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Peter Davis, Samuel Bloodthirst, Shayn Nicely, Steve Kolenberg, Tom Lagana, XJ SelmanART DIRECTORSMonique Wolf, Randall MaynardCOVER ARTAdam SimpsonCOPY EDITORSSheila Moody, Erica Ferguson, Andrea ReuterSPECIAL THANKSBecky Cole, Kate Napolitano, Jaya Miceli, Demand Media, Dan Strone at Trident Media Group, John Cheese, Sean Reiley, Chris Bucholz, Wayne Gladstone, Luke McKinney, Ian Fortey, Alex Green, Kristin Plate, spouses, moms, dadsFor granting us continual existence through its inconceivable power, we dedicate this book to the sun. Thanks for not eating us yet.The AuthorsTitle PageCopyrightDedicationAcknowledgmentsIntroduction A Brief Recap of Your Squandered EducationCHAPTER 1Health and AnatomyStuck inside an insane machine with a users guide made of liesCHAPTER 2BiologyThe propaganda campaign to make you think all cool animals are deadCHAPTER 3World HistoryIf it was written by the winners, they are boring liarsCHAPTER 4Sex EducationLies about your junk and how to use itCHAPTER 5PhysicsThe universe is an unpredictable magic showCHAPTER 6U.S. HistoryThe (bullshit) superhero movieCHAPTER 7Health and NutritionTricked into living fat and dying young CHAPTER 8Practical PsychologyHow to keep your brain from screwing youCreditsEven before our own mothers, the Cracked editors would like to thank the heaps of talented comedy writers who fearlessly throw their ideas to the wolves every day in our Writers Workshop. Without their tireless hunt for all things fascinating and their long-suffering tolerance of our fickle, occasionally drunken demands, this book would never have been possible. We would also like to thank the wolves, those Workshop and forum moderators who believe in something greater than themselves, and have inexplicably chosen a comedy website as that something. They never kill an idea or a profile without reverence and necessity, and in doing so, maintain the precarious balance between fascist order and lawless swill hole that Cracked could collapse into without their diligence. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to Randall Maynard, Monique Wolf, and the rest of the design team for arranging every inch of this book, as well as Andrea Reuter for her patient and flawless copyediting. The debt of gratitude, we should note, has no monetary value because we already paid them handsomely. If they are shoeless and blackout drunk in a box somewhere today, thats on them. 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Oh shit, and our moms! Sorry, moms, for saying shit just now. Welcome to school, the propaganda wing of your parents battle to win your hearts and minds, or at least get you to quiet down for a single goddamn second before Mommy does something crazy. An annoying number of pointless questions are going to start popping into your head. You come into the conscious part of your life as a barely contained vortex of pure uncut curiosity, and the people in charge of your education are like Danny Glover in the Lethal Weapon moviescounting down the days until theyre able to retire with some peace and quiet, and most assuredly too old for this shit. Teachers are fighting a nonstop battle to bring the energy in the room down to their level, which meant there was some stuff they couldnt tell you about. Because the truth is, and dont tell them we told you this, the world around you is fucking amazing. Its just way easier to manage a classroom full of children on the verge of falling asleep than one that is vibrating with sheer, joyous energy because nobody can freaking believe how goddamn amazing blue

whales are! And so, they edited the coolest stuff out of the stories they taught you, inundated you with dates and names and other curiosity-dampening instruments to clog the information-craving hole in your brain that churns out questions like, Yeah, but why is the stuff inside of the leaves green? One thing is for certain: They never came clean about completely biffing your education, which is how you came to construct your view of the world on a foundation of lies and half-truths that totally missed the point. In case you're wondering what they could have gotten so terribly wrong, here's a quick preview of one of the incredible history lessons nobody taught you. Bear with us, because this is weird. And it has massive implications for everything you've ever read on any subject ever.

