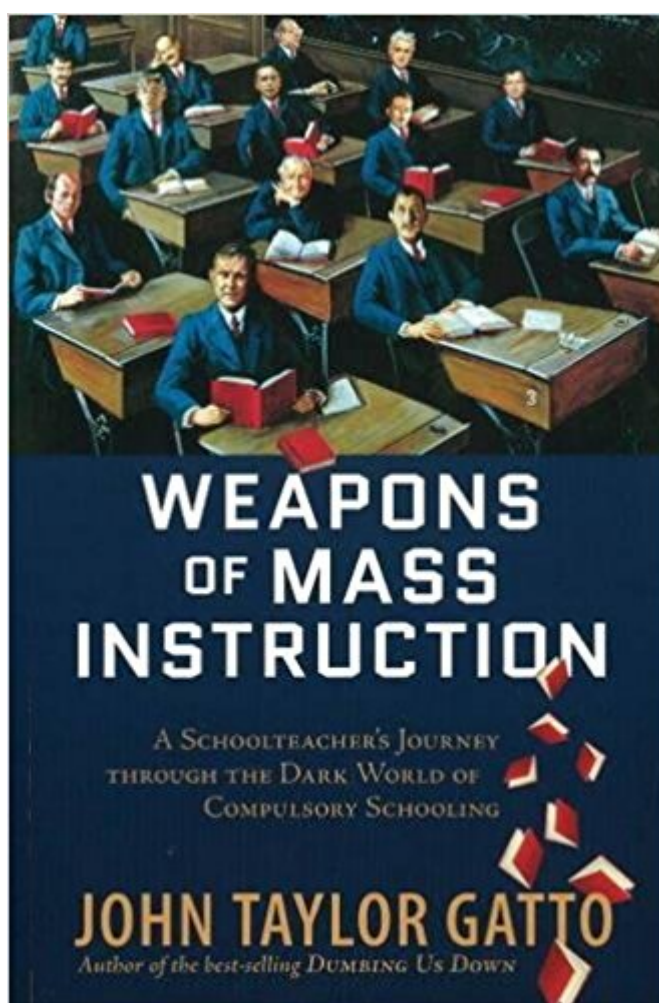


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# Weapons Of Mass Instruction: A Schoolteacher's Journey Through The Dark World Of Compulsory Schooling



## Synopsis

John Taylor Gatto's *Weapons of Mass Instruction*, now available in paperback, focuses on mechanisms of traditional education that cripple imagination, discourage critical thinking, and create a false view of learning as a byproduct of rote-memorization drills. Gatto's earlier book, *Dumbing Us Down*, introduced the now-famous expression of the title into the common vernacular. *Weapons of Mass Instruction* adds another chilling metaphor to the brief against conventional schooling. Gatto demonstrates that the harm school inflicts is rational and deliberate. The real function of pedagogy, he argues, is to render the common population manageable. To that end, young people must be conditioned to rely upon experts, to remain divided from natural alliances, and to accept disconnections from their own lived experiences. They must at all costs be discouraged from developing self-reliance and independence. Escaping this trap requires strategy. Gatto calls for "open source learning" which imposes no artificial divisions between learning and life. Through this alternative approach, our children can avoid being indoctrinated—only then that can they achieve self-knowledge, judgment, and courage. John Taylor Gatto is an internationally renowned speaker who lectures widely on school reform. He taught for thirty years in public schools before resigning on the op-ed pages of *The Wall Street Journal* during the year he was named *New York's* official "Teacher of the Year." On April 3, 2008, the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard credited Gatto with adding the expression "dumbing us down" to the school debate worldwide.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

John Taylor Gatto's *Weapons of Mass Instruction*, now available in paperback, focuses on mechanisms of traditional education which cripple imagination, discourage critical thinking, and create a false view of learning as a byproduct of rote-memorization drills. Gatto's earlier book, *Dumbing Us Down*, introduced the now-famous expression of the title into the common vernacular. *Weapons of Mass Instruction* adds another chilling metaphor to the brief against conventional schooling. Gatto demonstrates that the harm school inflicts is rational and deliberate. The real function of pedagogy, he argues, is to render the common population manageable. To that end, young people must be conditioned to rely upon experts, to remain divided from natural alliances and to accept disconnections from their own lived experiences. They must at all costs be discouraged from developing self-reliance and independence. Escaping this trap requires a strategy Gatto calls "open source learning" which imposes no artificial divisions between learning and life. Through this alternative approach our children can avoid being indoctrinated-only then can they achieve self-knowledge, good judgment, and courage.

