



The Book of General Ignorance

John Lloyd, John Mitchinson, Stephen Fry (Introduction), Alan Davies (Foreword)

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Camels store water in their humps and Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone, right? Wrong and wrong, according to the authors of The Book of General Ignorance, a witty and humorous tome that gives common misconceptions, misunderstandings and flawed facts the heave-ho. The Book of General Ignorance will activate the memory centers of your brain as you try to recall the information you learned. After all, you'll need to remember these fascinating tidbits to in order to impress everyone at dinner parties. Makes a great gift for trivia buffs, know-it-alls and aspiring game show contestants.

The Book of General Ignorance Details

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Author : John Lloyd , John Mitchinson , Stephen Fry (Introduction) , Alan Davies (Foreward)

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From Reader Review The Book of General Ignorance for online ebook

Abdulaziz Fagih says

QI: The Book of General Ignorance (The Noticeably Stouter Edition)

As the Book name indicate this a general knowledge book I haven't seen the show and I'm not sure I will. I got interested in this because I want something light to read as I was reading a lot and need some space and this book is an excellent idea to do that.

As of the content of the book it's targeting the Native English speaking community misconceptions so if you are not native you might not have these misconceptions

In general:

- Con:

- It target English speaking community.
- There are errors in some of the info they introduce.
- They introduce a lot of boring and unnecessary stuff regarding the Question they answer.
- Some of the items are theoretical unproven answers.
- No citation for references and sources.
- Some time all they did was argue semantics.
- There are a lot of old news kind of Info
- Not that funny.

+ Pro:

- It sure gives you the space to read slowly since the info take from 1 to 3 pages only.
- It gives you the necessary motive to go a check the info from more reliable sources.
- There some fascinating and interesting information

I think 2/5 is fare assessment for such book.

Bobparr says

Il problema di questo libro è smettere di leggerlo. Idealmente, andrebbe a fianco de "L'originale miscellanea di Schott", per la cacofonia di informazioni condensate a volte in una unica risposta a domande assolutamente banali e scontate. E' curioso, documentato, insolito, utile.

Ogni tanto bisogna mettere i puntini sulle "i", e questo libro lo fa, scardinando i luoghi comuni che - tra le altre cose - fanno di Amerigo Vespucci il navigatore da cui prese nome l'America, identificano lo struzzo come l'animale che mette la testa sotto la sabbia e identificano la Svezia come una nazione ad alto tasso di suicidi.

Kyle Johnson says

If you've never seen an episode (or even a clip) of QI, the british panel show from the BBC, you owe it to yourself to head straight to YouTube and start watching. (I highly recommend the Mannequin Bird clip, and the Parthenon clip. These two made me cry with laughter) Stephen Fry is a delight to watch, Allen Davies is hysterical, and many of the guests add unexpected wit. Series regular Bill Bailey (who is also a regular on Nevermind The Buzzcocks, a similar show about pop music) stands out amongst the many other outstanding guests.

What does this have to do with "The Book of General Ignorance?" Well first, those two ugly characters on the front of the book are badly done drawings of Fry and Davies. And second, many of the questions from the show's General Ignorance part of the episodes, are in this book. Its a collection of the most random tidbits of knowledge you probably think you know, but don't.

This is the kind of book you take on a long road trip with your family, to entertain everyone as you drive. It might even pair well with an edition of Trivial Pursuit, though I suspect a few of the answers may contradict eachother. Its up to you to decide which one is correct.

James says

Fun book full of interesting facts and unique snippets of information. I was finding it hard to dedicate a lot of time to reading each day, so this book was ideal, being divided into short, fascinating segments -- because I was picking the book up irregularly, it meant I was not constantly having to remind myself of where I left up. Overall a fun, light read.

Lolly's Library says

I may not be the next Ken Jennings upon finishing this book, but it's possible I could stand a reasonable chance to win a few bucks should I ever appear on a trivia-based game show. Short, witty, and cleverly devil- wait, that's not right. Whatever. **The Book of General Ignorance** is a perfect book to test the contents of your brain to see what floats...and if it floats, it should be flushed. (Too gross an analogy? Sorry.) To be honest, since I have a trivial brain (and, yes, I mean every word of that), I actually knew quite a few of the tidbits presented within the book, although if someone had asked me to name them directly, the most intelligible answer they would've received would've been something along the lines of, "Um, wait, I know who/what/where/when that is, I just can't quite remember. I definitely know it's not who/what/where/when you think it is. Give me a minute, 'kay?" (At least that's a more coherent response than if I actually did appear on a game show; with the glare of the bright lights and glittering eyes of a studio audience, I would be reduced to a quivering mass unable to say anything more than "Durumdedumyoudoodleoododulawhat?" Or something equivalent.) However, there were enough surprises sprinkled throughout the entries to have me gasping out a "No way!" every few pages.

