

Boredom: A Lively History

By Peter Toohey

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In the first book to argue for the benefits of boredom, Peter Toohey dispels the myth that it's simply a childish emotion or an existential malaise like Jean-Paul Sartre's nausea. He shows how boredom is, in fact, one of our most common and constructive emotions and is an essential part of the human experience.

This informative and entertaining investigation of boredom—what it is and what it isn't, its uses and its dangers—spans more than 3,000 years of history and takes readers through fascinating neurological and psychological theories of emotion, as well as recent scientific investigations, to illustrate its role in our lives. There are Australian aboriginals and bored Romans, Jeffrey Archer and caged cockatoos, Camus and the early Christians, Dürer and Degas. Toohey also explores the important role that boredom plays in popular and highbrow culture and how over the centuries it has proven to be a stimulus for art and literature.

Toohey shows that boredom is a universal emotion experienced by humans throughout history and he explains its place, and value, in today's world. *Boredom: A Lively History* is vital reading for anyone interested in what goes on when supposedly nothing happens.

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Boredom: A Lively History By Peter Toohey Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Review

"As for his engaging new book, Toohey needn't worry: *Boredom*, with its wise insights, is never boring."—Carmela Ciuraru, *Boston Globe*
(Carmela Ciuraru *Boston Globe*)

"Readers who are willing to meander from science to literature to art and other realms will find themselves engaged."—Nina C. Ayoub, *The Chronicle Review*
(Nina C. Ayoub *The Chronicle Review*)

"There are plenty of fine things here to keep a receptive mind alert."—Alain de Botton, *The Times*
(Alain de Botton *The Times* 2011-04-02)

"Few writers on boredom can match Peter Toohey when it comes to finding pleasure, excitement and even a perverse kind of glee in his subject."—Robert Douglas-Fairhurst, *The Daily Telegraph*
(Robert Douglas-Fairhurst *The Daily Telegraph* 2011-03-26)

"Mr. Toohey presents his case with verve."—Elizabeth Lowry, *Wall Street Journal*
(Elizabeth Lowry *Wall Street Journal*)

'Peter Toohey is a wonderful scholar, whose work on classical literature both instructs and delights.' - Darian Leader
(Darian Leader)

'Forget ennui: Peter Toohey makes the case that the simpler, everyday kind of boredom we all experience is far more important than the pretentious world-weariness of French philosophers. Being bored can be excruciating, but it can also spur people to the heights of creativity. Toohey succeeds in making boredom interesting.' - Dylan Evans, author of *Emotion: The Science of Sentiment*
(Dylan Evans)

'Who would have thought that boredom could be so stimulating?' - Michael Foley, author of *The Age of Absurdity*
(Michael Foley)

"A thoroughly enjoyable exploration of the history a maligned emotion, which according to the author, may actually be designed to help us flourish."—*The Bookseller*
(*The Bookseller* 2011-01-14)

"[Toohey's] crisp conversational prose is untainted by jargon or pretence. His arguments display impressive erudition: history, philosophy, psychology, neuroscience and aesthetics all get a guernsey. If good writing requires authorial boredom, Toohey was undoubtedly tortured by tedium while writing this sharp, humane and funny book."—Damon Young, *The Australian*
(Damon Young *The Australian* 2011-03-19)

"…quirky and contentious."—Stuart Kelly, *Scotland on Sunday*

(Stuart Kelly *Scotland on Sunday* 2011-03-27)

“Toohey has lots of exciting things to say about boredom.”—Craig Brown, *The Mail on Sunday* (Craig Brown *The Mail on Sunday* 2011-04-03)

“In Boredom: A Lively History Peter Toohey, a professor of classics, makes a strong case for boredom as a universal emotion, experienced by humans throughout history and throughout all cultures, with many practical and emotional benefits.”—Ian Sansom, *The Guardian*
(Ian Sansom *The Guardian* 2011-04-23)

“…… [Toohey] writes breezily and entertainingly about one of the world’s most boring subjects: boredom itself.”—Tim Heald, *The Tablet*
(Tim Heald *The Tablet* 2011-07-02)

"[Toohey] makes a persuasive case that there are even benefits to boredom, and at the very least this engaging read proffers a temporary antidote to the noonday demon."—Kelly McMasters, *Newsday*
(Newsday *Kelly McMasters*)

"Highly entertaining."—Gordon Pitz, *PsycCRITIQUES*
(Gordon Pitz *PsycCRITIQUES*)

“….a playful but scholarly study.”—*Sunday Herald*
(*Sunday Herald* 2012-02-05)

“It’s a brave author who chooses boredom as the subject for a book. How to describe this least glamorous of emotions, or delve into its essential qualities, without concocting a truly dull tract? Peter Toohey’s method is to whip through the history, meaning and artistic representations of boredom at such a jaunty pace that there’s no time to be bored at all.”—Helen Zaltzman, *The Observer*
(Helen Zaltzman *The Observer* 2012-02-26)

"A lively, eminently readable book."—S. Halling, *Choice*
(S. Halling *Choice*)

“Toohey’s book is a veritable boredom bible, plus it’s got some funny bits and lots of nice pictures.”—Chris Moss, *Time Out*
(Chris Moss *Time Out* 2012-03-01)

“A fun and illuminating argument for the benefits of boredom.”—Angus Clarke, *The Times* (Angus Clarke *The Times* 2012-03-24)

About the Author

Peter Toohey is a professor in the Department of Greek and Roman Studies at the University of Calgary. His previous books include *Melancholy, Love and Time: Boundaries of the Self in Ancient Literature.* He lives in Calgary, Canada.

Users Review

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