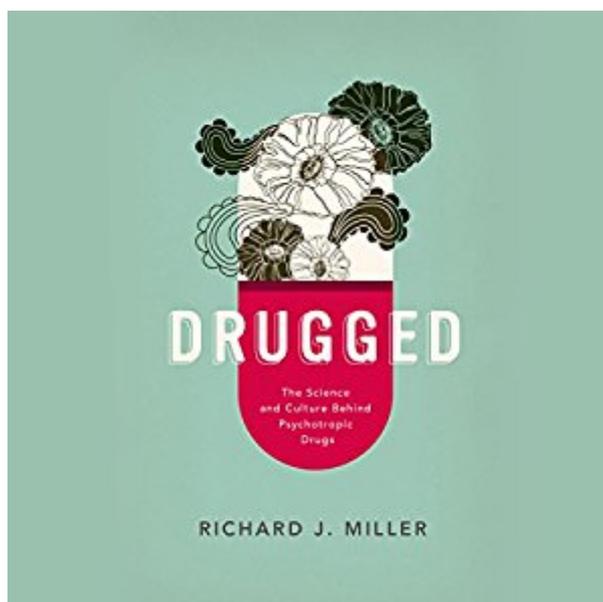


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Drugged: The Science And Culture Behind Psychotropic Drugs



Synopsis

"Morphine," writes Richard J. Miller, "is the most significant chemical substance mankind has ever encountered." So ancient that remains of poppies have been found in Neolithic tombs, it is the most effective drug ever discovered for treating pain. "Whatever advances are made in medicine," Miller adds, "nothing could really be more important than that." And yet, when it comes to mind-altering substances, morphine is only a cc or two in a vast river that flows through human civilization, ranging from LSD to a morning cup of tea. In *Drugged*, Miller takes listeners on an eye-opening tour of psychotropic drugs, describing the various kinds, how they were discovered and developed, and how they have played multiple roles in virtually every culture. The vast scope of chemicals that cross the blood-brain barrier boggle the very brain they reach: cannabis and cocaine, antipsychotics and antidepressants, alcohol, amphetamines, and Ecstasy - and much more. Literate and wide-ranging, Miller weaves together science and history, telling the story of the undercover theft of 20,000 tea plants from China by a British spy, for example; the European discovery of coffee and chocolate; and how James Wolfgang von Goethe, the famous man of letters, first isolated the alkaloid we now know as caffeine. Miller explains what scientists know - and don't - about the impact of each drug on the brain, down to the details of neurotransmitters and their receptors. He clarifies the differences between morphine and heroin, mescaline and LSD, and other similar substances. *Drugged* brims with surprises, revealing the fact that antidepressant drugs evolved from the rocket fuel that shot V2 rockets into London during World War II, highlighting the role of hallucinogens in the history of religion, and asking whether Prozac can help depressed cats. Entertaining and authoritative, *Drugged* is a truly fascinating book.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Richard Miller is a fantastic storyteller. I greatly enjoyed reading the history and mechanisms behind the drugs discussed in this book, which includes caffeine (always relevant). One thing to note, if you do not have a basic science background, some of the drug action mechanisms can be difficult to understand. However, Dr. Miller makes the subject matter entertaining by recounting the stories you never hear, and bringing the scientists, anthropologists, and other historical figures to life. If you ever have the chance to attend a lecture by Dr. Miller in person, I highly recommend that you do so. Overall, great book, and I definitely recommend that you read it!

Just finished Richard J. Miller's "Drugged" which is a tour de force of the history, culture, and science of psychotropic drugs (i.e. drugs which influence the brain). Miller's tour can become a bit technical in places, but the non-technical reader should bear through these points for the bulk of the book is filled with interesting knowledge. For the technically inclined, the book provides an excellent chemical and biological overview. "Drugged" explores all classes of psychotropics with, for the most part, each chapter covering each class. Miller usually starts out with historical context then moves into the technicals and weaves cultural implications throughout. The last chapter covers the relationship between the brain and immune systems wrapped in an exploration of the life and death of composer Robert Schumann. Coffee, caffeine, nicotine, alcohol, and chocolate are reviewed in addition to the usuals of LSD, ecstasy, cocaine, amphetamines, barbiturates, and morphine. All in all, it made for an excellent read.

As a 3rd year pharmacy student, I am always enthralled by the pharmacology/toxicology of drugs. I am also a rabid reader of history books, so when a book comes out that combines the two, I am ecstatic! This book has been a wonderful read thus far (I am only about 1/4 of the way through it due to having a therapeutics exam coming up and not a lot of "free time" to read leisurely). The book is well-written and definitely easily approachable by the common layperson and is also a good refresher for us biology/chemistry geeks. I look forward to finishing it soon and will definitely update my review at that time. With that said, so far so very good!

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. It's science lingo, though inevitable, was difficult to follow at times.

Fascinating history of psychotropic drugs, as the title implies. Read it and get started on the homework assignment at the end.

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