

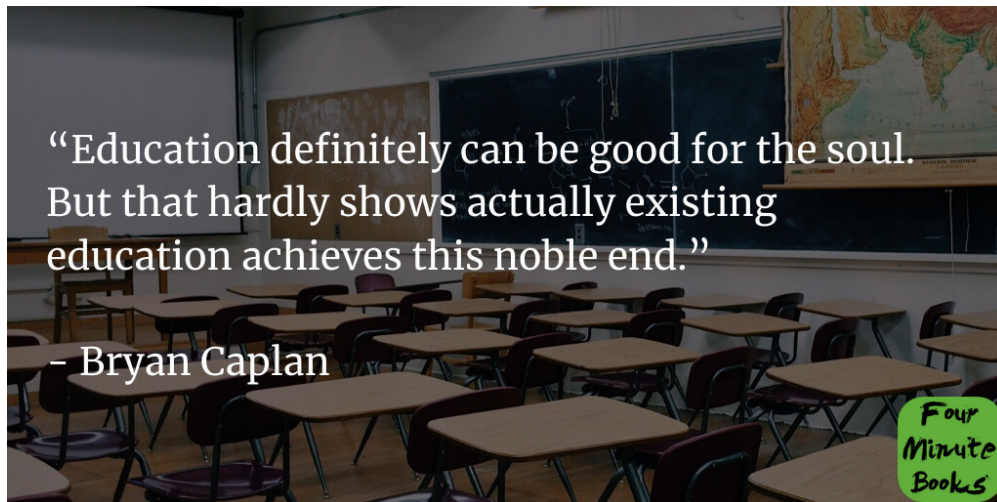
The Case Against Education Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *The Case Against Education* reveals why the schooling system is so broken, how it doesn't fulfill its intended purposes but instead creates multiple problems for society, and what we might try to do to fix it.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Do you remember that class that you hated taking in high school? The one that you'd always complain was a waste of time? Chances are everybody told you it was important because it improved your critical thinking skills or something like that.

But what if they were wrong? What if education isn't actually as good for individuals and society as we all assume?

You know that some classes are boring. And that going to college drains your bank account and puts you into crippling debt. Setting all of this aside, there are some serious drawbacks to the way we do schooling that it's time to uncover and fix.

If you're wondering how on earth education could be a bad thing, get ready to have your mind blown. You'll learn all the reasons why and how we could solve these problems in Bryan Caplan's *The Case against Education: Why the Education System Is a Waste of Time and Money.*

And as you'll discover, some of these drawbacks have far more serious implications than any of us can imagine.

Let's see how much we can learn in just 3 lessons:

1. Most of what you learn in school is irrelevant to your life.
2. A college degree is little more than a signal to employers that a person is hardworking, but it doesn't turn people into hard workers.
3. We've got to rethink the way we look at work if we want to fix education.

Are you ready to have your mind opened to some unorthodox ideas? Here we go!

Lesson 1: School doesn't teach you much that is relevant to real life.

Taking a physics class as part of a Civil Engineering degree doesn't sound so crazy, right? But what if the subject matter focuses on light and relativity? I had this very experience and when I asked the dean about it in my exit interview before graduating he just told me that it was required for them to be accredited.

How ridiculous is it that governing bodies require such a useless class to have this certification? It certainly didn't make it any easier to adjust to being an engineer once I graduated!

What's worse is that few of the classes I took *as part of my major* made any difference when it was time to begin working. **I remember many times thinking that it would be nice if someone fixed the system so I didn't have to learn everything on the job!**

Regardless of whether it's college physics or high school Spanish, classes that provide no help in the real world are abundant in the school system. And when it comes to foreign languages, people only become fluent outside the classroom!

Educators will disagree with these notions, declaring that classes teach critical thinking and logic. But are they right? Science says no. Research identifies that while college does help with critical thinking skills, they don't reach beyond the classroom.

In other words, a college degree does nothing to prevent you from using illogical thinking in the real world.

Lesson 2: Graduating from college signals to employers that you're a hard worker, but it won't turn you into a diligent person.

If you get a bachelor's degree you earn more money. You learned a lot and developed new skills in school so you're more valuable to employers, right?

Actually, that's not why a diploma gets you a higher salary. It's simply because hardworking people are those that go to college and graduate. The character traits are already there, and getting the degree is evidence of that.

But it doesn't build those attributes.

When economists try to explain why graduates make more, they use a flawed system called human capital theory. This is the idea that the classroom trains you to be a better employee by giving you those skills which you didn't have before.

A more accurate way is what's known as signaling. **In this view, employers will pay more if you have a college diploma because it's a signal that you have *preexisting* profitable traits like diligence, obedience, and intelligence.**

In other words, school doesn't give you those skills, it only proves that you already had them in the first place.

Signaling theory also can explain things that human capital theory can't. Take the fact that someone with a degree in English will still make more than a non-degree holder in a business consultant position.

Although the discipline is unrelated, the wages are still higher because it's a signal to the employer that the person is a hard worker.

Lesson 3: To fix education we need to reform the way it's done and rethink the way we see work.

If you're like me, you probably didn't like how poorly school prepared you for the real world. All of those useless classes just amounted to wasted time and money when it came time to actually make a living on what you learned.

So how do we fix all the problems with education?

First, we need to forsake the misguided idea that it's always better to have more education or some education than nothing. This kind of thinking got us into this mess.

We also must drop meaningless requirements in all forms and levels of curriculum. Stop making Civil Engineering students take classes about relativity! **And let's get rid of the common subjects everybody forgets, like Shakespeare and history.**

We also need to stop credential inflation, or how the value of a degree diminishes because of subsidies that make it easier to get one. To do this, we simply have to stop the overabundant financial support.

Most importantly, it's time to emphasize vocational, or on-the-job training above classroom learning. Doing is the most efficient form of learning, and the best way for kids to get that is with regular work.

According to the author we should adjust child labor laws so kids can get more experience earlier. This would help them start off on the right foot at graduation. Then they wouldn't have to deal with the struggles that having a college degree brings!

The Case Against Education Review

Well so much for the master's degree that I just finished! Not really though, I think that going to college is still the best option for most people just because this social structure is still ingrained into society. I agree with a lot of what *The Case Against Education* teaches, it did miss a few important truths that affect the real-life usefulness of these principles.

Who would I recommend The Case Against Education summary to?

The 19-year-old who is considering college, the 43-year-old high school teacher that wants a new perspective on education, and every politician that has the power to make improvements to this inefficient and outdated system.