Homeric scholar William Gladstone was going through *The Iliad* for the thousandth time when he noticed something odd. Despite being one of the best poets ever to put pen to paper, Homer sucked at describing colors. He described the ocean, oxen, and sheep as being the color of wine. He described honey and a nightingale as being green, and the sky as being bronze. At one point he described Hector's hair as being the color of a stone that we know to be blue. Gladstone, who was so smart that he'd eventually become the prime minister of England four times, started going through and counting all the colors referenced in the book. There were thousands of blacks and whites, a handful of reds, yellows, and greens, and, assuming Hector wasn't a Smurf, no blue at all. Following Gladstone's lead, scholars expanded the search for the color blue in ancient Greek writing. Nothing in Aristotle. Even the color theorist Empedocles didn't mention it, and writing about colors was sort of his thing. Ancient Greeks not only seemed to not have a word for blue but also didn't seem to be able to perceive the color at all. Realizing that the cone receptors in our eyes couldn't have changed that much over the course of three thousand years, the scholars were forced to conclude that it was some rare mental block. But as academics and historians from different fields began comparing notes, they realized that it wasn't just the ancient Greeks. Colors seemed to emerge in stages. In the early days, colors started as black and white. Aristotle described colors as the presence and absence of light, and he was the smartest dude ever to exist anywhere. Next, the concept of colors would blink into existence one at a time. Red would show up first, then green and yellow would eventually arrive on the scene. Without fail, blue would always show up last. A loose theory has emerged that it's need-based. Cultures take their lazy old time, not inventing colors until they need them. Red comes first because it's the color of blood and wine, two of the only fluids with color that are in abundant supply in the early stages of a civilization. Green would usually come next because it's the color of foliage and can be useful in differentiating one leaf from another. But in most places in the world, the only thing that's naturally blue is the sky. And if sky blue is the only type of blue you ever see, why have a word for it at all? So Homer was writing at a time somewhere around the invention of yellow; he uses it, just not very well, and about five hundred years before blue arrived and freed ancient Greek artists to take reality from black and white to Technicolor (see here). What's amazing is that not having a word for blue made him see the world the way someone might if they were wearing glasses that filtered out all blue light. Put on a pair of blue blockers and the sea probably does look like wine, and the sky bronze. In a recent experiment, a man actively shielded his daughter from the word blue for the first four years of her life and found that on a clear day she would simply describe the sky as white, and blue things as other colors, because her mind hadn't invented the existence of blue. This means that language is not some separate code that we use to describe a set of preexisting things. Language gives us the ability to perceive them. Probably the greatest modern example of this is the Aboriginal Australian tribe that invented the word kangaroo but never got around to inventing words for right and left. Instead, they related everything to its position on the compass. Rather than making them worse at orienting themselves, not having the concept of left and right gave the tribe a superhuman sense of direction: They could be chasing an animal in circles through the forest on a moonless, pitch-dark night in the middle of a downpour and they would know exactly where true north was at all times. Think about what that means for history. We're not just the newest link on a chain of identical iterations of humankind. The world you perceive might be completely different from the one being observed and recorded in historical documents. Think about how much more interesting history class would have been if you'd realized that every new era offered you the ability to see the world in a completely new way and solve the mystery of what words and ideas people possessed at a given time, and what they didn't. Think about how much more interested you would have been in the world around you if they'd just taught you that there are types of human perception and abilities that you can't even conceive of because nobody's given you the tools necessary to describe them in your head. That could have changed your life! But it's easier to test your ability to remember names and dates, so they just made up a bunch of those, taught you how to memorize them, and called it a day. This book is our attempt to erase the layer of black and white gunk they painted

over some of the most surprising truths mankind has found out about so far. It is full of information that you will be furious you weren't taught the first time around, and lies you won't believe you fell for. And dick jokes. There will be plenty of those, too.

**FIGURE 1.1** Fun fact: The most disgusting part of the body is literally the entire thing. Welcome to Your Body! Here's Some Bullshit We Made Up About It. Naturally, you're curious about this meat suitcase you find yourself locked inside. From the time that you enter kindergarten not knowing your ass from elbow macaroni, and unwilling to take I don't know for an answer on through the stage when puberty flushes everything that isn't hormones from your bloodstream and well into adulthood, you're going to have lots of questions about the soft pile of tissue you're stuck piloting.

Unfortunately, your parents and teachers won't let you learn enough about human anatomy to know what part of their body they're pulling the answers out of.

**The Five Senses**  
**THE MYTH:** You perceive the world around you with five senses. When someone says they have a sixth sense, it means they're a crazy person. Believing there are more than five senses is for television psychics and M. Night Shyamalan.

**FIGURE 1.2** While none of Johnny's five senses are bringing in new data, his brain still senses that we've made him stare at this blank wall for more than three hours. After talking to his classmates, his sense of time will tell him that these were the same three hours when they did an experiment to find out which ice cream makes time go the fastest.

(Answer: the best-tasting ice cream!)

**Class Discussion!** Should Johnny have doubted his teacher about having a clock in his brain, even though he doesn't know shit?

**THE TRUTH:** The five senses you're familiar with aren't even the most important ones. For instance, think about your sense of time—the inner clock that tells you how long something is taking. Don't think you have a clock ticking away inside your brain? Try staring at a white wall in a totally silent room. Your sense of time is what tells you how much of your life has been wasted because you doubted us (see Figure 1.2).