John Gatto was a teacher in New York City's public schools for over 30 years and is a recipient of the New York State Teacher of the Year award. A much-sought after speaker on education throughout the United States, his other books include *A Different Kind of Teacher* (Berkeley Hills Books, 2001) and *The Underground History of American Education* (Oxford Village Press, 2000).

This book began to turn my world upside down with regard to my understanding of the history of public education in the US. I came away from it wondering, "How does he KNOW all of this?" This led me to read Gatto's "Magnum Opus", "The Underground History of American Education", which, while a more difficult read, went a long way to explaining how he came to his conclusions.

John Gatto's years of experience in the classroom and the American system of education bring him to some conclusions which will shock, anger, and may even raise the voices of staunch opposition, *Weapons of Mass Instruction* will challenge your core beliefs about our current system of public education. As a college educator for many years I saw first-hand what Gatto describes as the inability to think critically in far too many students. And worse I heard high school teachers tell stories of students who could not read, perform simple computations, nor write coherent sentences, yet they were told to move the students along, while making sure they could pass the state-mandated tests. While Gatto may be correct in his assessment I wish he had given more

thoughts about ways to better educate children and youth. His examples are few, and though they may well describe some pockets of excellency, there is need to revamp the system, and since far too many people brought up in the system do not think critically they may not know how to make the changes advocated. This book is a must read for educators. Even if you radically disagree with Gatto's findings, the book will cause you to think and evaluate why we educate. It has certainly caused me to ask more questions about school versus education.

All home schooling families should read this book. The Author is a veteran teacher and lays out the educational sabotage in clear English. Really every American should read this book and become active at demanding educational change for our future generation.

This school teacher with thirty years teaching experience reveals the inner workings of the school system and will make you seriously reconsider your view of education and how the school system has affected it. His books are a great motivation for anyone considering home schooling, and are handy to loan to skeptical friends & family of home schoolers. In this particular book he "focuses on mechanisms of compulsory schooling which cripple imagination and discourage critical thinking. Here is a demonstration that the harm school inflicts is quite rational and deliberate. The real function of pedagogy is to render the common population manageable, remove the obligation of child care from adult workers so they are free to fuel the industrial economy and to train the next generation into subservient obedience to the state." His books have helped me to rethink my view of education- what it can be, what it should be, and what it isn't in America. I've found this to be of great help as my husband and I have decided to educate our own children, so that rather than bringing "school" home, we instead incorporate education and real-life learning experiences into our life, and seek out apprenticeship opportunities for our kids. This is not a home schooling book though. Those who don't home school will benefit by realizing how deficient schools are, so that they can take up the task of filling the void in non-school hours. I also highly recommend reading his other books: *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling* (which shows the deliberate dumbing down of the American School System, and displays "how the U.S. educational system cranks out students the way Detroit cranks out Buicks. He contends that students are more programmed to conform to economic and social norms rather than really taught to think.") *The Underground History of American Education: A School Teacher's Intimate Investigation Into the Problem of Modern Schooling* (a huge work in which he exposes the errors of short-answer tests, bells, uniform time blocks, age-grading, standardization, and all the rest of school religion. This

groundbreaking, revolutionary work will change the way you look at the process and even the very concept of public education. Every parent should read this book! It shows how compulsory schooling came to be as it is in America with a lure of utopia and a very strong Prussian connection (which should be cause for much concern). It also exposes the affects of compulsory schooling on America, drawing both from history (showing alarming drops in education, literacy, and much more) and 30 years of school-teaching experience. You can read this one online for free from his website. ( won't let me put in a link, so just google his name and you'll find it.)\*\*Although I can't give a direct link in this review, you can find my website by accessing my profile. I mention that because I have a LOT of great resources on my site for those who are in the process of rethinking education and determining what that means for them and their children.\*\*

Every now and then a book comes along that opens your eyes, when you didn't even realize they were closed. If you don't want to be one of the sleeping masses, then this book is for you. Everybody who cares about freedom should read this book. One of the quotes inside the cover says, "...A people who believe in freedom will never emerge from a system that starts with coercion." -Michael Farris, Chairman of HSLDA If you think standardized testing is all about standardization and not about high standards and don't really measure anything of worth, then read to the end. Parents (& teachers) of kids in school should read it, to encourage taking part in the Bartleby Project described in the afterword, to quietly sabotage the standardized testing industry!

I can't help but think that all the current US social unrest is the direct result of social controls derived in the schooling system. Too bad ...

Dense read. But good info. Lots of history of how institutionalized school system was started. Once you start waking up you see the same few players over and over again when it comes to who is behind medicine, schooling, governing. It frustrating and alarming just how deep the deception goes.

What a great inspiration this book is into the mind of the public education system. I've always known there was SOMETHING wrong going on here and this book puts all of the puzzle pieces together in a way that just fits and makes perfect sense.

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