For a quick read or as something to scan in between reading projects, **The Book of General Knowledge** is a perfect book for that most entertaining of past-times, that of stuffing your brain with useless information (and risking the possibility of losing important information along the way) just to whip out said trivia to entertain your friends. Hey, it makes for great fun at parties! Especially when you start drooling and can't remember

your own name...but at least you know how many penises a European earwig has. (Curious to know how many too? Read the book to find out!)

Louisa says

How many penises does an European earwig have?

Two. The European or Black earwig carries a special one in case the first one snaps off, which happens quite frequently.

I love trivia (cue me spending hours on Cracked.com). I especially love strange trivia. Penis trivia? Booyah!

This book was easy to get through too - one can pick it up at any point again to discover something new about the universe. I'm a huge fan of the TV series QI. Any lover of the Stephen-Fry-run quiz show should enjoy this, as will anyone who likes, well, penis trivia. And who really invented the telephone, etc. etc.

Nikki says

Very good for reading just a bit of before bed, palate-cleansing during frantic essay writing, or sitting down with for an hour straight, thinking 'just one more page'... I haven't actually seen much of the TV show, but I do follow @qikipedia and have heard my mother hooting away with mirth when watching the tv show. The book isn't as funny, most of the time, but it does succeed in being Quite Interesting.

It covers a lot of facts I've read elsewhere in other books (some of which I suspect of taking their topics at least from here, if not the text) and a lot that I've never read elsewhere. If general knowledge sort of stuff is your thing, this and the New Scientist books are probably your best bet...

Bronwen says

Bloody brilliant! One of the most fascinating books I have ever read. Highly enjoyable and highly recommended!

Bill Holmes says

I've been perusing this one for awhile, as I find that trivia books are best absorbed in small doses. This is one of the better efforts in the genre, a little more erudite than some.

The format is essentially this:

"Here's a piece of trivia you thought you knew. But you're wrong, there's more to it than that. And while we're on the topic, here are a few more facts and observations that are sort of related to the original subject but perhaps not so much."

You'll learn, among other things, that Henry VIII technically had only two wives, that marmots are the most deadly mammals humans have ever encountered, and that bees were the first animals to "realize" that the earth is round.

All in all, a useful resource for debunking those who presume to have knowledge of trivia that is superior to yours.

Becky says

This was an interesting book full of trivia that nobody knows. Now if only I had friends geeky enough to quote it at. :D

I didn't really find this all that humorous, except for the one bit towards the end about the theory of the wise man visiting Jesus who put off getting a gift for the savior until too late and the shops were closed, so had to go halfsies on the frankincense. I giggled at that.

I probably would have rated this higher had I read it instead of listening to the audio. The authors, John Lloyd and John Mitchinson, read this one, and while they didn't do nearly as badly as some authors I've listened to, I found them to be a bit boring. One of the Johns has a quite raspy/gravelly voice, and I kept hoping for someone to get him a glass of water or a lozenge or something. Then there were the accents given to quoted materials, which were... well, just not good.

I say it in almost every time I review an audiobook: Please stop doing voices. It is not necessary, and almost never adds to the performance. I'd rather the reader err on the side of too subtle than too much.

But, nonetheless, a good book full of interesting stuff. Recommended.

Özlem Güzelharcan says

Okumas? h?zl? ve keyifli bir kitap. Bo? zaman doldurmak için ideal.

Serena.. Sery-ously? says

Se pensate che il motore a vapore sia stato inventato da James Watt (.. Pivello!), che il materiale più comune sulla terra sia l'ossigeno o l'azoto, che le possibilità di morire per un fulmine siano maggiori di quelle per un asteroide, che Fleming abbia scoperto la penicillina o vi chiedete perché le falene siano attratte dalla luce o di dove sia Babbo Natale (e no, non parliamo nemmeno dell'invenzione della Coca Cola!)..

ALLORA questo libro fa per voi!!!!

Mi sono divertita un sacco con alcune domande/risposte.. In altre ho assunto il cipiglio da: "MA CHE

DAVVERO??? DOV'ERO IO QUANDO ACCADEVA?!" mentre per altre ero lì a gongolare dicendo: "Ah-ah. Ah-ah. Sì, sì, questa la sapevo! Olè!"

Insomma, ce ne è davvero per tutti i gusti e si legge in uno starnuto.. Consigliato! (Anche se "Il libro sull'ignoranza degli animali è molto più carino! :3)

Britt says

This book did have a lot of interesting bits of information in it, but I don't feel like it succeeded in its goal. We were to learn the truth about so many things about which we have been misinformed. I didn't find that I actually had the incorrect knowledge on most of this. I think a lot of what they did was argue semantics or just phrase things in tricky ways. For instance, we were properly informed about the highest v. tallest mountain, so Everest would not have been the answer they were looking for. Tricked ya! It might be the highest but it's not the tallest! Yes, ok, didn't we actually learn that in like 8th grade or somewhere thereabout? Or how about there are actually only 46 states and 4 commonwealths. Really? I mean, this has almost no bearing on anything, so who but those who want to trick people with these questions actually cares?