If you're walking in the woods and a bear growls in the bushes over your left shoulder, the sound hits your left ear a millionth of a second before your right. Your sense of time picks up on that tiny difference and allows you to perfectly triangulate the bear's location. If you had only five senses, you'd have to use your eyes to locate the bear, and by then it would be too late. A blur of brown fur would be the last thing you ever saw!

**The Tongue Map**  
**THE MYTH:** Your tongue has specialized zones responsible for detecting certain tastes.

**FIGURE 1.3** What you learned the tongue looks like in action: a ladybug that knows how to party. You saw this colorful diagram in an elementary school textbook and you might have even sat through a classroom experiment where you placed different flavors on different parts of your tongue to show you that your taste buds stick to their own in segregated taste zones, presumably fighting little salty versus sweet gang wars on the borderlands whenever you eat a chocolate-covered pretzel.

**THE TRUTH:** Your tongue is like your digestive system's fingerprint.

**FIGURE 1.4** What the tongue actually looks like: a ladybug that's freaking out, you guys! The idea that strictly defined areas of the tongue respond to particular tastes started much in the same way that we expect the next world war to start...

...with Americans failing to grasp the translation of words written in a foreign language. In 1941, a Harvard academic with the comically ideal name of Dr. Boring (seriously) mistranslated a 1901 German study, erroneously interpreting it to mean that certain areas of the tongue react more strongly to certain tastes. The first red flag should have been the fact that German food only has one taste: sauerkraut. Rather than identifying a precise map of the tongue, that 1901 German study just concluded that some people react to different tastes on different parts of the tongue more strongly than others, which is pretty much spot-on.

Each of our tongue maps will react to different tastes in different ways, sometimes detecting different flavors in the exact same meal. As for taste buds, they aren't just on the tongue but instead stretch all the way down the esophagus into the stomach. When you eat something that makes you nauseous, it's the taste buds in your stomach that tell the rest of your digestive tract that the train is coming. We blame pressure from the notoriously strong Colorful Chart Industry lobby for keeping this myth alive in classrooms a full thirty years after it was debunked.

**Deoxygenated Blood**  
**THE MYTH:** The blood inside your veins is blue, only turning red when exposed to oxygen. This one is simple. White people, look at the underside of your arm right now. See all those veins? They're blue, right? That's because the blood coursing through them is also blue. It only turns red when it mixes with oxygen, a scientific process that those who have witnessed it have rated as totally not worth it.

**FIGURE 1.5** Bleeding to death on Earth versus bleeding to death on the moon: both probably terrible.

**THE TRUTH:** Blood comes in two colors—red and even more red. Deoxygenated blood isn't blue. Those veins we asked (demanded, actually) every white person look at also aren't blue. The veins and the blood they carry are not only red; they're even redder than oxygenated blood. That blue? That's just your eyes playing tricks on you. The fact that you can see them at all is due to how close they are to the surface of the skin. The color change can be chalked up to the fact that light reflects blue through Caucasian skin, unlike

how it reflects through the skin of other races, whose veins can look brown, green, or pink. Basically, blue blood was one of those scientific discoveries that probably happened when some white guy noticed something that was true about his race, briefly considered checking with people of different races, then remembered who was the white guy here and went back to his job deciding what color to make Band-Aids.

**Body Heat**  
**THE MYTH:** You lose most of your body heat through your head. Listen up, this is just common sense. Heat rises. And where is your head? Its on top of your body. So naturally, when heat escapes your body, it leaves through your head (see Figure 1.6). Now quit asking questions and put this hat on. It looks like a pandas head. So not only will it keep you warm, but chicks will dig it, too.  
**THE TRUTH:** Covering one part of your body has as much effect as covering any other. The myth that heat escapes your body through your head is based on what could very well be the most poorly executed study ever conducted. In 1951, the U.S. Army tossed a bunch of test subjects wearing the latest in arctic survival gear out into the freezing cold and measured how much body heat they lost. One thing, though they didnt bother to put hats on them. Shockingly, most of the measured body heat escaped through their uncovered domes. Who could have seen that coming? The army was so proud of this groundbreaking discovery that it published the finding in a survival manual and stressed that hats were mandatory survival gear. Just like that, your mother had something to nag you about for the rest of her blessed time on this earth. The truth is, an uncovered head loses no more body heat than any other uncovered body part and gets you less jail time than a few of them.

