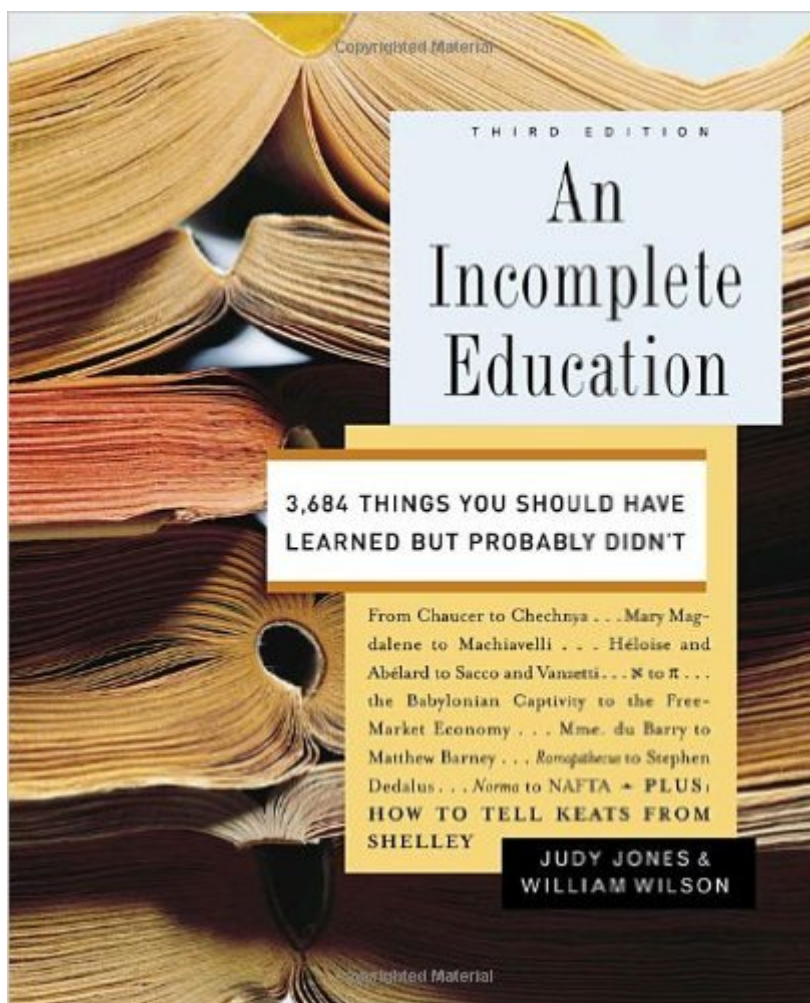


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# An Incomplete Education: 3,684 Things You Should Have Learned But Probably Didn't



## Synopsis

When it was originally published in 1987, *An Incomplete Education* became a surprise bestseller. Now this instant classic has been completely updated, outfitted with a whole new arsenal of indispensable knowledge on global affairs, popular culture, economic trends, scientific principles, and modern arts. Here's your chance to brush up on all those subjects you slept through in school, reacquaint yourself with all the facts you once knew (then promptly forgot), catch up on major developments in the world today, and become the Renaissance man or woman you always knew you could be! How do you tell the Balkans from the Caucasus? What's the difference between fission and fusion? Whigs and Tories? Shiites and Sunnis? Deduction and induction? Why aren't all Shakespearean comedies necessarily thigh-slappers? What are transcendental numbers and what are they good for? What really happened in Plato's cave? Is postmodernism dead or just having a bad hair day? And for extra credit, when should you use the adjective continual and when should you use continuous? *An Incomplete Education* answers these and thousands of other questions with incomparable wit, style, and clarity. American Studies, Art History, Economics, Film, Literature, Music, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, Religion, Science, and World History: Here's the bottom line on each of these major disciplines, distilled to its essence and served up with consummate flair. In this revised edition you'll find a vitally expanded treatment of international issues, reflecting the seismic geopolitical upheavals of the past decade, from economic free-fall in South America to Central Africa's world war, and from violent radicalization in the Muslim world to the crucial trade agreements that are defining globalization for the twenty-first century. And don't forget to read the section *A Nervous American's Guide to Living and Loving on Five Continents* before you answer a personal ad in the *International Herald Tribune*. As delightful as it is illuminating, *An Incomplete Education* packs ten thousand years of culture into a single superbly readable volume. This is a book to celebrate, to share, to give and receive, to pore over and browse through, and to return to again and again.

