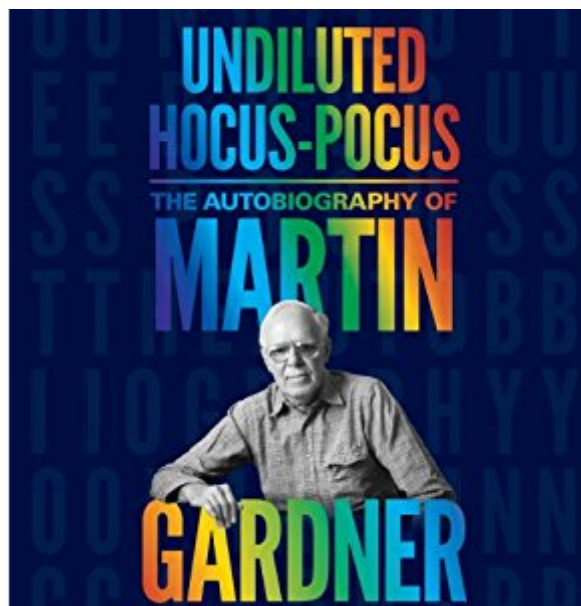


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Undiluted Hocus-Pocus: The Autobiography Of Martin Gardner



Synopsis

Martin Gardner wrote the Mathematical Games column for Scientific American for twenty-five years and published more than seventy books on topics as diverse as magic, philosophy, religion, pseudoscience, and Alice in Wonderland. His informal, recreational approach to mathematics delighted countless readers and inspired many to pursue careers in mathematics and the sciences. Gardner's illuminating autobiography is a disarmingly candid self-portrait of the man evolutionary theorist Stephen Jay Gould called our "single brightest beacon" for the defense of rationality and good science against mysticism and anti-intellectualism. Gardner takes readers from his childhood in Oklahoma to his college days at the University of Chicago, his service in the navy, and his varied and wide-ranging professional pursuits. Before becoming a columnist for Scientific American, he was a caseworker in Chicago during the Great Depression, a reporter for the Tulsa Tribune, an editor for Humpty Dumpty, and a short-story writer for Esquire, among other jobs. Gardner shares colorful anecdotes about the many fascinating people he met and mentored, and voices strong opinions on the subjects that matter to him most, from his love of mathematics to his uncompromising stance against pseudoscience. For Gardner, our mathematically structured universe is undiluted hocus-pocus - a marvelous enigma, in other words. Undiluted Hocus-PocusM offers a rare, intimate look at Gardner's life and work, and the experiences that shaped both.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I've been a Gardner fan since reading his Fads And Fallacies more than 50 years ago. This book

seems to be a garnering of bits and pieces he left lying around when he died at a ripe old age, laden with honor. They were assembled by his friends (especially, I think, Persi Diaconis) as a final tribute. The resulting book contains a hodgepodge of information - not always in logical order - that is interesting to anyone who is a Gardner fan - his childhood in Tulsa, his years in Chicago, including his formative experience at the University of Chicago, and his struggles to make a living as a professional editor and writer. One must overlook the disorganization and gaps and repetitions of what Gardner published elsewhere because what it contains is a lot of fun to read.

The "Scientific American" column on mathematical games was written by Martin Gardner for decades. It was always the first article I would turn to when I received my latest issue of "Scientific American." This book was written as an autobiography by Martin Gardner to be published after his death. It is interesting but it is not what I expected, and, in my estimation, not as good as any one of his columns. I did not complete reading the book.

Martin Gardner admitted that his book is rather disorganized, and I agree. I bought the book to read and then to give to my brother. It had received an excellent review in THE NEW YORK TIMES. I was disappointed because the book seemed disjointed. He named so many names that it seemed like a list of everyone he had ever known.

Martin Gardner had one of the liveliest minds of the 20th century. He was endlessly curious and generous about sharing the results of his explorations with the rest of us. He also writes well and entertainingly. I especially appreciate his hard work on "The Annotated Alice," which introduces Americans to one of the wisest and wittiest books in the English language. Lewis Carroll's two masterpieces are known to every educated English person, and widely quoted. Americans are not so wise & also tend to misunderstand these volumes as being for girls only. Gardner, appreciating them greatly, broadened their acceptance. He also presented math in ways which helped those who fear the subject - since he so obviously loved math.

I have been a Gardner since 1967. This is the perfect book to get to know Martin Gardner.

Interesting man, but I found his constant suggestions to read another of his books or articles to learn more about his thoughts on a topic to be annoying. If you're a fan of his work, you'll love his autobiography.

Perhaps, since I've not read any other Gardner books, I'm a poor judge. But I am a magician and so much of this book resonated with me. It is a rambling discourse, but it also has many moments of deep fascination. Despite its shortcomings, I'm glad I read it.

I admire many people but if there is one person whose life I really envy, it is Mr. Gardner. He seems to have read everything worth reading with attention and care.

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