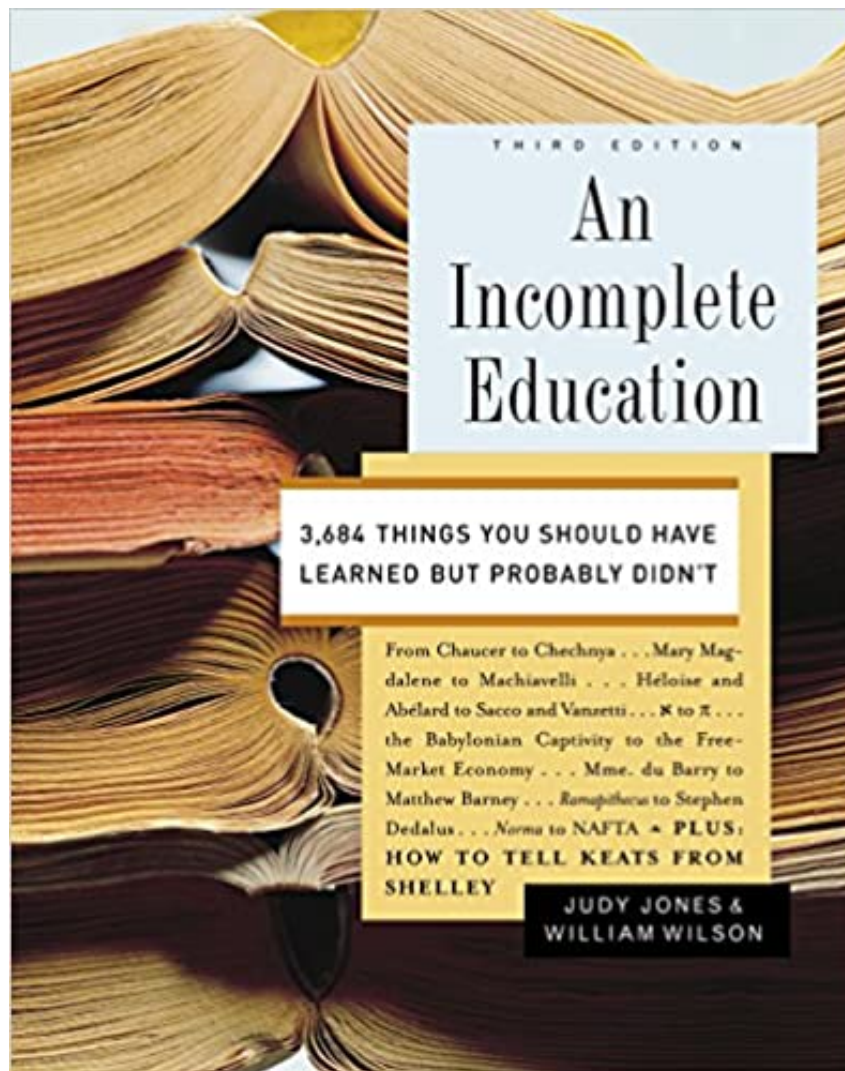


An Incomplete Education: 3,684 Things You Should Have Learned but Probably Didn't

by

Judy Jones



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Synopsis

A completely updated, revised edition of the classic, 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.

Sort review

Praise for *An Incomplete Education* "AN ASTONISHING AMOUNT OF INFORMATION."—The New York Times "IT IS PRECISELY THE BOOK THAT I'VE ALWAYS WANTED WITHOUT KNOWING THAT I ALWAYS WANTED IT. . . . It's for people who have huge gaps in their knowledge of specific areas of culture and intellectual history. . . . Cheerfully, subversively anti-academic."—Jon Carrol, *San Francisco Chronicle* "MEMORIZE THIS BOOK AND YOU CAN DROP NAMES, ALLUSIONS, AND ARCANE TERMS WITH THE BEST OF THEM, whether you (or they) know what they're talking about. . . . The book will rekindle warm memories of your favorite courses, favorite professors, favorite books, favorite theories, favorite philosophical paradoxes."—Chicago Tribune "RUSH TO YOUR NEAREST BOOKSTORE AND BUY *An Incomplete Education*. . . . [It] brings you 10,000 years of information. Imagine the power of

knowing where Watteau went when the lights went out!”—New York Daily News“ARTICULATE AND IRREVERENT, crammed with facts, figures, drawings, definitions, and historic information sufficient to fill your every gap. . . . Judy Jones and William Wilson . . . tell you everything you should’ve learned but didn’t.—Esquire“THIS BOOK GETS AN A+.”—The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

About the Author Judy Jones is a freelance writer who lives in Princeton, New Jersey. William Wilson was also a freelance writer. Wilson went to Yale and Jones to Smith, but both have maintained that they got their real educations in the process of writing this book. William Wilson died in 1999.