**FIGURE 1.6** A man doffs his hat to a passing woman the number one cause of hypothermia and global warming according to some bullshit your mom learned from the army. Corrected Users Manual to You

**THE MOST BASIC THINGS YOURE ALMOST CERTAINLY DOING WRONG** There are certain aspects of life that, thankfully, seem to come preinstalled simple things that your body figures out almost instinctively so you can save all of your precious focus for cartoon plotlines and the instructions on the backs of shampoo bottles. Theres only one problem: Youre doing every single one of those things incorrectly, and its killing you. Most of the things that your body does instinctively are actually behaviors youve learned by watching your parents and the people around you. And humanity has picked up some pretty terrible habits over the years. For instance...

**Corrected Users Manual to You: SITTING HOW YOU DO IT** In a chair, at a 90-degree angle, which it turns out is the worst thing you can possibly do to your body that isnt smoking. Your parents warned you about posture but forgot to mention that just sitting in a chair leads to a lower life expectancy and increased risk of diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. Youd be better off connecting that chair to thousands of volts of electricity and getting it over with. It seems like the most natural thing in the world, but sitting in a chair is a relatively new development. Prior to the past few centuries, you could sit on a backless stool or bench, or you kneeled. Weve still got terms like chairman that show how uncommonly high you had to get in an organization before they gave you something to lean back against. Now that everyone gets to sit in a chair all day like fancy millionaires, the core muscles that used to hold us together are turning into pudding, which is apparently really bad for you. So bad that people who work a desk job and exercise regularly die younger than people in careers that require them to stay on their feet.

**HOW YOURE SUPPOSED TO DO IT** Look at that weird guy in the office who sits on a giant inflatable ball. Ugh. As much as we hate to say it, the best way to keep your abs from taking the day off is to engage them by challenging your ass with a seat that requires some degree of balance and precision. Think a backless stool, a bench, or, if all those things burned down, a bouncy, pastel-colored yoga ball. You can also avoid the Sitting Death by kneeling, crouching, standing, or continuously performing jump-squats and roundhouse kicks while at your desk, at the dinner table, on roller coasters, or anywhere else youd usually sit. Another option is to constantly recline at least 135 degrees, which has been shown to provide some relief to the spine but also increases tenfold your chances of falling asleep at work. So if you dont feel like being that guy with the ball, getting fired, or ratcheting all your tables at home up to standing height, your best bet is to spend as much time as possible at the stools natural habitat: the bar. Do it for your health.

**Corrected Users Manual to You: POOPING**  
**BET YOU DIDNT KNOW:** Not only is sitting on a toilet the wrong way to poop, it can also give you hemorrhoids, which will, in turn, make it even harder to poop! Life is an endless cycle of wrong-poopedness.  
**HOW YOU DO IT** Pooping is easy, right? So easy that you can do it sitting down, over an interminable length of time. It turns out, sitting at a right angle doesnt just inflict crippling spinal damage; it also slows the pooping process. Thats because standard sitting toilets force the pooper to create a kink in their poop-tubes, jamming the poop all up in there.  
**HOW YOURE SUPPOSED TO DO IT** Like a catcher: ass below knees, waist and knees bent at acute angles, head forward so you dont witness the sin you are returning unto the earth. Remove catchers mitt prior to wiping. Youre supposed to squat without support, like

you're making a mound of your own right behind home plate. Modern toilets only came to prominence in the nineteenth century, meaning that the human race has been dumping on the go for far longer than we've been holding up with our laptops on the ceramic throne. In fact, our musculature is designed specifically to hinder defecation when we're in a standing or sitting position, presumably because otherwise a game of musical chairs would be fraught with a lot more peril. A recent study showed that a sample group of people who agreed to poop and then talk to a scientist about it found their elimination experience easier and up to a minute shorter in the free squat than in the now-traditional sitting posture. So next time you've got the urge, try hovering above the can instead of slapping cheek, and see if you don't set a land speed record yourself.

Corrected Users Manual to You: BATHING HOW YOU DO IT Too frequently. Or, if you're French, cest parfait! Although most developed nations encourage daily washing, there are a few reasons that it's a bad idea, and only one of them is, it's easier not to.

HOW YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO DO IT Revue de presse Praise for YOU MIGHT BE A ZOMBIE AND OTHER BAD NEWS "In a sea of literary lies, finally a book that will tell you the truth about the things you need to know." -Sarah Silverman "Smart, funny, and cool." -Roger Ebert "The funniest, wisest, greatest book ever written! I keep reading and rereading it here in my padded cell!" -Stan Lee