There were a few questions that relied on only 1 study to contradict what people commonly believe on a topic, or what other studies have concluded. An example of this would be the question on how much sleep people actually need. Why should I believe this study over other studies?

I'm also dubious as to the accuracy of many of their answers. Some of the questions didn't even have real answers, they just threw around commonly held theories such as on the origins of the Hokey-Pokey. Or word origins, we know how easy those can be to track. Wasn't the point to discount the common myths and provide us with truth?

I had a major issue with the fact that they had a book filled with information purporting to be corrections to common misconceptions, but there was no bibliography or footnotes or anything to tell us where they got most of this information. Guess what? I can contradict most commonly held beliefs by looking for information on the Most Reliable and All-Knowing Internet. So why should I believe any of this if they don't even tell us where they found their super special knowledge?

I know this book was meant to be fun, and a lot of it was, but there are just some standards that should always be met when you want someone to accept as truth the information you are sharing. Otherwise, all you're doing is adding to the common misconceptions.

Amer Alkharoubi says

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Scott Klemm says

John Lloyd and John Mitchinson's book, *The Book of General Ignorance*, is an interesting collection of trivia. The subtitle on the book's jacket says "Everything you think you know is wrong." Each entry, a short page or page and a half, discusses some popular misconception covering such fields as history, botany, zoology, physics, geology, medicine, sports, etc. Some previous reviews have mentioned the lack of documentation. Undoubtedly, the vast array of topics would require endnotes nearly as long as the text itself. In general, the book appears to be well researched and reliable. However, no one can be an expert in every field of knowledge, and Lloyd and Mitchinson are not infallible.

On page 63, the authors state, "Rhinos are the only animal to have a horn that is entirely made from keratin; unlike those of cattle, sheep, antelopes, and giraffes, they don't have any bone core." Neither do giraffes. Giraffe "horns" are actually ossicones derived from ossified cartilage and covered with skin and fur.

On page 74 it is stated that “Nero also invented ice cream (runners brought mountain snow flavored with fruit juice) ...” You cannot have ice cream without cream. Fruit flavored ice would be what Americans would call a snow cone.

In the discussion of Julius Caesar (p. 78), the authors tell us that “Romans pronounced ‘Caesar’ as *kaiser* (which is still the German word for ‘king’ ...).” Wrong. The German word for king is *koenig*. *Kaiser* means emperor.

On page 243, it's alleged that the biblical story of Jesus' virgin birth was the result of Christianity absorbing "pagan ideas to broaden its appeal." The authors assert that "Perseus and Dionysus in Greek mythology, Horus in Egyptian and Mithra, a Persian deity whose cult rivaled Christianity in popularity, were all 'born of virgins.'" Wrong again. Perseus was born of Zeus and Danae, Dionysus of Zeus and Semele, Horus of Osiris and Isis, and Mithra from a rock.

Was Adolf Hitler a good Catholic? You would think so according to this book. To support their contention, the authors provide a 1928 quote from Hitler in which he said, "I am now, as before, a Catholic and will always remain so" (p. 194). At this point in time Hitler had not acquired full power and could not afford to alienate a large segment of the population. His real opinion is revealed in Hitler's Table Talk, a collection of his private conversations compiled by a close aid during the war years. In it he calls Christianity one of the great "scourges" of history, and blamed the Jews for inventing Christianity.

Malak Alrashed says

*The book is inspired by a BBC comedy quiz show. Go to YouTube and watch it! It's funny.

How much you think you know? And even if you think you know enough information, do you think all of them are true?

This is what the book is about; it corrects the misconceptions that everyone thinks they're true basically because they are "a common knowledge". There are so many things that will shock you and make you wonder how much we really know? And, most importantly, how much of it is true?

I loved getting to know that Mount Everest isn't really the tallest mountain on earth, it is the Mauna Kea it's 10,000 m (33,000 ft) tall while Mount Everest is 8,848 metres (29,029 ft). Another thing that I liked is that piece of information about the driest place on earth, do you know that the driest place on earth is Antarctica and it's considered as a desert? Some of the continent parts have seen no rain since two million years (desert defined as a place that receives less than 25mm of rain a year) o_o!

I found it entertaining to read this book because it's comprehensive; you can find information about anything and everything in it: animals, science, sports and places which all are divided to questions and then followed by a paragraph answering the Q. You may find "some" silly things, things that you think are not important to know, but generally the book is good, light and simply written. I only wished it contained a source of the informations that are mentioned.

