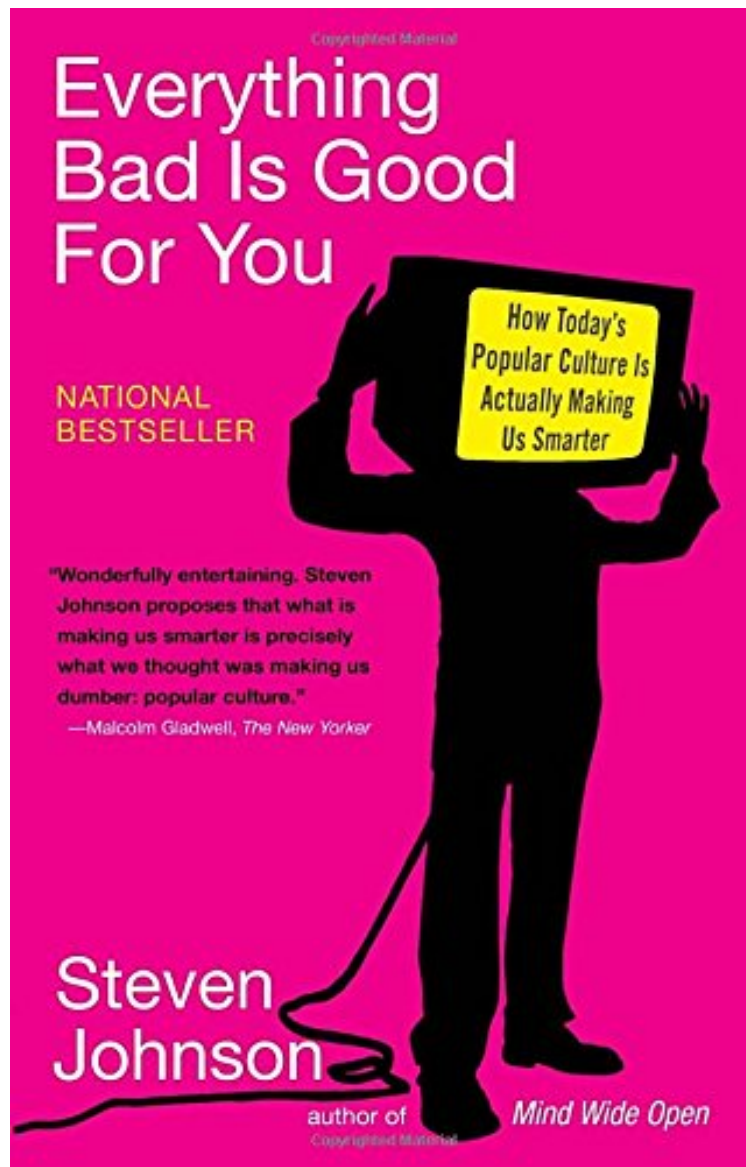


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Everything Bad is Good for You: How Today's Popular Culture is Actually Making Us Smarter

Steven Johnson

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Steven Johnson : Everything Bad is Good for You: How Today's Popular Culture is Actually Making Us Smarter before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Everything Bad is Good for You: How Today's Popular Culture is Actually Making Us Smarter:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great analysis of the complexity of pop culture and how we are drawn to it
By Brian G. Morin
The book categorized some things that were intuitively known to me but I had not systematized. That video games are more complex, and doing complex things makes us smarter. That tv shows were the same. That interactive challenging screen time is better and more challenging than hours of Facebook. I like it and feel justified in my geekhood.
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. This is good for you too
By Geraldo XEXEO
The writer's style feels like a conversation, where he tells about his ideas and some supportive research made by other persons. The lack of references in the text is compensated by a last chapter with comments about the origin of the data he used to support his claims. This informal text is what makes the book an easy and enjoyable reading. However, as a scientific result, the book is not completely sound, since his conclusions are based only on what he thinks is happening and the supportive that is not necessarily correlated with his findings. Parents, researchers and educators will find the book provocative. Actually, it defends that beyond content, form is also important, and maybe more important when we are talking about the new media (basically TV and games). As a general reader, it is a very good book. As a position book, it really makes the author's point of view. However, scientific oriented readers will feel something is missing.
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. great!!
By Customer
great!!

