



The New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know

E. D. Hirsch, Joseph F. Kett, James Trefil

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In this fast-paced information age, how can Americans know what's really important and what's just a passing fashion? Now more than ever, we need a source that concisely sums up the knowledge that matters to Americans -- the people, places, ideas, and events that shape our cultural conversation. With more than six thousand entries, The New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy is that invaluable source.

Wireless technology. Gene therapy. NAFTA. In addition to the thousands of terms described in the original Dictionary of Cultural Literacy, here are more than five hundred new entries to bring Americans' bank of essential knowledge up to date. The original entries have been fully revised to reflect recent changes in world history and politics, American literature, and, especially, science and technology. Cultural icons that have stood the test of time (Odysseus, Leaves of Grass, Cleopatra, the Taj Mahal, D-Day) appear alongside entries on such varied concerns as cryptography, the digital divide, the European Union, Kwanzaa, pheromones, SPAM, Type A and Type B personalities, Web browsers, and much, much more.

As our world becomes more global and interconnected, it grows smaller through the terms and touchstones that unite us. As E. D. Hirsch writes in the preface, "Community is built up of shared knowledge and values -- the same shared knowledge that is taken for granted when we read a book or newspaper, and that is also taken for granted as part of the fabric that connects us to one another." A delicious concoction of information for anyone who wants to be in the know, The New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy brilliantly confirms once again that it is "an excellent piece of work . . . stimulating and enlightening" (New York Times) -- the most definitive and comprehensive family sourcebook of its kind.



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