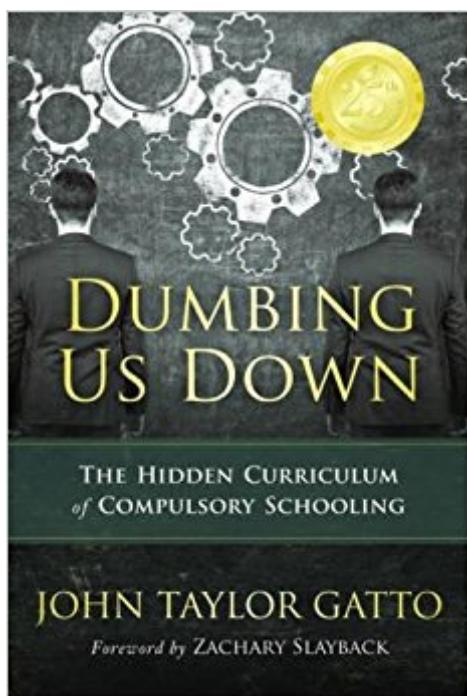


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# Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum Of Compulsory Schooling



## Synopsis

Throw off the shackles of formal schooling and embark upon a rich journey of self-directed, life-long learning. After over 100 years of mandatory schooling in the U.S., literacy rates have dropped, families are fragmented, learning & disabilities are skyrocketing, and children and youth are increasingly disaffected. Thirty years of teaching in the public school system led John Taylor Gatto to the sad conclusion that compulsory governmental schooling is to blame, accomplishing little but to teach young people to follow orders like cogs in an industrial machine. He became a fierce advocate of families and young people taking back education and learning, arguing that genius is as common as dirt, but that conventional schooling is driving out the natural curiosity and problem-solving skills we're born with, replacing it with rule-following, fragmented time, and disillusionment. Gatto's radical treatise on public education, a New Society Publishers bestseller for 25 years, continues to bang the drum for an unshackling of children and learning from formal schooling. Now, in an ever-more-rapidly changing world with an explosion of alternative routes to learning, it's poised to continue to shake the world of institutional education for many more years. Featuring a new foreword from Zachary Slayback, an Ivy League dropout and cofounder of tech start-up career foundry Praxis, this 25th anniversary edition will inspire new generations of parents and students to take control of learning and kickstart an empowered society of self-directed lifetime-learners. John Taylor Gatto has been a fierce advocate for self-directed & guerrilla education for decades. He is also the author of Weapons of Mass Instruction and The Underground History of American Education.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

After over 100 years of mandatory schooling in the U.S., literacy rates have dropped, families are fragmented, learning "disabilities" are skyrocketing, and children and youth are increasingly disaffected. Thirty years of teaching in the public school system led John Taylor Gatto to the sad conclusion that compulsory governmental schooling is to blame, accomplishing little but to teach young people to follow orders like cogs in an industrial machine. He became a fierce advocate of families and young people taking back education and learning, arguing that "genius is as common as dirt," but that conventional schooling is driving out the natural curiosity and problem-solving skills we're born with, replacing it with rule-following, fragmented time, and disillusionment. Gatto's radical treatise on public education, a New Society Publishers bestseller for 25 years, continues to bang the drum for an unshackling of children and learning from formal schooling. Now, in an ever-more-rapidly changing world with an explosion of alternative routes to learning, it's poised to continue to shake the world of institutional education for many more years. Featuring a new foreword from Zachary Slayback, an Ivy League dropout and cofounder of tech start-up career foundry Praxis, this 25th anniversary edition will inspire new generations of parents and students to take control of learning and kickstart an empowered society of self-directed lifetime-learners.

