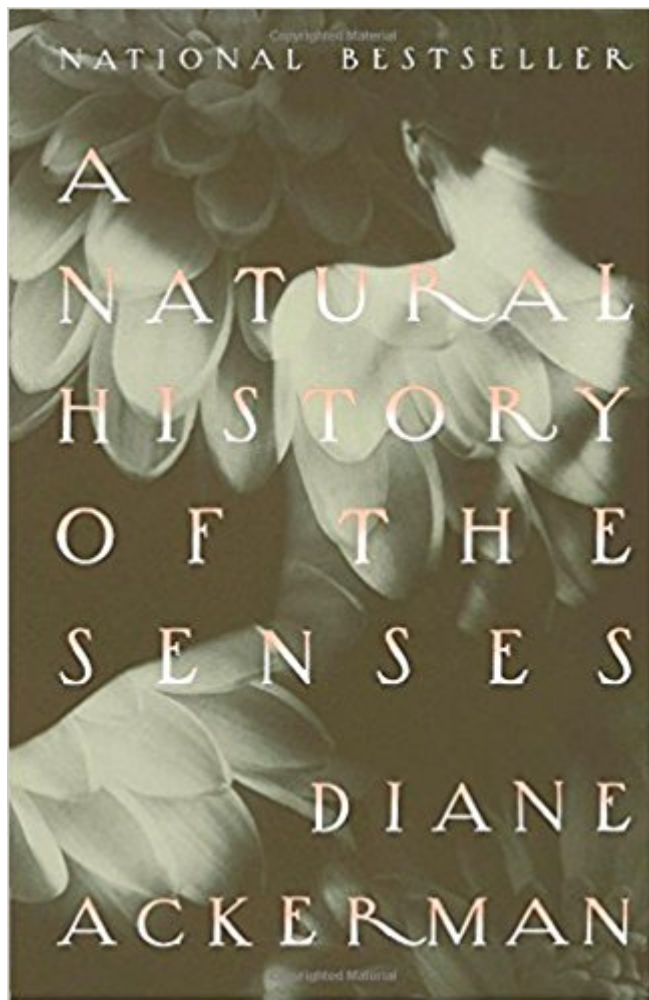




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A Natural History Of The Senses



Synopsis

Diane Ackerman's lusciously written grand tour of the realm of the senses includes conversations with an iceberg in Antarctica and a professional nose in New York, along with dissertations on kisses and tattoos, sadistic cuisine and the music played by the planet Earth. "Delightful . . . gives the reader the richest possible feeling of the worlds the senses take in."--The New York Times.

(Literature--Classics & Contemporary)

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Customer Reviews

"One of the real tests of writers," notes Ackerman in this liveliest of nature books, "is how well they write about smells. If they can't describe the scent of sanctity in a church, can you trust them to describe the suburbs of the heart?" Ackerman passes the test, writing with ease and fluency about the five senses. Did you know that bat guano smells like stale Wheat Thins? That Bach's music can quell anger around the world? That the leaves that shimmer so beautifully in fall have "no adaptive purpose"? Ackerman does, and she guides us through questions of sensation with an eye for the amusingly arcane reference and just the right phrase.

Physiology and philosophy mesh in this poetic investigation of the five senses; essays explore synesthesia, food taboos, kissing and the power and diversity of music. "Rooted in science, enlivened by her own convincing sense of wonder, Ackerman's essays awaken us to a fresh awareness," said PW. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc.

It really depends on what you want from the book. I bought it as a scientific discussion of the senses, and it falls far short of that mark, providing only scant facts. On the other hand, it is a well written exposition on the senses, human emotions and behavior, and our perception of and interactions with the world. If that's what you're looking for, add a star or two.

