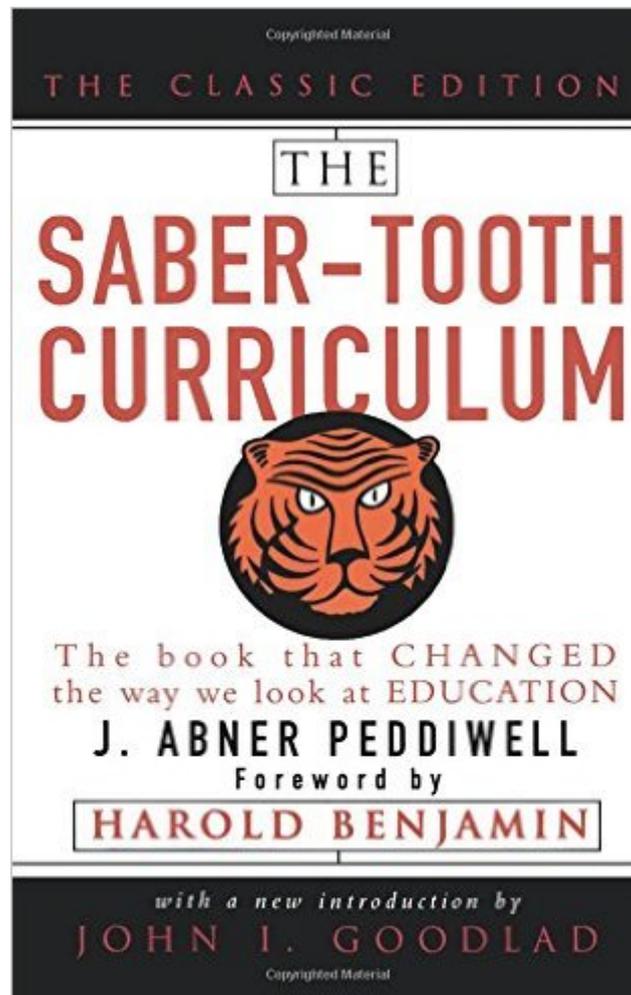


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The Saber-Tooth Curriculum, Classic Edition



Synopsis

The 65th-anniversary edition of an educational classic proves its relevance in examining today's educational quandaries McGraw-Hill first published *The Saber-Tooth Curriculum* in 1939, and it has remained a classic bestseller to this date. The book is just as relevant and applicable to the key questions in education today as it was when it was first published. With tongue firmly in cheek, Peddiwell takes on the contradictions and confusion generated by conflicting philosophies of education, outlining the patterns and progression of education itself, from its origins at the dawn of time to its culmination in a ritualistic, deeply entrenched social institution with rigidly prescribed norms and procedures. This fascinating exploration is developed within a fanciful framework of fictional lectures, given by Professor J. Abner Peddiwell, doyen in the History of Education at Petaluma State College. In a humorous fable, Peddiwell illustrates the progress of education and give valuable insights into how it could continue to develop in the decades to come.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I doubt *THE SABER-TOOTH CURRICULUM* would be produced today, a sad commentary on our times. No contemporary publisher would distribute the first edition to educators for the sake of discourse and no doubt a little shrewd marketing like McGraw did in the late 1930s, and no pointed but whimsical and very funny satire on pedagogical history in the age of theory rendered in opaque language would get very far. What is a better commentary on our times is that this wonderful book is still in print and still venerated despite the trouble it would have in getting born now. A thumbnail

sketch: a man, Raymond Wayne, the putative author (actually, the real author is Harold Raymond Wayne Benjamin, who died in 1969 and is still admired as an educational thinker), is in a bar in Tijuana, knocking back tequila daisies when he runs into his old professor, J. Abner Peddiwell, Ph.d., who, with considerable help from the daisies, agrees to embark on a seminar illustrating the history and issues of pedagogy. His witty example is told through the story of the cave man who first decided that children needed to learn the essentials of fish-grabbing, little horse clubbing and tiger-scaring. Out of this grows a complex system that includes teacher accreditation, higher education, Ph.D. programs, progressive theory, conservative theory, teacher unions, the rise of phys ed. and the question that never goes away, do we teach children how to think or what to think? It is enlightening to read how fresh the issues are nearly 70 years later. One only wonders what hay Benjamin would make with the likes of today's educational soup of politics, law, economics and the headlining controversies that plague the profession.

When I found this book on my list of items to read for a graduate course, I did not believe the reviews that stated a 70 year old book could still provide enlightenment on today's issues. Coming into the education field with a background in business, I found myself not only laughing throughout parts of the book but agreeing with the author. This book brought education and business together for me. The author is correct, today we spend too much time focusing on what worked yesterday and not wanting to change. As a result, we make excuses on why what was still could be the answer. We are all realizing that yesterday's education is no longer effective for tomorrow's students. This book is one every stakeholder should read before voting on the latest "get fixed-quick" plans for education are initiated. While this book does not offer any suggestions on how to fix the system, it does offer an interesting viewpoint on how everything went so wrong. The question thus becomes who can come up with an answer to the questions this book poses.

Yup, the more things change the more they stay the same. Observations on education made in the 30's are highly relevant today. I was granted a teaching certificate in 1979, earned it years later, and stumbled onto this book about 1990. I was laughing my way though it, turned to the copyright date, and was stunned to see it was already 50 years old. Now, in 2011, it's still relevant. This is a 1-day read, highly entertaining, and spot on.

True the and true now...we are not all susceptible to the same teaching and learning methods...we humans have a "grain" which if the teaching considers, will allow more effective learning...the

reason "Allie (the alligator)" cannot do well climbing trees is because she is an alligator--not because she needs to better apply herself. The students and teachers are as capable as they've ever been...we just need to get the Unions and Administrators back to their necessary levels.

This is a must read for those of us who struggle to deal with the frustrations of constant education reform dictated by administrators and executives who have never worked on the field. It makes us take a look at why we continue to do what we do!

Although written in the 1940s, this book is extremely relevant today. There are those that want to make the Common Core standards political. This book puts them "and any other standards document" into perspective by using the allegory of cavemen who want to teach the saber-toothed curriculum long after they become extinct. A real classic.

This book should be required reading for anyone involved in education--particularly administrators and officials. No "big" words or educational jargon here, just a simple fairy tale which points out all the basic flaws in educational systems.

I first read this book while teaching at Michigan State University in 1963 thanks to Dr. Vince Lombardi, a Social Science faculty. In addition to its wonderful and humorous critique of education, it is also a marvelous critique of capitalism and its "natural" tendency towards monopoly. Now 65 years later when issues of income and wealth inequality are finally relevant, the Saber-Tooth Curriculum provides a simple guide to sense making. Written in 1939 when the Great Depression was still tearing at the economic and social fabric of U.S. and other Western societies, it is not surprising that the book would address how we got to that place.

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