

Doing Our Own Thing: The Degradation of Language and Music and Why We Should, Like, Care

By John McWhorter

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Doing Our Own Thing: The Degradation of Language and Music and Why We Should, Like, Care By John McWhorter

A rousing polemic in defense of the written word by the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Losing the Race* and the widely acclaimed history of language *The Power of Babel*.

Critically acclaimed linguist John McWhorter has devoted his career to exploring the evolution of language. He has often argued that language change is inevitable and in general culturally neutral-languages change rapidly even in indigenous cultures where traditions perpetuate; and among modernized peoples, culture endures despite linguistic shifts. But in his provocative new book, *Doing Our Own Thing*, McWhorter draws the line when it comes to how cultural change is turning the English language upside down in America today, and how public English is being overwhelmed by street English, with serious consequences for our writing, our music, and our society.

McWhorter explores the triumph of casual over formal speech-particularly since the dawn of 1960s counterculture-and its effect on Americans' ability to write, read, critique, argue, and imagine. In the face of this growing rift between written English and spoken English, the intricate vocabularies and syntactic roadmaps of our language appear to be slipping away, eroding our intellectual and artistic capacities. He argues that "our increasing alienation from 'written language' signals a gutting of our intellectual powers, our self-regard as a nation, and thus our very substance as a people."

Timely, thought-provoking, and compellingly written, *Doing Our Own Thing* is sure to stoke many debates about the fate of our threatened intellectual culture, and the destiny of our democracy.

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Editorial Review

From Booklist
Acclaimed linguist McWhorter (*The Power of Babel* [2002]) explores the social dynamics that have changed the English language since the 1960s and threaten to erode our intellectual prowess. Comparing past speakers from Abraham Lincoln to Mario Cuomo to more modern speakers, including President George W. Bush, McWhorter laments the loss of the art of oration, notwithstanding Jesse Jackson and the black preaching tradition. He traces the current emphasis on oral versus written speech across a variety of cultures and times. McWhorter focuses on the forces at work in the U.S. that have heightened the appeal of plain-speaking since the 1960s, including the influence of music, the breakdown of racial barriers, and the rise in immigration and technology. While he sees the trend toward emphasizing the oral over the written as "the celebration of the art in spoken language," he laments the impact on our ability to read, write, and critique. McWhorter's eloquent style and cogent analysis will appeal to readers concerned about trends in American education and communication. *Vanessa Bush*
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Review
"Startling, provocative, and remarkably entertaining." -- *The San Diego Union Tribune*

From the Back Cover
"Illustrated with an entertaining array of examples from both high and low culture, the trend that Mr. McWhorter documents is unmistakable." —*The Economist*

"Provocative, funny. . . McWhorter suggests that prose ought to be something ‘we *decorate* out of a basic sense of exuberance of living.’" —Andrea Behr, *San Francisco Chronicle*

"An entertaining and provocative analysis of the way we use language, while also suggesting that we should love it." —Charles Matthews, *San Jose Mercury News*

"McWhorter is a gifted young linguist who seeks to understand the change in our verbal habits rather than just bemoan it, and his analysis is insightful, richly documented and, yes, eloquently written." —Steven Pinker, author of *The Blank* Slate and The *Language Instinct*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Michael Riddle:

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Debra Davis:

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Pearl Minjares:

Exactly why? Because this Doing Our Own Thing: The Degradation of Language and Music and Why We Should, Like, Care is an unordinary book that the inside of the book waiting for you to snap that but latter it will zap you with the secret this inside. Reading this book close to it was fantastic author who have write the book in such remarkable way makes the content on the inside easier to understand, entertaining way but still convey the meaning entirely. So , it is good for you for not hesitating having this anymore or you going to regret it. This excellent book will give you a lot of benefits than the other book have such as help improving your proficiency and your critical thinking technique. So , still want to hesitate having that book? If I ended up you I will go to the guide store hurriedly.

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