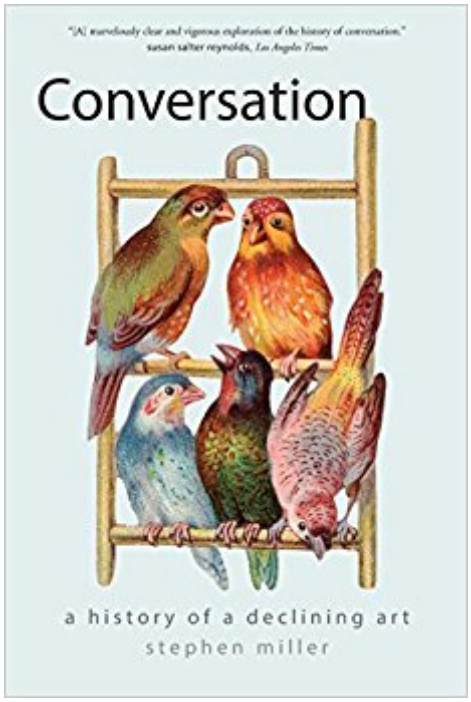
Ebook Directory
the best source of ebook

The book was found

Conversation: A History Of A Declining Art



PDF
Adobe
DOWNLOAD EBOOK

Synopsis

Essayist Stephen Miller pursues a lifelong interest in conversation by taking an historical and philosophical view of the subject. He chronicles the art of conversation in Western civilization from its beginnings in ancient Greece to its apex in eighteenth-century Britain to its current endangered state in America. As Harry G. Frankfurt brought wide attention to the art of bullshit in his recent bestselling On Bullshit, so Miller now brings the art of conversation into the light, revealing why good conversation matters and why it is in decline.Miller explores the conversation about conversation among such great writers as Cicero, Montaigne, Swift, Defoe, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, and Virginia Woolf. He focuses on the world of British coffeehouses and clubs in Ã¢â ¬Å“The Age of ConversationÃ¢â ¬Â• and examines how this era ended. Turning his attention to the United States, the author traces a prolonged decline in the theory and practice of conversation from Benjamin Franklin through Hemingway to Dick Cheney. He cites our technology (iPods, cell phones, and video games) and our insistence on unguarded forthrightness as well as our fear of being judgmental as powerful forces that are likely to diminish the art of conversation.

Book Information

Paperback: 368 pages

Publisher: Yale University Press (June 21, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0300123655

ISBN-13: 978-0300123654

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.8 x 8.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.3 out of 5 stars 13 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #758,757 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #157 inÃ Â Books > Reference > Etiquette > Conversation #333 inÃ Â Books > History > Historical Study & Educational Resources > Essays #2659 inÃ Â Books > Reference > Words, Language & Grammar > Communication

Customer Reviews

Miller, a freelance writer whose essays on 18th-century writers have appeared in the Times Literary Supplement, laments the decline of American conversational arts. By "conversation," Miller means the discussion of great and small topics by people who practice mutual tolerance for opposing viewpoints. The author agrees with philosopher David Hume’s view that "it is impossible but people must feel an increase of humanity, from the very habit of conversing together." Miller’s history is

itself much like a pleasant academic conversation as it meanders through a mini-history of coffee-houses in 18th-century Britain, a consideration of poet Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Church Yard" and Miller's displeasure with the counter-culture movement of the American 1960's and the current prevalence of conversation-precluding gadgets. In these latter arguments, he comes off at times as a Luddite, spewing scorn for cell phones and portable MP3 players, and if most of this book is an enjoyable and thought-provoking (if not conversation-provoking) read, Miller does manage a few missteps, as when he points to the taciturn masculinity of Hollywood westerns and Ernest Hemingway's terse writing style to bolster his thesis.Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Miller traces the history of conversation from Aristotle to the present day, focussing particularly on the eighteenth century. For him, the Paris salons where Diderot opined and the London coffeehouses where Dr. Johnson imbibed between aphorisms represent conversation's apogee. In America, he feels, it fared less well, even before the contemporary menace posed by the Internet, iPods, and the polarization of the political sphere. Thoreau dismissed conversation as a waste of time, and Melville thought it was a tool of con men. Miller defines conversation as the act of speaking with others without any objective other than enjoyment and exchange, and there is something conversational about his own style, which tends toward anecdote and ignores theoretical approaches that could have enriched his argument. Copyright Ã Â© 2006 The New Yorker --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Stephen Miller's historical study of conversation, its development and decline, is one of the most provocative books I've read in a long time. Conversing is something we spend a good part of our life doing, yet how many of us think consciously of what it really is (and was) or how we might better our understanding and practice of it?Miller has an impressive breadth and depth of knowledge but does not overwhelm the reader with this. Rather, he tells his story with wit and clarity, guiding us from the Book of Job and Plato's Symposium (whose discussion of Socrates as a conversationalist is fascinating) to 18th century Britain, where we meet brilliant conversationalists of a different sort, Defoe, Swift and Johnson, among them, all the way to the 21st century U.S. and the factors that have caused a worrisome loss in conversational ability.There are gems of information throughout the book: the difference between "raillery" and "repartee" (the first is part of successful conversing, the second isn't); the crucial role of London's coffee houses in conversation (there was 4,000 of