A bestseller for 25 years, John Taylor Gatto's radical treatise on public education continues to advocate for the unshackling of children and learning from formal schooling. We don't need school reform. Schools are working exactly as their designers intended. We need more choices and options outside of school. At the end of the day, the person who creates those is you. Stop waiting for permission from others and create opportunities to learn. By ZACHARY SLAYBACK, from the Foreword. Education's most original thinker. By DANIEL H. PINK, author, *Free Agent Nation*. AFTER OVER 100 YEARS of mandatory schooling in the U.S., literacy rates have dropped, families are fragmented, learning "disabilities" are skyrocketing, and children and youth are increasingly disaffected. Thirty years of teaching in the public school system led John Taylor Gatto to the sad conclusion that compulsory governmental schooling is to blame. He became a fierce advocate of families and young people taking back education and learning, arguing that "genius is as common as dirt," but that conventional schooling is driving out the natural curiosity and problem-solving skills we're born with, replacing it with rule-following, fragmented time, and disillusionment. Gatto continues to

bang the drum for an unshackling of children and learning from formal schooling. Now, in an ever-more-rapidly changing world, with an explosion of alternative routes to learning, it's poised to continue to shake the world of institutional education for many more years. JOHN TAYLOR GATTO was a schoolteacher for 30 years. He resigned in the op-ed pages of The Wall Street Journal upon receiving the New York State Teacher of the Year award. He has been a fierce advocate for self directed "guerrilla" education for decades, and is also the author of Weapons of Mass Instruction and The Underground History of American EducationA one-man intellectual insurgency. ¢ The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

This is a brief book, and a good start, but I recommend Gatto's: The Underground History of American Education, Volume I: An Intimate Investigation Into the Prison of Modern Schooling over this one.

A quarter century on, and JTG is never more relevant. With a snazzy new introduction, this slim tome should be a mando gift to anyone starting out in the public education industrial complex. I have a more extensive review at FEE dot org.

A must read and a very dangerous book, which is high praise. Long time classroom teacher and NY City and State Teacher of the Year Gatto is prophetic in the true sense of the word: he criticizes the status quo and energizes us to develop a better future for educating our children. He reveals the dysfunctionality behind mass schooling, which is more a mass jobs project than an inspiring means by which to instill a body of knowledge, far less stoke creativity, curiosity, and inspiration. He makes an supremely convincing case for LESS school, not more and reveals the destructive lessons instilled by the way we do school, like conformity and subordination. Essentially, school "ensures a workforce that will not rebel...that will be physically, intellectually, and emotionally dependent upon corporate institutions for their incomes, self-esteem, and stimulation, and that will learn to find social meaning in their lives solely in the production and consumption of material goods. They haven't changed much since the 1890s because they don't need to --they perform precisely as they are intended." His work has become a foundation for homeschoolers everywhere because he urges parents to take their power to play a much larger role in their offspring's education. Perhaps this is a good idea in many loving households. At a recent state homeschoolers' convention of 4000-5000 attendees in Florida, the twin mantra were "We want to spend as much time as we can with our children and keep them as part of our close family forever" and "it doesn't really matter what we

teach or don't; God will make sure they get what they need." We may defend parents' rights to raise and educate their children as they see fit while vehemently disagreeing with the method and content. Nevertheless, there are some major problems with homeschooling. What about parents who have zero desire to be with their children all day, or who must or want to work full-time, or who care for infirm relatives or who travel for their job? What about dysfunctional families in which progeny are best protected from the damaging or abusive/neglectful parents? Every educator knows students for whom school is an oasis. What about irresponsible parents? To render home education feasible for parents is an enormous undertaking...which is, in part, why we have what we do. Gatto further advocates for communities' rights to determine what is relevant in their milieu. In Florida, the homeschoolers ardently defend their rights to decide for themselves and want the fed to stay out... except when it comes to issues that contradict their religious teachings like gay marriage, abortion, and euthanasia, which they want the federal government to actively prohibit. If communities always decided for themselves what they wanted free of federal intervention, we might still enslave human beings. Dismantling mass factory style education and implementing more experiential learning, however, has much to recommend it. It's astonishing to me in my work with micro-schools that so few (Blyth Templeton a notable exception) actually take students on field trips or make use of the community as classroom. This should be the center of what we do. We need more people of vision like Gatto to make it happen.

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