Patrick Gibson says

What's the tallest mountain in the world? Think you know right, Mount Everest, at 29,029 feet? Nope, it is Mauna Kea. Though it is a modest 13,799 above sea level, measured from its seabed base to its summit, it is a whopping 33,465 feet in height, almost three-quarters of a mile higher than Mount Everest. What's the driest place in the world? The Sahara right? It is dry alright, getting just one inch of rain a year but it is the third driest place on Earth. The driest in fact is Antarctica, as some areas of the continent have not seen rain for two million years. The second driest is the Atacama Desert in Chile, which averages 0.004 inch of rain a year, and some areas have not seen rain for four hundred years. You have been told that Eskimo is a rude term right, that the preferred term now is Inuit? True, Inuit is the preferred term in Canada, but Alaskan Eskimos are perfectly happy with the name as they "are emphatically not Inuit, a people who live mainly in northern Canada and parts of Greenland." In fact there are many types of Eskimo, of which the Inuit are just one type (the others include the Kalaallit of Greenland and the Yupiget and the Alutiiq of Alaska). Think the first turkeys eaten by English-speaking peoples were the Pilgrims? Nope, Turkeys first reached Europe in the 1520s, brought from their native Mexico by Spain and sold throughout Europe by Turkish merchants, by 1585 becoming a Christmas tradition in England. Perhaps you have heard that chop suey is actually an American dish. Not so, according to this book, it is a local dish of southern Canton, where it is called tsap sei, which means "miscellaneous scraps" in Cantonese, brought over by early Chinese immigrants to California. How many states of matter? Three right, solid, liquid, and gas? Nope, more like fifteen, as the list includes such states as plasma, superfluid, degenerate matter, fermionic condensate, Bose-Einstein condensate, and strange matter.

Others questions and answers deal with just plain odd things that I didn't know. Croatia for instance gave the world the necktie, as Hrvat is the Croatian word for "Croat" and where the word cravat comes from. In the

17th century, Louis XIII of France kept a regiment of Croatian mercenaries during the Thirty Years War who as part of their uniform wore a wide, brightly colored neck cloth by which they became known, a style that was later much copied in Paris. St. Bernard dogs have never, ever carried barrels of brandy around their neck; the myth comes from an 1831 painting by a young English artist named Sir Edwin Landseer, who in his work 'Alpine Mastiffs Reanimating a Distressed Traveler' painted two St. Bernards, one with a miniature brandy barrel around its neck which he added "for interest." 'Ursus arctos' is not the scientific name for the polar bear, it is the name for the brown bear, as ursus is Latin for bear and arctos is Greek for bear. The Arctic, interestingly enough, is named after the bear, not the other way around, as it is "the region of the bear."

I have only one complaint about the book. Though it does include a helpful index, it lacks any mention of sources. Though not presented a serious scholarly work but merely a fun book to read, it might have nice to include some list of references.

Al Young says

The Book of General Ignorance purports that everything you know is wrong which means its either because we have longtime cultural memes (like cannibals cooking people in big pots) or technically true (Mauna Kea in Hawaii is taller than Everest from base to tip but starts under sea level) or just unlikely (the most dangerous animal is the mosquito).

So, there's things like Loofahs aren't Sponges, Cashews aren't nuts, Chameleons don't change their color to match their background and moths aren't attracted to light. All stuff that won't make you a better husband, more productive at work, or get you into college, but the type of things you might talk about at the right type of parties.

I grew up on The Book Of Lists and I love this type of stuff. In 2018, the internet is powered by this kind of stuff because it makes for the best clickbait on social media. So, I give credit that most of the book is filled with stuff that I wouldn't probably know. Also, each question/answer is about 3/4 page of long. This is the perfect size to give the answer and then move on- not too short but not too long. It also is a relatively short book but doesn't "feel" short.

The book is based off the British Show QI, which I wasn't familiar with, and although it has a British slant, there were maybe only a couple of times where I might have missed the reference. It seemed to be written for an universal audience.

As far as these books go, it does a good job. It is 'bathroom reader' style material, but that's a good thing. Recommended for those who think similarly.

Rowena says

I watch the BBC's Quite Interesting comedy quiz show this book is based on (or is it the other way around?). After watching the show and reading this book, I want to know what exactly are we taught at school? So many misconceptions, for one. I found the book very interesting and also humourous. I definitely learned a

lot of cool facts from it.

Tim says

Great little book of snippets of facts that one is unlikely to know. In fact it is written in such a way that it often turns misconceptions on their head with a touch of humour at the same time.

The result is normally something like, "Oooh i didnt know that! Would you ever!"

A great book for keeping in the toilet as there are lots of little sections to be read stand alone ;)