I read *A Natural History of the Senses* back in 1991, when it first came out ... If you're an aspiring writer, if you enjoy meditation and/or sensory deprivation (or other activities designed to heighten your sensory awareness), or even if you're just an unpracticed closet sensualist eager for new experiences, then do not walk ... RUN ... run out and buy this book. Better still, click on our "Buy Books" link, locate it, and select overnight shipment. You'll thank me for it. Yes, it really is THAT good. Ackerman gives us a first hand tour de force overview of our 5 bodily senses, from the historical, scientific, philosophical, artistic and literary vantagepoints. With the giddy delight of someone with a rapt attention for fine details, not to mention a true gift for words, she takes us on a rich journey of the subtle and the sublime ... from the musky scent of fire-warmed leather, to the plaintive cry of a lonely loon hidden in the misty wilderness, to the rousing plushness of crushed velvet, to the crisp-tart taste of muscat grapes plucked straight from their sun-ripened vines. No need for me to wax poetic, because that's what this work is all about ... it's a master class in understanding the senses we use to perceive the world itself. Sure, there are people out there who think that books like this are just lightweight literary fluff ... such people reveal themselves to be the same undiscerning people who are blindly content to live on fast food slop, who never stop to relax and fully appreciate a beautiful sunset, and who mechanically motor off into the rat race without pausing for a long moment to nuzzle in the musky warmth of their lover's neck and hair, and to beam love for a long languid moment into their mate's eyes. For those cannot appreciate the subtleties such things, I feel nothing but pity. Go right ahead and wallow in your detached mediocrity ... and whatever you do, do NOT buy this book, because it'll only upset you to realize all the things you've been missing out on all these years. You've been living your life in the lowest possible resolution, and you have nobody to blame but yourself. Anyway, this book is easily one of the most enjoyable and satisfying books I've read to date.

Diane Ackermann: *A Natural History of the Senses* Diane Ackerman with non-fictional work. *A Natural History of the Senses* is a nonfictional piece of work sharing a wide view of all the five senses for exploring the world. Describing about the common situations when sensing the world and explaining how these senses work, Ackerman expands the perception of the senses. ~~~~~ My

take. The book is about human, sensing the world through their five senses. Ackerman accomplishes to expand the reader's ideas about senses. With an incredible amount of knowledge and thoughts almost like from the different planet, the book succeeds to surprise even the most experienced readers. The book handles all the senses one at the time with a wide variety of perspectives. One might say that the text loses its plot from time to time floating from a subject to another through a long path of thoughts. However, actually it is the best ability of the book of being different than any other novel. The text sucks the reader to its world with extremely detailed describing about experiences and feelings through aphorisms, ideas, examples, and explanations of the functions of the senses. Five chapters and five senses in the book. One by one the texts discuss about every area what could be imagined when talking about senses in a scientific and a secular point of view. The colorfulness of the text is one of the main reasons, why this book succeeds to force a reader to imagine, go back to their own experiences and enjoy these feelings all over again. There is no doubt that this piece would leave someone cold with its rich scheme and colorful language. It might be hard to follow the thoughts from time to time, sometimes the text feels like brainstorming, and the message might be under the rock, but with immersing to the book with full passion the message comes out. Every chapter differs from another with their structures, which makes the reading experience to be enjoyable, although, I had to concentrate sometimes to see the complete analogy. It was very hard to be critical because the book was written with great skill. What is the source of all this knowledge? Some of the arguments might be considered lacking important information or being just an individual experience not shared by every person, for example one thing that got me was "the one sure thing I learned about sophomore boys is that they're all decibel and testosterone" (Ackerman, p. 186). This is just a generalization followed by other feelings about their music and taste, of which didn't occur to her. All in all I believe that with precise describing and new kinds of ideas this is a great work, a master piece that doesn't have peers. The book had an influence on me by opening my world to new kind of sensing. I would definitely recommend to read this book whether just for fun or to see a complete thought about human sensing the world around between the green colored covers. Works cited Ackerman, Diane. A Natural History of The Senses. New York: Random House, 1990. Print.

great great book. I honestly thought it would be just ok but after the 2nd chapter things got a lot more interesting. Shipped fast right to my house. I am keeping this on the shelf for a long time

This is one of those books you should have in your personal library for many reasons. First, this is a

good read. Second, you learn a lot about many things too numerous to mention, but in a fun way so you don't feel like you're learning. Third, if you have inspirations to be a writer, you will want to first read the book for enjoyment, then to learn along the way, but lastly be blown away by Ackerman's writing style. Good study! What more could one want from a book. I've given away & reordered this book for my personal collection more times than I can remember. Am a fan of Ackerman's other books also so if you like this one, check into her others!

Excellent. Informative and very well written.

Writer's will find this a valuable four-star reference book. Others who are not interested in delving so deeply into the senses may not like this book. It is non-fiction. It is not a book with characters, a plot, or setting. The language is rich and the vocabulary elevated. I first read this as a library book for my book club. Because I consider this book a must have reference for writer's. I have purchased a used copy for my personal library and continued reference.

Well done and clear

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