

[PDF] The Invention Of Air

Steven Johnson - pdf download free book

Books Details:

Title: The Invention of Air

Author: Steven Johnson

Released: 2008-12-26

Language:

Pages: 272

ISBN: 1594488525

ISBN13:

ASIN: B0045EPCPA



[**CLICK HERE FOR DOWNLOAD**](#)

pdf, mobi, epub, azw, kindle

Description:

From Publishers Weekly *Signature* Reviewed by Simon Winchester This is an intelligent retelling of a rather well-known story, that of Joseph Priestley, the Yorkshire dissenting theologian and chemist, and then went on to emigrate to America and advised the creators of the new republic—Thomas Jefferson, most notably—on how best to run their country. Steven Johnson, who has a fine reputation for discerning trends and for his iconoclastic appreciation of popular culture, chooses his topics well. His most recent book, *The Ghost Map*, looked at the story—also very familiar—of the London cholera epidemic of 1854, and of the heroic epidemiologist, John Snow, who discovered the ailment's origins and path of transmission. It was a good story, but essentially a simple one. With Priestley, Johnson has now taken on a subject that is every bit as complex and multifaceted as any of the Quentin Tarantino films he so admires. Priestley was a scientist, true, and his meditations on the exhalations of gases from mint leaves and the curiosities of phlogiston and fixed air, his discoveries of sulfur dioxide, nitrous oxide, ammonia gas—and oxygen, most importantly—and his relationship with his French rival Lavoisier have been the stuff of schoolroom

chemistry lessons for more than two centuries. But it is his politically liberal and spiritually dissenting views that underpin the story that Johnson chooses to tell—views that led in 1794 to Priestley, whose house in Birmingham had been sacked by rioters, emigrating to America, thereby becoming the first great scientist-exile, seeking safe harbour in America after being persecuted for his religious and political beliefs at home. Albert Einstein, Otto Frisch, Edward Teller, Xiao Qiang—they would all follow in Priestley's footsteps. Johnson unearths an interesting and illuminating statistic: in the 165 letters that passed between Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, the name Benjamin Franklin is mentioned five times, George Washington three times, Alexander Hamilton twice—and Joseph Priestley, a foreign immigrant, is cited no fewer than 52 times. The influence of the man—he was a fervent supporter of the French Revolution, a tolerant stoic and a rationalist utterly opposed to religious fundamentalism—was quite astonishing, and Steven Johnson makes a brave and generally successful attempt to summarize and parse the degree to which this influence infected the founding principles of the American nation. As a reminder of the underlying sanity and common sense of this country—a reminder perhaps much needed after the excesses of a displeasing presidential election campaign—*The Invention of Air* succeeds like a shot of the purest oxygen. Illus. (Jan. 2) Simon Winchester, author of *The Professor and the Madman*, is working on a biography of the Atlantic Ocean.

Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From The author of *Everything Bad Is Good for You* provides an entertaining account of the eighteenth-century scientist and radical Joseph Priestley's monumental discovery that plants restore "something fundamental"—what we now know as oxygen—to the air. Johnson also offers a clear-sighted and intelligent exploration of the conditions that are propitious to scientific innovation, such as the availability of coffee and the unfettered circulation of information through social networks. The members of the networks that Priestley belonged to, including Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, provide Johnson with some of his strongest material. But he sometimes overstates the relationship between politics and science, particularly when he strains to make the case that Priestley, after fleeing England in 1794, became a pivotal figure in the formation of the American republic.

Copyright ©2008

-
- Title: *The Invention of Air*
 - Author: Steven Johnson
 - Released: 2008-12-26
 - Language:
 - Pages: 272
 - ISBN: 1594488525
 - ISBN13:
 - ASIN: B0045EPCPA