them at one time); the nature of conversation in the 17th and 18th salons of Paris, which were headed by women of culture; and judgments about various public figures and their conversation (Stalin delivered boring monologues, Clinton talked more than he listened, and Goethe was drowned out by the chatter of Madame de Stael).Miller has provided me with a lifetime supply of amusing anecdotes and quotes appropriate for "cocktail conversation." If I have one complaint--and it’s not a complaint about the book at all, but of how it affected me--it’s that I have become so obsessed with the subject that I can no longer carry on a conversation without grading myself!This would be a great gift for those in your circle who don’t know how to converse.

I am quite astounded that any person with an interest in this subject could give this fine book less than a five star review. Well-written, interesting and informative, replete with observations by historical authorities, this is the sort of book that should be underlined, marked up and re-read.

An affecting, enagaging rumination on the past, present, and future of conversation. The book is strongest in examining the great 18th century conversationalists -- Hume, S. Johnson -- and in offering observations on "conversibility" in the modern age. In some of the other historical chapters, Miller does not seem quite as well informed, and the thread of the essay stretches a bit thin.But overall the book is fun and very much worth reading. It makes one appreciate the delights of conversation and yearn to be a better conversationalist.

Very good read, and started a few conversations in waiting rooms

First off, this is not really a history of conversation, as most of the narrative is focused on 18th and 19th century England, the author’s specialty. Nonetheless, the book contains enough general historical background, anecdotes and insight to make it worth reading (even though I really had to struggle to get past the central chapters). Miller seems to be ambivalent about modern technology’s effect on conversation, and lists several of what he calls Conversation Avoidance Devices. While an iPod certainly does fall into this category (then again, do we really want to be conversing all the time with everyone who happens to stand nearby?), the Internet does not, as chat rooms, blogs, email etc. obviously open up different ways to do conversation -- ways that the author does not seem to appreciate or enjoy as much as a personal interaction at the coffee house. But why do the two have to be mutually exclusive?

Pedantic

The idea that conversation is in decline seems rather like the idea that every younger generation is a disappointment and declension from the high standards of the past. Anyway, it is worth conversing about/discussing and the book will please many readers. I was a little disappointed in that the book seemed to assume little knowledge in its readers. If you have read Boswell's Life of Johnson, taken an interest in Bloomsbury and so on [surely most British people who like books and have had an arts education], the book does not offer much new. I felt I was being told in a pleasant enough way things I already knew.

Download to continue reading...

Conversation: A History of a Declining Art Conversation: The Gentle Art Of Hearing & Being Heard - HowTo "Small Talk", How To Connect, How To Talk To Anyone (Conversation skills, Conversation starters, Small talk, Communication) Declining Prospects: How Extraordinary Competition and Compensation Are Changing America's Major Law Firms The Declining Work and Welfare of People with Disabilities: What Went Wrong and a Strategy for Change Mastering German: Basic Conversation (Global Access Basic Conversation) (German Edition) Teach Yourself Japanese Conversation (3CDs + Guide) (TY: Conversation) The Conversation Train: A Visual Approach to Conversation for Children on the Autism Spectrum The Green Zone Conversation Book: Finding Common Ground in Conversation for Children on the Autism Spectrum George Grant in Conversation (In Conversation series) World History, Ancient History, Asian History, United States History, European History, Russian History, Indian History, African History. (world history) The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology (Oxford History of Art) History: World History in 50 Events: From the Beginning of Time to the Present (World History, History Books, Earth History) (History in 50 Events Series Book 3) History: Human History in 50 Events: From Ancient Civilizations to Modern Times (World History, History Books, People History) (History in 50 Events Series Book 1) The Art of Conversation Through Serious Illness: Lessons for Caregivers The Fine Art of Small Talk: How To Start a Conversation, Keep It Going, Build Networking Skills -- and Leave a Positive Impression! Talk is (Not!) Cheap: The Art of Conversation Leadership The Art of Witty Banter: Be Clever, Be Quick, Be Interesting - Create Captivating Conversation Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading The Art of Civilized Conversation: A Guide to Expressing Yourself With Style and Grace Her Ladyship's Guide to the Art of Conversation

Contact Us

DMCA

Privacy

FAQ & Help