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American Literature 101 You signed up for it thinking it would be a breeze. After all, you’d read most of the stuff back in high school, hadn’t you? Or had you? As it turned out, the thing you remembered best about Moby-Dick was the expression on Gregory Peck’s face as he and the whale went down for the last time. And was it really The Scarlet Letter you liked so much? Or was it the Classics Illustrated version of The Scarlet Letter? Of course, you weren’t the only one who overestimated your familiarity with your literary heritage; your professor was busy making the same mistake. Then there was the material itself, much of it so bad it made you wish you’d signed up for The Nineteenth Century French Novel: Stendhal to Zola instead. Now that you’re older, though, you may be willing to make allowances. After all, the literary figures you were most likely to encounter the first semester were by and large only moonlighting as writers. They had to spend the bulk of their time building a nation, framing a constitution, carving a civilization out of the wilderness, or simply busting their chops trying to make a living. In those days, no one was about to fork over six figures so some Puritan could lie around Malibu polishing a screenplay. Try, then, to think only kind and patriotic thoughts as, with the help of this chart, you refresh your memory on all those things you were asked to face—or to face again—in your freshman introduction to American Lit.

JONATHAN EDWARDS (1703-1758) Product of:Northampton, Massachusetts, where he ruled from the pulpit for thirty years; Stockbridge, Massachusetts, where he became an Indian missionary after the townspeople of Northampton got fed up with him. Earned a Living as a:Clergyman, theologian. High-School Reading List:The sermon, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” (1741), the most famous example of “the preaching of terror.” College Reading List:Any number of sermons, notably “God Glorified in the Work of Redemption by the Greatness of Man’s Dependence on Him in the Whole of It” (1731), Edwards’ first sermon, in which he pinpoints the moral failings of New Englanders; and “A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God” (1737), describing various types and stages of religious conversion. Also, if your college professor was a fundamentalist, a New Englander, or simply sadistic, one or two of the treatises, e.g., “A Careful and Strict Enquiry into the Freedom of the Will” (1754), or the “Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended” (1758). Not to be missed: a dip into Edwards’ Personal Narrative, which suggests the psychological connection between being America’s number-one Puritan clergyman and the only son in a family with eleven children. What You Were Supposed to Have Learned in High School:Edwards’ historical importance as quintessential Puritan thinker and hero of the Great Awakening, the religious

revival that swept New England from the late 1730s to 1750. What You Didn't Find Out Until College:What Edwards thought about, namely, the need to get back to the old-fashioned Calvinist belief in man's basic depravity and in his total dependence on God's goodwill for salvation. (Forget about the "covenant" theory of Protestantism; according to Edwards, God doesn't bother cutting deals with humans.) Also, his insistence that faith and conversion be emotional, not just intellectual.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN (1706-1790) Product of:Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Earned a Living as a:Printer, promoter, inventor, diplomat, statesman. High-School Reading List:The Declaration of Independence (1776), which he helped draft. College Reading List:The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin (1771– 1788), considered one of the greatest autobiographies ever written; sample maxims from Poor Richard's Almanack (1732– 1757), mostly on how to make money or keep from spending it; any number of articles and essays on topics of historical interest, ranging from "Rules by Which a Great Empire May Be Reduced to a Small One," and "An Edict by the King of Prussia" (both 1773), about the colonies' Great Britain problem, to "Experiments and Observations on Electricity" (1751), all of which are quite painless. What You Were Supposed to Have Learned in High School:Not a thing. But back in grade school you presumably learned that Franklin invented a stove, bifocal glasses, and the lightning rod; that he established the first, or almost the first, library, fire department, hospital, and insurance company; that he helped negotiate the treaty with France that allowed America to win independence; that he was a member of the Constitutional Convention; that he was the most famous American of the eighteenth century (after George Washington) and the closest thing we've ever had to a Renaissance man. What You Didn't Find Out Until College:That Franklin had as many detractors as admirers, for whom his shrewdness, pettiness, hypocrisy, and nonstop philandering embodied all the worst traits of the American character, of American capitalism, and of the Protestant ethic.