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## Customer Reviews

The thing I most remember from ALL my college courses is this book. AN INCOMPLETE EDUCATION is truly a wonderful supplement to any person's knowledge. This book is basically an intellectual history overview with a lot of helpful charts and guides. It's written in a very humorous tone, and it hits the humor target more often than not. If you feel that you lack knowledge, this is the book for you. It's not in depth, but it does tell you what you SHOULD know in all areas, including history, philosophy, music, art, and even film. My personal favorite features are the Latin abbreviations and the "Words you pronounce wrong but if you pronounced them right, you'd be considered a pretentious snob" feature. For a good time (and to increase your IQ), read this book. It's tongue-in-cheek, but it's a wealth of information.

After giving this book to my daughter upon her graduation, I found I couldn't resist buying another copy for myself. Whether you're interested in a "refresher" or in a quick briefing on an academic area you never had time for--film studies, for example--or structuralist and post-structuralist criticism--you're likely to find the field treated in this lively, fascinating, edifying volume. The authors provide definitions, canons of the essential works, profiles of major contributors to the field, and judicious evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of each major thinker or artist. When an individual, text or movement is overrated or becoming passe, the authors are not afraid to say so. And unlike similar collections--the "Dummies" books, for example--this text is far more than an accumulation of trivia. The authors manage to provide narrative continuity to each academic area and, above all, a sense of perspective. Since their judgements strike me as on target in the areas with which I'm familiar, I'm inclined to trust them in those disciplines I don't know much about. The only reason not to pick up the book right away is the possibility that a new edition is just around the corner.

I found this book to be entirely unlike what I expected. I was hoping for a book that gives snippets of information that adults could use in everyday life but are missing, regarding issues such as

grammar, etiquette, law, and so forth. That is not what this book deals with. Laid forth are the histories of various fields, with respect to the creators, movers, and shakers of the classics and masterpieces. While there is some trivia as such, what you learn from this book is not only how things such as economics, popular music, literature, etc., got started, but the major courses they traversed, i.e., WHY THINGS ARE THE WAY THEY ARE TODAY. This book won't give you much to boast about at a cocktail party, but will give you an overall understanding of the state of the arts, politics, and the rest of the world in general, which may be of more use than what I had intended on buying in the first place.

I first ran across this book on a friend's coffee table. After thumbing through it, I knew I had to have a copy of my own. It is witty, humorous and surprisingly accurate. The authors intentionally don't take the subject matter seriously in deference to those legions of name droppers and intellectuals who do. Each chapter covers a specific subject area ("Art history", "Film", "Music", etc.) which is further broken down into essential "need-to-know" sections like "A Trio of Geographical Clarifications for a Nation that, Frankly Would Rather Skateboard" or "A Night at the Opera: manners and morals for the MTV Generation." The writing itself is similarly tongue-in-cheek. In a section titled "How to Tell Keats from Shelly" the authors write, "Keats is the one you'd play racquetball with. He wasn't happy, exactly, but he was better adjusted and less the outcast than Shelly and it shows." I certainly got a kick out of reading it. If you are searching for a good laugh that is also enlightening, (and will fill the holes in your college education), this is the book for you. But PLEASE don't take this book too seriously.

This book was given to me as a gift upon completion of my MBA to "round out" my education. I read it cover to cover and enjoyed it very much (I am ordering a new copy because a friend "borrowed" it). I had great fun with the witty commentary. In fact, at times, I thought that absurd analogies actually helped explain esoteric and abstract concepts in a more simple and understandable manner (maybe my philosophy prof should consider these methods). I understand the criticism of many people who claim that the book is a shallow and "incomplete" coverage of the topics - it absolutely is. Reading the section on opera by no means makes one an expert or replaces the experience, nor does it intend to. Instead, I think it either gives a novice a fun introduction or presents the expert with a funny perspective on what they already know. So, having been to both Wagner and Mozart operas, I enjoyed reading how they could contrast the two in layman's terms (a great chapter, I might add). Simply put: If you are capable of not taking it too seriously, you'll love

this book. If not, don't take yourself too seriously, and then buy it!

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