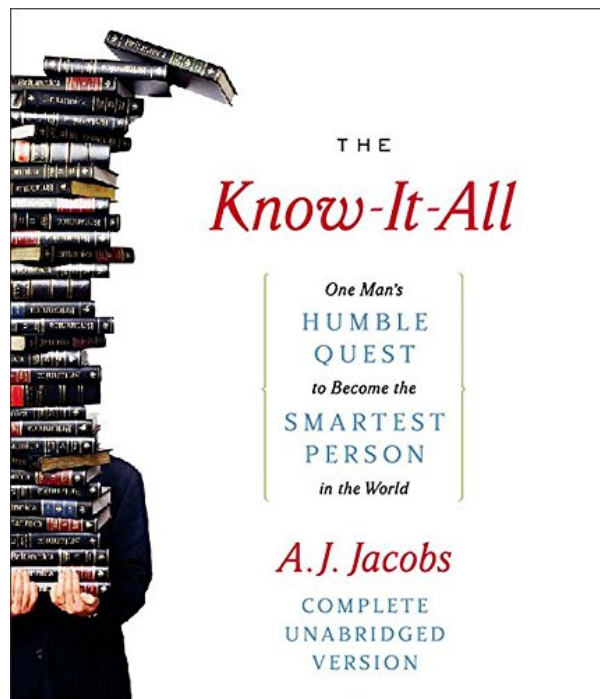
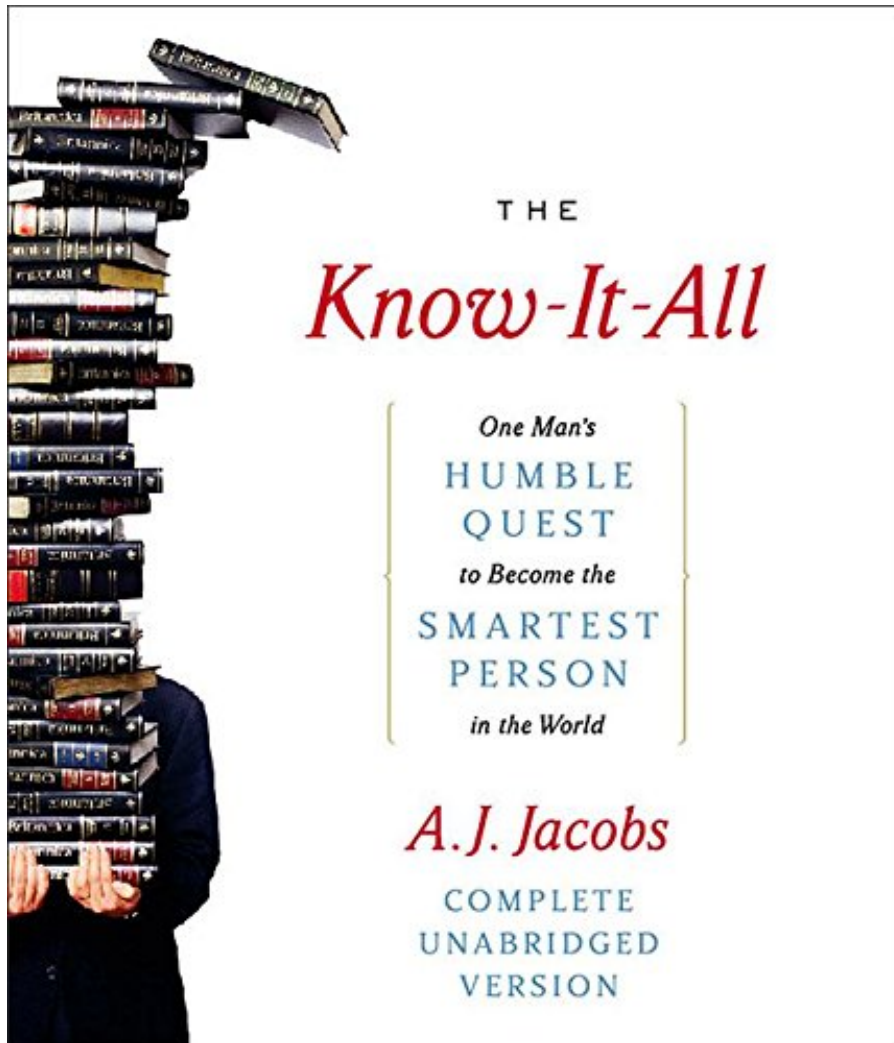


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From Publishers Weekly

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THE KNOW-IT-ALL: ONE MAN'S HUMBLE QUEST TO BECOME THE SMARTEST PERSON IN THE WORLD (UNABRIDGED EDITION) BY A.J. JACOBS PDF

A hilarious, intelligent-trivia-packed story from a man who read the entire ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA. Early in his career, A. J. Jacobs found himself putting his Ivy League education to work at ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY. After five years he learned which stars have fake boobs, which stars have toupees, which have both, and not much else. This unsettling realization led Jacobs on a life-changing quest: to read the entire contents of the ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA, all 33,000 pages, all 44 million words. Jacobs accumulates useful and less-so knowledge, and along the way finds a deep connection with his father (who attempted the same feat when Jacob's was a child), examines the nature of knowledge vs. intelligence, and learns how to be rather annoying at cocktail parties. Part memoir/part-education (or lack thereof), the chapters are organized by the letters of the alphabet.

