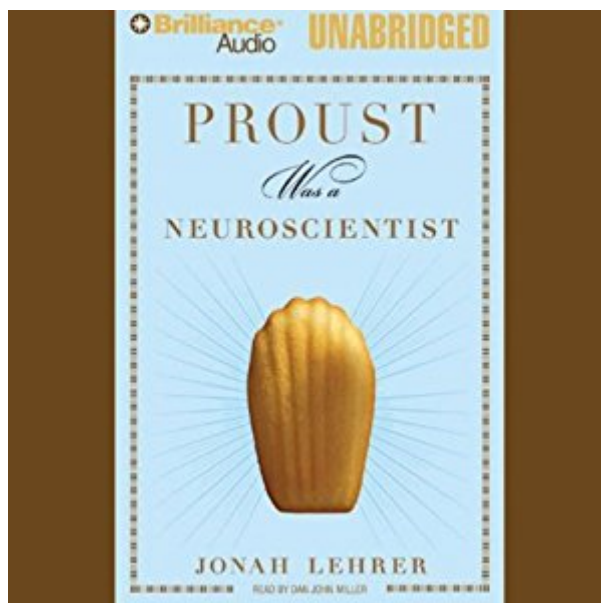


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# Proust Was A Neuroscientist



## Synopsis

In this technology-driven age, it's tempting to believe that science can solve every mystery. After all, science has cured countless diseases and even sent humans into space. But as Jonah Lehrer argues in this sparkling debut, science is not the only path to knowledge. In fact, when it comes to understanding the brain, art got there first. Taking a group of artists — a painter, a poet, a chef, a composer, and a handful of novelists — Lehrer shows how each one discovered an essential truth about the mind that science is only now rediscovering. We learn, for example, how Proust first revealed the fallibility of memory; how George Eliot discovered the brain's malleability; how the French chef Escoffier identified umami (the fifth taste); how Cézanne worked out the subtleties of vision; and how Gertrude Stein exposed the deep structure of language — a full half-century before the work of Noam Chomsky and other linguists. It's the ultimate tale of art trumping science. More broadly, Lehrer shows that there's a cost to reducing everything to atoms and acronyms and genes. Measurement is not the same as understanding, and this is what art knows better than science. An ingenious blend of biography, criticism, and first-rate science writing, *Proust Was a Neuroscientist* urges science and art to listen more closely to each other, for willing minds can combine the best of both, to brilliant effect. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I've only read the first 20 pages, but it is already well worth the price -- so many wonderful tidbits within the greater context of mind-body integration. Whilst we look at phrenology with modern

derision, it carried the day in much of the 1800's and Lehrer vividly describes its lore. A great story woven with logic and so many fun (for me) facts that I had not known, e.g. that William James was the first Prof. of Psychology or that Walt Whitman actually coined the phrase "I sing the Body Electric" (in advance of any real evidence of electrical impulses guiding our actions). I thought Ray Bradbury had coined this in his story (actually it was a TZ episode), but Ray was just paying homage to Mr. Whitman, as does a bridge over the Delaware going into Philadelphia. Joshua Lehrer has already enriched my mind and I hope others might also partake.

I put Jonah in the same category as Malcolm Gladwell and Simon Speck: great points derived from insightful thinking surrounded by science and solid storytelling. This is book I'd give away to those who see the crossover from cognitive neuroscience and the arts. (Yes, artists got it right before the profs). The book moves at a comfortable pace and is full of anecdotal evidence to carry you down the river of his thinking. Readers should know Lehrer had a bit of controversy about his scientific due diligence in other works. Personally I think it's petty academic posturing. Sometimes it takes a visionary to postulate on the big truths and let others endorse or prove it wrong. This particular book is especially compelling and covers off the senses: sight, sound, touch in succession. Expect to have moments of revelation as your thinking gets readjusted.

I really enjoyed the read. I know some reviewers have said things like "No, Proust was not a scientist", or "the author is just making up connections, the discoveries were made by scientists Not these artists", and so on. I think those reviewers are missing the point and taking things way too literally. I'm an artist myself so I really connected with these chapters about how these masterful artists intuitively made connections about the human mind that hadn't been discovered or at least published at the time they did so, it's an interesting concept and most people who are in to art and/or science will enjoy the read. I left out one star because some of the facts he puts in the book are questionable at best, though it didn't ruin anything for me personally it seems to annoy some people so I took one star away.

The author is able to entry in the soul of Proust, CÃfzanne, Withman, Eliot not only for the greatness in the art and literature, but also for their visions by a psychological point of view. In those men the strongness of their art was united to a particular study of the human life. This analysis goes in the deep levels of the mind, so we can retain this context particularly important for a knowledge of the modern times. The correlations of those different aspects is interesting, so we can see the

narrow relation between the work of Leherand and his teacher, Kandel.

Very good attempt to bridge science and art. It is an easy reading recommended for any enqistive mind. Buddha envisioned the vastness of universe with many worlds centuries before quantum physics. It is very hopeful and humbling reading these words.

This is a phenomenal book. The first chapter was a bit slow going, but after that it takes off. It is a great blend of current cognitive, neuro, and biopsych research and how relevant this was with artists, writers, etc. who have shaped the past. If you have read any books by Lehrer in the past, you will enjoy the depth of this book.

Got this book because I wanted to try Jonah Lehrer's writing. I'll give it the benefit of the doubt with 3 stars because I don't know a lot about literature/authors, but honestly it reads similarly to some essays that I had to write in high school/college where I had to write about connecting an author to his environment and place in history. The themes and up being really broad and the conclusions are really generalized

Lehrer seamlessly switches between modern neuroscience and the instinctive insights of authors and writers to provide a very readable and informative discussion of how they independently have both reached similar conclusions about human cognition. His style reminds me of Bill Bryson in *A Short History of Nearly Everything: Special Illustrated Edition*. This book is well worth its modest price.

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