Forget everything you've ever read about the age of dumbed-down, instant-gratification culture. In this provocative, unfailingly intelligent, thoroughly researched, and surprisingly convincing big idea book, Steven Johnson draws from fields as diverse as neuroscience, economics, and media theory to argue that the pop culture we soak in every day from Lord of the Rings to Grand Theft Auto to The Simpsons has been growing more sophisticated with each passing year, and, far from rotting our brains, is actually posing new cognitive challenges that are actually making our minds measurably sharper. After reading *Everything Bad is Good for You*, you will never regard the glow of the video game or television screen the same way again. With a new afterword by the author.

.com In his fourth book, *Everything Bad Is Good for You*, iconoclastic science writer Steven Johnson (who used himself as a test subject for the latest neurological technology in his last book, *Mind Wide Open*) takes on one of the most widely held preconceptions of the postmodern world--the belief that video games, television shows, and other forms of popular entertainment are detrimental to Americans' cognitive and moral development. *Everything Good* builds a case to the contrary that is engaging, thorough, and ultimately convincing. The heart of Johnson's argument is something called the *Sleeper Curve*--a universe of popular entertainment that trends, intellectually speaking, ever upward, so that today's pop-culture consumer has to do more "cognitive work"--making snap decisions and coming up with long-term strategies in role-playing video games, for example, or mastering new virtual environments on the Internet-- than ever before. Johnson makes a compelling case that even today's least nutritional TV junk food like *The Joe Millionaires* and *Survivors* so commonly derided as evidence of America's cultural decline--is more complex and stimulating, in terms of plot complexity and the amount of external information viewers need to understand them, than the *Love Boats* and *I Love Lucys* that preceded it. When it comes to television, even (perhaps especially) crappy television, Johnson argues, "the content is less interesting than the cognitive work the show elicits from your mind." Johnson's work has been controversial, as befits a writer willing to challenge wisdom so conventional it has ossified into accepted truth. But even the most skeptical readers should be captivated by the intriguing questions Johnson raises, whether or not they choose to accept his answers. --Erica C. Barnett
From Publishers Weekly
Worried about how much time your children spend playing video games? Don't be, advises Johnson not only are they learning valuable problem-solving skills, they'd probably do better on an IQ test than you or your parents could at their age. Go ahead and let them watch more television, too, since even reality shows can function as "elaborately staged group psychology experiments" to stimulate rather than pacify the brain. With the same winning combination of personal revelation and friendly scientific explanation he displayed in last year's *Mind Wide Open*, Johnson shatters the conventional wisdom about pop culture as pabulum, showing how video games, television shows and movies have become increasingly complex. Furthermore, he says, consumers are drawn specifically to those products that require the most mental engagement, from small children who can't get enough of their favorite Disney DVDs to adults who find new layers of meaning with each repeated viewing of *Seinfeld*. Johnson lays out a strong case that what we do for fun is just as educational in its way as what we study in the classroom (although it's still worthwhile to encourage good reading habits, too). There's an important message here for every parent one they should hear from the source before savvy kids (especially teens) try to take advantage of it. Agent, Lydia Wills at Paradigm. (May) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.
From School Library Journal
Adult/High School Johnson puts the much-maligned pastime of playing video games under the microscope and comes up with some startling conclusions concerning the intellectual value and cognitive demands of this pop-culture activity. He argues that it isn't the content of today's games that engages the mind and makes one smarter; rather, it is their ever-increasing level of complexity and sophistication that challenges the mind to grow neurologically. One only comes to understand how to play a game by probing the complex interfaces within its levels to see what works as one goes along. Johnson observes that this is much like real life. He urges parents to sit down with their children and play in

order to understand just how mentally challenging the games can be. He extends his argument to TV series such as The Sopranos, 24, Six Feet Under, and Law and Order, all of which, he argues, are multi-threaded and require viewers to think in order to follow the increasingly complex character and plot developments. While the book and its arguments endorsing the cognitive challenges of video games and other mass media are thought-provoking and somewhat convincing, Johnson is less successful in convincing readers that video games especially the more violent ones are good for a player's mental health. While the book should be of value for reports, don't be surprised if many students can't resist citing it the next time their parents ask why they haven't finished their homework. Catherine Gilbride, Fairfax County Public Library, VA Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.