his puppets were regulars on a local television show. By the time he was 19, he had established a career as a puppeteer with the Captain Kangaroo show and another one of my perennial favorites, The Great Space Coaster. Shortly thereafter, Clash found himself in the dream job of his youth as a Muppeteer with the great Jim Henson companies. The birth of Elmo was one of those happy flukes. Fellow muppeteer Richard Hunt, who passed away in 1994, flung a random puppet, then known as 'Baby Monster' to Clash and said, "Give it a voice, Clash." Since then, Elmo, as he was eventually renamed, has become a world-wide phenomenon. In My Life as a Furry Red Monster, Clash and his co-author take a rather unusual approach to the re-telling of Clash's life story and the story behind perhaps the most popular puppet in television history. Instead of a chronological retelling of his life history, Clash opts instead to divide the chapters into life lessons such as tolerance, friends, and joy. Using stories from his early childhood, his life as Elmo, and from Elmo's point of view, Clash illustrates the importance of these aspects of life. In some ways, this unique approach works. One can see, particularly in Clash's retelling of events that have happened to him as the voice of Elmo, how one small three and a half year old with a hyper-active imagination and an unlimited capacity to love has changed the world and improved it for so many. This is not, however, a history lesson in Elmo and the Muppets. The facts and behind-the-scenes tidbits that are so tantalizing and fascinating to a reader such as myself are in very short supply, and entirely out of order. We read about the death of Muppet creator Jim Henson within the first paragraph. We never really learn anything in-depth about Clash's induction into the Muppet hall-of-fame or how he progressed from muppeteer-in-training to director, producer, and muppeteer-in-training trainer. The writing is very accessible and engaging; the voice, personal. However, it is difficult to follow the

though path of Clash and his co-writer due to some very unusual stream-of-consciousness thought paths that have Clash in one paragraph recounting his childhood, the next paragraph preaching about a topic, and then immediately back to the Sesame Street studios. It's a short work, coming in at just over 200 half-sized pages, and when all is said and done, I felt rather unfulfilled by my experience. I also had a small complaint about the form factor of the book. Instead of being a standard size, the book was printed in an unusual 6.7" x 5.9" form factor, which makes holding the book open with one hand a difficult process. I found my hand cramping after just a few minutes holding the book open. Clash does do one job well, however, and that's relating Elmo's experiences to those faced by adults and the world in general. Clash relates particularly touching experiences, including the introduction of Elmo to a group of small school children in the newly apartheid-free South Africa in preparation for the release of a South African version of Sesame Street and his experiences in New Orleans following the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. It's easy to see how, in Elmo's life, the ability to distribute love freely has resulted in love being returned to him ten-fold--and the difference that has made in the lives of countless children and adults. Toward the end of the book, Clash writes "We go to school to learn--from our instructors, from our books, from each other. And at some point, we begin to listen to another teacher: our dreams. We think about what could be, what might happen once we're all grown up, what we might be able to do without our budding talents or our latest interests. Dreams are fragile things, but when they've been bolstered by the support of parents and teachers, and reinforced with early success, they can withstand the skeptics and take flight." This, perhaps more than any other statement, defines what this book is about. Though light on the "literature," history, and behind-the-scenes tidbits, *My Life As A Furry Red Monster* is all about the quest of a furry, red, three-and-a-half year old monster to make the world a better place, one hug and one laugh at a time. Rating: B

Elmo? A Furry Red Monster?? The only thing wrong with this book is the title: Elmo should be called a furry red LOVE monster! Thoroughly enjoyable book about Kevin Clash (Elmo's creator) and Elmo--who to me are one and the same--only difference is Kevin is not a redhead! Can't get enough of Elmo. Book is an excellent read and one to share with others.

As the mother of an Elmo-crazy toddler, I became intrigued with the little red guy and started looking on You-Tube for interviews with his puppeteer. I found him to be hysterically funny and never willing to compromise Elmo's status as a "3 and a half year old" to get laughs on any adult talk shows, like some performers might. I bought this book and now I am a true fan. Kevin Clash is smart, funny,

and devoted to children. You'll laugh, you'll cry (if you get through the story about him singing "Sing" to a young terminally ill girl without tears running down your face, then you're a Vulcan), you'll love Elmo just as much as your kids do! Very refreshing to have a role model like this. Thanks for the outstanding work, Kevin. Now, how can my kid meet you and Elmo???

I had been given this book as a gift & my puppy chewed it up. I was happy to replace it & I received the product in a couple days & it was in excellent shape.

Great book. basically just stories from Kevin Clash's life, before elmo and with elmo. Simple and a fast read, full of the innocence of childhood that we should bring back into our lives. a real uplifter. I'm in PA school with barely any time to do anything but study, so this is a great book to pick up when i have the time, to escape my hectic studying life and enjoy a good read, even if it's only for 5 minutes.

KEVIN CLASH IS A TRUE ARTIST AND I SO REGRET THE HARD TIMES HE HAS FALLEN UPON. I BOUGHT THIS BOOK FOR MY NEPHEW, WHO IS TWELVE AND SOOO CREATIVE~! HE LOVES IT. COME BACK, KEVIN CLASH~WE LOVE YOU TOO MUCH TO LET YA GO, MAN~XO

I ordered this book for my middle school daughter who needed to do a book on a black american during Black History Month. She said she was surprised to learn about his journey as being the voice of Elmo. Very interesting, and informational. It made her other classmates want to read the book as well.

This book I had to get it and read it as soon as I saw Kevin Clash on food network he was talking about the book I loved it so much I finished the book it a week it was good he really talks about his life and how he created Elmo my son loves Elmo so I can say that I know I will find myself reading this again and again thanks

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