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- Running time: 900 minutes
- Binding: Audio CD

From Publishers Weekly

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Most helpful customer reviews

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

A-Z of Humor and Knowledge KINDLE Edition

By Mars Velvet

What Kindle users want to know:

Active Table of Contents for each letter chapter.

You can browse chapter to chapter with one click.

Formatting is nice and simple to read.

Index available but is neither clickable or page numbered which makes an index useless.

What readers want to know:

This is a narrative of one man's adventure in reading the Encyclopedia Britannica. For select entries, the author expounds on the content and history and its application in his world (his wife, his job, etc.).

It is humorous, enlightening, and fun. If you are a trivia or reference book enthusiast than this is your comfort reading! It has hilarity and heart. And even I, a reference book junkie learned a thing or too! The narrative is pleasant and makes the effort more enjoyable than just reading about entries.

Jacobs has brought stunt authoring to the academics... or at least Jeopardy watchers! It makes you want to go back when information searching began with sifting through pages of a heavy set of leather bound books.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Light and Surprisingly Engaging Read

By Liebo

Napoleon Bonaparte was an avid ice skater.

"Wicked Bibles" were published in Britain in 1631, which neglected to include the word "not" in Exodus 20:14, thus creating the commandment "Thou shalt commit adultery."

Ancient Egyptians used geese as guard animals.

Did those three factual tidbits entertain you? Does the prospect of reading 400 pages of similar fare interspersed with some memoir-ish reflections and anecdotes appeal to you? If your answers are in the affirmative then you will probably enjoy *The Know-It-All* by A.J. Jacobs. The book chronicles Jacobs' attempt to read the complete *Encyclopedia Britannica* and his more-difficult task of keeping the reader interested during the whole affair. Jacobs' largely succeeds with the latter, and *The Know-It-All* is a worthwhile read to anyone looking for a light read instilled with plenty of trivia.

The idea was sparked out of Jacobs' wish to reengage with his intellectual side, which had been languishing a bit due to his job as a magazine editor for the likes of *Entertainment Weekly* and *Esquire*. Jacobs has found his niche in the "stunt journalism" genre, as his other books include *Drop Dead Healthy* (where he attempts to become the healthiest human ever in a highly readable and engaging fashion) and *The Year of Living Biblically* (where he attempts to become the most Biblical human ever I guess, I haven't read that one yet). Reading the encyclopedia (when some skimming is inevitable) clearly is a bit pedestrian in comparison in terms of total commitment and strenuousness. Realizing this, Jacobs doesn't really focus much on the physical act of reading the volume, though he does mention several times that it is often incredibly boring and repetitive. Instead, the book is largely a vehicle for Jacobs to riff on some fun facts he encounters, pursue some semi-relevant intellectual activities like attending Mensa meetings and playing chess, and reflecting a bit on the nature of intelligence and knowledge with some more personal passages.

The book is organized in a slightly unorthodox fashion. Every chapter covers a letter, and Jacobs recounts his efforts from a-ak (a genre of Korean court music) to Zywiec (a small town of 32,000 in Poland). Each chapter is further divided into individual entries, where Jacobs cultivates several usually fascinating factual morsels, such as the three that kicked off this review. There is never any drama regarding whether he will actually finish the book, which is appreciated given that he could really just have skimmed everything and we would be none the wiser. It's not like we the collective reading public were going to quiz him at the end or something. The format is mainly a success, as it still provides Jacobs with the freedom to tangentially relate particular entries to stories from his past or some of his scholarly field trips undertaken during his quest.

Tackling the *Britannica*, and describing how one goes about such an endeavor, is something that could easily fail in the hands of the wrong writer. Thankfully, Jacobs does a pretty commendable job of maintaining interest. Like *Drop Dead Healthy*, Jacobs and his immediate family and friends are featured prominently and these segments that focus on the author's attempts to one-up his intellectual brother-in-law help keep the book from becoming a mere list of random trivia. The Mensa meetings, school visits, and chess games also break up the monotony, though some asides such as Jacobs' appearance on *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* (the book was published in 2004 when the show had already passed any shreds of cultural relevance or importance) fell a bit flat. But overall Jacobs does an excellent job touring the reader through the highlights of the *Britannica* and the prose is snappy, light, and self-effacing, something he has likely perfected through a career in magazines. While the book is facetiously titled and Jacobs often makes light of his deteriorating

levels of "useful" knowledge, he does let his more highbrow and Ivy League education show during some clever and legitimately funny sections. I felt that the book lost some steam near the end but that it was ultimately an engaging mix of memoir and trivia, in a very similar vein to *Drop Dead Healthy*, which I also recommend.

In Sum

If you are looking for some light reading and enjoy historical facts with some anecdotes and riffs on pop culture thrown in for good measure then you can certainly do worse than A.J. Jacobs' amusing and even sometimes witty *The Know-It-All*.

7/10

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Really, he read the entire encyclopedia.

By Mark Pfennigstag

Very entertaining. A humorous account of a professional writer's pursuit of his goal of reading the entire *Encyclopedia Britannica*, his wife's tolerance of his objective and progress, and of his family's, friend's and co-workers endorsement and skepticism. Author offers both humorous and profound insights as he works through 22 volumes, 33 thousand pages in his attempt to absorb the entire corpus of human knowledge according to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Many laugh-out-loud moments in this book.

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From Publishers Weekly

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