



The Puzzle Instinct: The Meaning of Puzzles in Human Life

By Marcel Danesi

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"Humans are the only animals who create and solve puzzles?for the sheer pleasure of it?and there is no obvious genetic reason why we would do this. Marcel Danesi explores the psychology of puzzles and puzzling, with scores of classic examples. His pioneering book is both entertaining and enlightening." ?Will Shortz, Crossword Editor, The New York Times

"... Puzzle fanatics will enjoy the many riddles, illusions, cryptograms and other mind-benders offered for analysis." ?Psychology Today

"... a bristlingly clear... always intriguing survey of the history and rationale of puzzles.... [A] splendid study...." ?Knight Ridder Newspapers

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Editorial Review

Review

"Danesi, a professor of semiotics and anthropology (Univ. of Toronto), explores why puzzles, having arisen in earliest human history at the same time as mystery cults, are an intrinsic part of human life. Will Shortz, crossword puzzle editor of the New York Times, has suggested enigmatology as the study of the relationship between puzzles and culture. This book, which explores the puzzle genres that have survived over the years, is a contribution to that rubric. After first asking the question Why puzzles? (and developing several possible answers, among which is that they provide comic relief from unanswerable larger questions), Danesi devotes chapters to each of several types of puzzle. These include language puzzles (e.g., riddles and anagrams); pictures (e.g., optical illusions and mazes); logic (e.g., deductions and paradoxes); numbers (e.g., mathematical recreations); and games (e.g., chess). A final chapter synthesizes the discussion. A detailed list of references is included, as are solutions to the specific puzzles posed. The book is well written, has no mathematical prerequisites, and is quite suitable for a general audience as well as lower- and upper-division undergraduates." ?D. Robbins, Trinity College (CT), choice, December 2002

About the Author

Marcel Danesi is Professor of Semiotics and Anthropology at the University of Toronto and Director of the Program in Semiotics and Communication Theory. His books include Increase Your Puzzle IQ and Of Cigarettes, High Heels, and Other Interesting Things: An Introduction to Semiotics. He lives in Toronto.

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