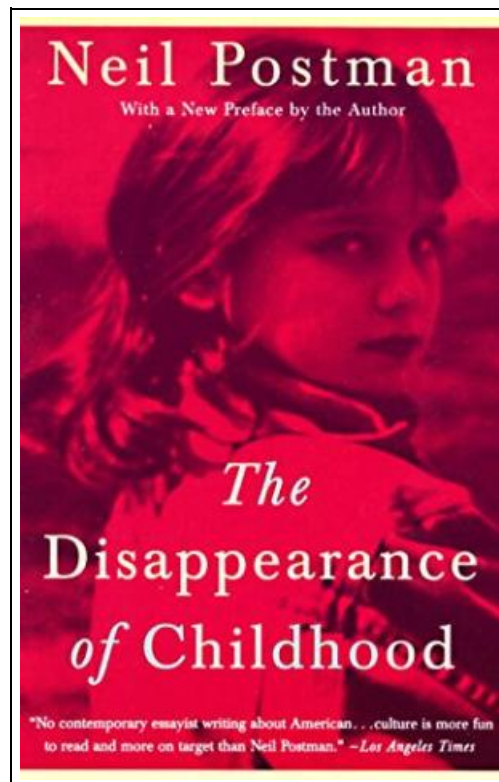


The Disappearance of Childhood



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Reviews

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THE DISAPPEARANCE OF CHILDHOOD



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Vintage August 1994, 1994. Paper Back. Condition: New. High school teachers, who used to fret about students chewing gum, now worry about whether the little ones are carrying knives. Even without the statistics on crime, illiteracy, and sexual behavior we all recognize that today's young people are different than yesterday's young people. Postman persuasively explains that we are witnessing the disappearance of childhood. This last is less a biological fact than a cultural artifact, and so it changes as our civilization changes. The invention of the printing press led to an educational system based upon books. This system required the segregation of children and sequential learning, and Postman shows us how these two things led to childhood as we have known it for the past three centuries. (Postman also shows us how different things were in the Middle Ages.) But the modern vehicles of communication-- first the telegraph, then the radio, then the TV-- are in the process of depreciating the values and skills induced by book learning. In particular, these vehicles, which do not require being learned-- who ever heard of a TV watching disorder?-- do not and cannot, for reasons Postman explains, keep from children information once thought privy to adults. And without adult secrets there can be no children. Now we have fourteen-year old mothers, twelve-year old models, and ten-year old criminals; and for the youngest there are cartoon shows featuring hideous open-mouthed monsters with blood-dripping fangs. Innocence is gone; our children are grown-ups.



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