WASHINGTON IRVING (1783-1859) Product of:New York City and Tarrytown, New York. Earned a Living as a:Writer; also, briefly, a diplomat. High-School Reading List:"Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," both contained in The Sketch Book (1820). College Reading List:Other more or less interchangeable selections from The Sketch Book, Bracebridge Hall (1822), Tales of a Traveller (1824), or The Legends of the Alhambra (1832), none of which stuck in anyone's memory for more than ten minutes. What You Were Supposed to Have Learned in High School:That Irving was the first to prove that Americans could write as well as Europeans; that Ichabod Crane and Rip Van Winkle's wife both got what they deserved. What You Didn't Find Out Until College:That Irving's grace as a stylist didn't quite make up for his utter lack of originality, insight, or depth.

JAMES FENIMORE COOPER (1789-1851) Product of:Cooperstown, New York. Earned a Living as a:Gentleman farmer. High-School Reading List:Probably none; The Leatherstocking Tales, i.e., The Pioneers (1823), The Last of the Mohicans (1826), The Prairie (1827), The Pathfinder (1840), and The Deerslayer (1841) are considered grade-school material. College Reading List:Social criticism, such as Notions of the Americans (1828), a defense of America against the sniping of foreign visitors; or "Letter to his Countrymen" (1834), a diatribe written in response to bad reviews of his

latest novel. What You Were Supposed to Have Learned in High School: That Cooper was America's first successful novelist and that Natty Bumppo was one of the all-time most popular characters in world literature. Also that The Leatherstocking Tales portrayed the conflicting values of the vanishing wilderness and encroaching civilization. What You Didn't Find Out Until College: That the closest Cooper ever got to the vanishing wilderness was Scarsdale, and that, in his day, he was considered an insufferable snob, a reactionary, a grouch, and a troublemaker known for defending slavery and opposing suffrage for everyone but male landowners. That eventually, everyone decided the writing in The Leatherstocking Tales was abominable, but that during the 1920s Cooper's social criticism began to seem important and his thinking pretty much representative of American conservatism. RALPH WALDO EMERSON (1803-1882) Product of: Concord, Massachusetts. Earned a Living as a: Unitarian minister, lecturer. High-School Reading List: A few passages from Nature (1836), Emerson's paean to individualism, and a couple of the Essays (1841), one of which was undoubtedly the early, optimistic "Self-Reliance." If you were spending a few days on Transcendentalism, you probably also had to read "The Over-Soul." If, on the other hand, your English teacher swung toward an essay like "The Poet," it was, no doubt, accompanied by a snatch of Emersonian verse— most likely "Brahma" or "Days." (You already knew Emerson's "Concord Hymn" from grade-school history lessons, although you probably didn't know who wrote it.) College Reading List: Essays and more essays, including "Experience," a tough one. Also the lecture "The American Scholar," in which Emerson called for a proper American literature, freed from European domination. What You Were Supposed to Have Learned in High School: That Emerson was the most important figure of the Transcendentalist movement, whatever that was, the friend and benefactor of Thoreau, and a legend in his own time; also, that he was a great thinker, a staunch individualist, an unshakable optimist, and a first-class human being, even if you wouldn't have wanted to know him yourself. What You Didn't Find Out Until College: That you'd probably be a better person if you had known him yourself and that almost any one of his essays could see you through an identity crisis, if not a nervous breakdown. Read more

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What people say about this book

Lew Troop, "Relevant Irreverence. A book of snippets about some important and some not so important things could be a jumbled mess more reflecting the authors and their tastes rather than a pocket full of miracles which is what this book is. I had my shoulder in a sling following a total replacement and needed something to read that didn't require me to remember plot elements, wasn't spiritually uplifting but yet rose above best seller list trash, memoirs of the unimportant and books aimed at self improvement; Given surgical help, I'd been as improved as, for that time, as I wished to be. Of the thousands of articles, many with illustrations, there's not one that could not be said to have value at some point in some way. Sure, you may never wander into a dinner party where the topic is the Dialogues of Plato but, should that happen, you'll be at least a leg up and not think that Plato is a Greek restaurant or a brand of yoghurt. Even subjects that have some depth are treated with a lighter touch, not dismissive or as parody, but they keep you reading just to see where it's going. Which is another great point; Nothing in here is so long that, looking at it, you're immediately persuaded that, even if it were started, it would never be finished. Think of it as the book to take to the beach when you want more than romance and triviality. It doesn't demand to be read but suggests it's a good idea. perfect gift for a teenager who thinks they know everything; this will persuade them otherwise. But, I think, its greatest gift to the reader is to inspire curiosity, to go on to find out what happened after the article ended. I have it by my bed and still, just before I turn out my light, open it randomly and always find something I didn't know but am glad to learn."

