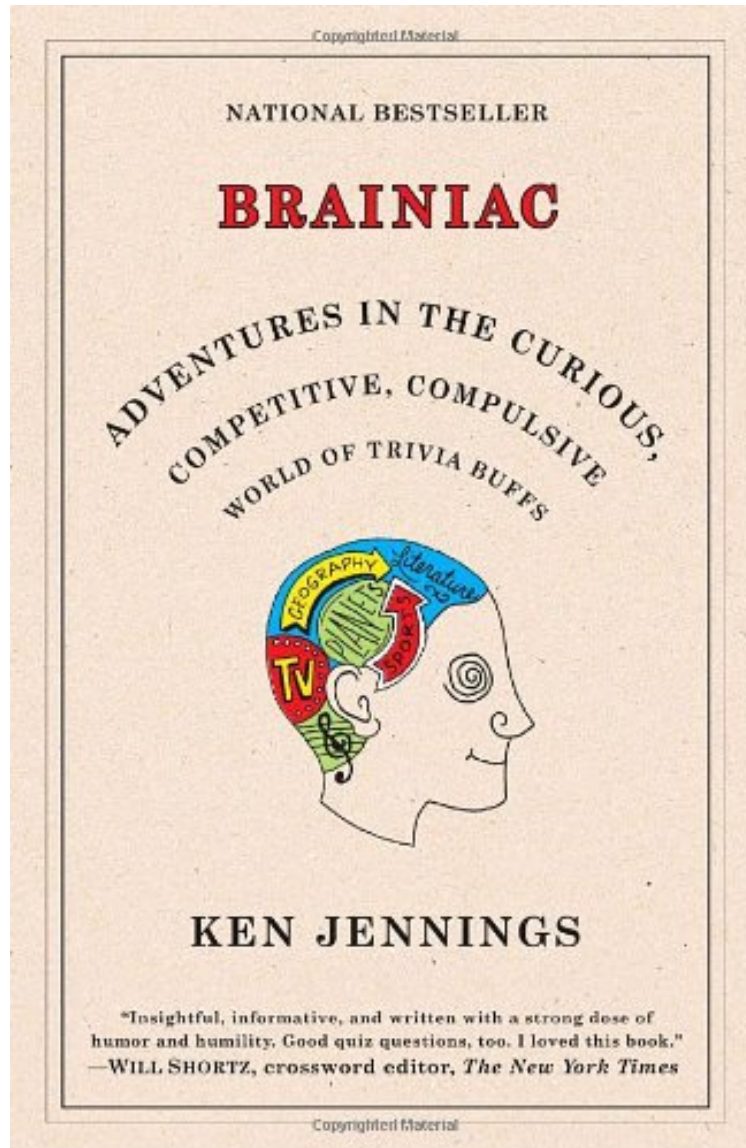


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Brainiac: Adventures in the Curious, Competitive, Compulsive World of Trivia Buffs

Ken Jennings

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Ken Jennings : Brainiac: Adventures in the Curious, Competitive, Compulsive World of Trivia Buffs before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Brainiac: Adventures in the Curious, Competitive, Compulsive World of Trivia Buffs:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. I remember this bookBy Ryan ReederYeah. I read it, and I took it

with me when I went to my own Jeopardy! tryouts in 2007 (didn't get called back). Then I lost it. I think it stayed at someone's house where I was staying out of town, but it disappeared. Ken Jennings was like a personal hero. I even made a tribute video in his honor. Then he got nasty to people and used some blue humor on Twitter, and I got a little disillusioned that maybe he wasn't such a nice guy. He's still smart and writes a great weekly trivia quiz. You should totally sign up! 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. FUN! By Carole Harris Fun and interesting read if you like trivia like I do! 4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Great Memoir/Commentary By T. A. Daniel Are you a trivia buff? A trivia nut? Someone who just likes to play trivia at pubs in the company of friends? Ken Jennings (the current record holder for most Jeopardy! wins of all time) has written a book that almost defies description. BRAINIAC is a memoir of sorts that covers Jennings' trip to try out on Jeopardy! and his subsequent record-setting run. But BRAINIAC is also a commentary and exploration on the world of trivia itself, from the pub-playing host of friends, to the elite college students' Quiz Bowl. The book is both of these things, and even though the narrative is pretty brief, Jennings makes every transition work. While it seems weird to wrap a memoir in the survey of the very hobby that the memoir centers on, the author makes it work. His style and voice are very approachable, and at times, downright fun. Aside from the humor, each chapter has a set of trivia questions embedded in the body of the text, with answers complete at the end of each chapter. BRAINIAC has two halves. One half of the book focuses on Jennings' misadventures on Jeopardy! The first chapter covers tryouts with long-time friend Earl Cahill and memories of watching gameshows compulsively as a kid (calling up grandparents to ask if they also caught the day's gameshow highlights). By the final chapter, we enter Jennings' head as he falters on his 75th game of Jeopardy! and the relief that follows. I've seen some reviews state that there's just not enough of the behind-the-scenes Jeopardy! present here: is Alex Trebek a jerk? How did you not answer XXX question right? It's true: not even half of this book is dedicated to this narrative, but I wasn't left wanting. Jennings' comes across as a humble, self-deprecating guy, and he attributes most of his wins to his familiarity with buzzer-timing. The other half of BRAINIAC is a survey of the goofy world of trivia. From the obscure beginnings in Europe to the casual (but competitive) world of pub-trivia, Jennings covers a ton of ground. While some of this may come off as a history lesson, it's written in a playful way. Anyone with a cursory interest in trivia will probably love some of these passages (what's more trivial than trivia about the world and history of trivia?). The author also covers some more meditative areas: why is trivia enjoyable? Why is Jeopardy! the top-rated quiz show in America? What makes a good trivia question? Jennings doesn't give authoritative answers, but he does give his thoughts on the subject, mixed with interviews from a host of quirky individuals. Interviews with trivia-authors, quiz-bowlers, pub-crawlers, gameshow-fanatics, and walking encyclopedias paint a scene that is about as quirky as anything else out there. As someone who enjoys trivia a bit more than the average American, I absolutely loved this book. BRAINIAC has been one of the more fun reads I've gone through, and surely one of the funniest non-fiction books. You'll laugh a ton, and you'll learn just as much. If you're not interested in trivia, I'd still give this book a shot -- Jennings might convince you to care with his super accessible prose and charm.