PLB, "A must-have browser's reference - informative and entertaining. I've been buying this book for myself and as gifts ever since the first edition. It's the answer to a browser's prayer, offering a wealth of facts and figures and connections and quotes and analyses, all leavened with appropriately funny asides and observations. The authors, together with some guest experts, have boiled down a host of disciplines into a manageable compendium, getting to the essence of everything using mostly layman's terms, and in general providing a marvelous intellectual browser's paradise. Unlike typical miscellanies, this book is organized into useful topical areas, with complete essays in each topic that provide depth and breadth of coverage ample to satisfy the curious mind without overdosing the reader with arcana. The book gives you more useful fact and understanding in a single page than the popular but superficial TV show "60 Minutes" offers in the 43 minutes remaining after commercials, with none of the pomposity and inaccuracy and far more pleasure to the reader. It's also a great gift for shut-ins: the topical essays are short enough to hold the interest and deep enough to pique curiosity. We keep a copy in every bathroom and bedroom of my house, for us and for company. The guest room reading lights have been staying on a lot longer lately. Instructions are simple: (1) Open to any page at random, then (2) read a page or two and learn something you didn't know while being tickled by well-turned phrases and honest appraisals of the landscape of our common culture. Then (3) at

some point, read the entire book from start to finish, as long as it takes. Then (4) repeat (1) through (3). Then buy the next edition when it comes out, to see the developments in the political world since the last edition. It's a gem!"

Nonetheless, "An Armchair Education. Have you longed to be able to pick up a reference book for an instant, uncomplicated answer to that vexing question Do you shrink from discussing such topics as why all of Shakespeare's comedies are not "thigh slappers"? Or maybe you caught yourself referring to Evelyn Waugh as "she". An Incomplete Education is just the sort of book that provides a framework in twelve areas of knowledge including the Arts, Philosophy, Political Science, World History, Music and much more. The original edition was published in 1987; the third updated and expanded edition came out in 2006. It's a book of knowledge that is also very well paced and entertaining. For example, in the literature section, they identify "twelve fictional characters with whom you should have at least a nodding acquaintance"; in political science: "What you need to know before answering a personals ad in the International Herald Tribune". According to authors Judy Jones and William Wilson, "In a world of bits and bytes, of reruns and fast forwards, of information overloads , . . it feels good to be grounded." Clearly, this is not a COMPLETE Education. To wit: the title. After all, how would anyone define what might be a COMPLETE education. Rather, the book is a useful volume which helped me to organize my thinking. It is a companion that sits on my bookshelf "at the ready" when questions arise, (what do I really understand about the difference between Shiites and Sunnis) or when a Lexicon is needed to settle the question of whether continual or continuous is the appropriate word. It is a great addition to anyone's library, or a gift for someone who asks a lot of questions. I found myself savoring--and chuckling over-- each section."

Ebook Library Reader, "Thousands of facts, familiar but forgotten. There is no story here, just short reminders of interesting things long forgotten. None are very useful for dealing with daily life in and of themselves. But collectively, they define our culture and character. I enjoyed making my way through these almost random facts and remembering when they were first introduced to me and by whom. It is also interesting to take note of my initial reaction and my current concepts after almost 80 years of living with them forgotten in the basement of my life. I suppose the surprise was that education and facts provide only the bare skeleton for living. The flesh of life comes from our interaction with friends, family and nature."

Andri, "Interesting Book about History. It has been a good book for a quick snapshot of key historical events. Great Read."

Michael Simms, "Great book. Fantastic for filling in holes in your education...Have read and re-read it many times...4th time I've bought this and given to friends.."

Serge S, "Education with sense of humor. Like mini-Wikipedia - offline."

The book by Judy Jones has a rating of 5 out of 4.3. 443 people have provided feedback.

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