One day back in 2003, Ken Jennings and his college buddy Earl did what hundreds of thousands of people had done before: they auditioned for Jeopardy! Two years, 75 games, 2,642 correct answers, and over \$2.5 million in winnings later, Ken Jennings emerged as trivias undisputed king. Brainiac traces his rise from anonymous computer programmer to nerd folk icon. But along the way, it also explores his newly conquered kingdom: the world of trivia itself. Jennings had always been minutiae-mad, poring over almanacs and TV Guide listings at an age when most kids are still watching Elmo and putting beans up their nose. But trivia, he has found, is centuries older than his childhood obsession with it. Whisking us from the coffeehouses of seventeenth-century London to the Internet age, Jennings chronicles the ups and downs of the trivia fad: the quiz book explosion of the Jazz Age; the rise, fall, and rise again of TV quiz shows; the nostalgic campus trivia of the 1960s; and the 1980s, when Trivial Pursuit again made it fashionable to be a know-it-all. Jennings also investigates the shadowy demimonde of today's trivia subculture, guiding us on a tour of trivia hotspots across America. He goes head-to-head with the blowhards and diehards of the college quiz-bowl circuit, the slightly soused faithful of the Boston pub trivia scene, and the raucous participants in the annual QA marathon in Stevens Point, Wisconsin, The Worlds Largest Trivia Contest. And, of course, he takes us behind the scenes of his improbable 75-game run on Jeopardy! But above all, Brainiac is a love letter to the useless fact. What marsupial has fingerprints that are indistinguishable from human ones? What planet has a crater on it named after Laura Ingalls Wilder? What comedian had the misfortune to be born with the name Albert Einstein? Jennings also ponders questions that are a little more philosophical: What separates trivia from meaningless facts? Is being good at trivia a mark of intelligence? And is trivia just a waste of time, or does it serve some not-so-trivial purpose after all? Uproarious, silly, engaging, and erudite, this book is an irresistible celebration of nostalgia, curiosity, and nerdy obsession in a word, trivia. * The koala ** Venus *** Albert Brooks From the Hardcover edition.

From Publishers Weekly Did you know that Trivia was a Roman name for the goddess Hecate or that Jeopardy! tapes a week's worth of shows in a single afternoon? Jennings's record-setting 2004 six-month stint on the syndicated TV quiz show won him \$2.5 million and instant fame as he landed on Letterman, Leno, Sesame Street and Barbara Walters's

"Ten Most Fascinating People" list. Sprinkling trivia questions throughout his first book, the former computer programmer is a charmingly self-deprecating guide to the subculture of esoterica as he relates how he answered his first trivia question about the Wright brothers at four and made his chops on the ego-driven college quiz bowl circuit; confides how he mastered the "tricky" Jeopardy! buzzers; bonds with professional trivia writers; and describes being bested by the puzzler "Most of this firm's seven thousand seasonal white-collar employees work only four months a year" (Jennings answered FedEx; HR Block is correct). You don't have to be a couch potato to answer this: what's an eight-letter word for a highly entertaining, fast-paced read that demystifies "America's most popular and most difficult quiz show" while pondering how trivia is a cultural phenomenon that offers a tidy alternative to life's messiness as well as instant camaraderie between people from different walks of life? (Sept. 12) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From Booklist Although reality shows and other mindless drivel seem to dominate the TV landscape, it's reassuring that Jeopardy! still remains as a last vestige of academic pursuit in a sea of pop culture. This book provides a behind-the-scenes look at this holy grail of trivia contests. Jennings, perhaps the most famous Jeopardy! winner of all, completed a record 74-game winning streak over a six-month period in 2004, shortly after the five-game limit was lifted. Steeped in the world of trivia, he offers an in-depth history of the young sport, with its roots in English pub contests, the quiz shows (and accompanying scandals) of the 1950s, and the collegiate quiz-bowl circuit, where nerds reign supreme. Jennings informs and astounds us and manages to cram in enough fun facts to keep any trivia nut happy. David Siegfried Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved.

About the Author Ken Jennings was born in Seattle but spent much of his childhood in Seoul, South Korea. A graduate of Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, he worked as a computer programmer until becoming an unlikely celebrity due to his unprecedented record-breaking streak on the television quiz show Jeopardy! He lives outside Salt Lake City with his wife and son. For more information, visit www.ken-jennings.com. To schedule a speaking engagement, please contact American Program Bureau at www.apbspeakers.com From the Hardcover edition.