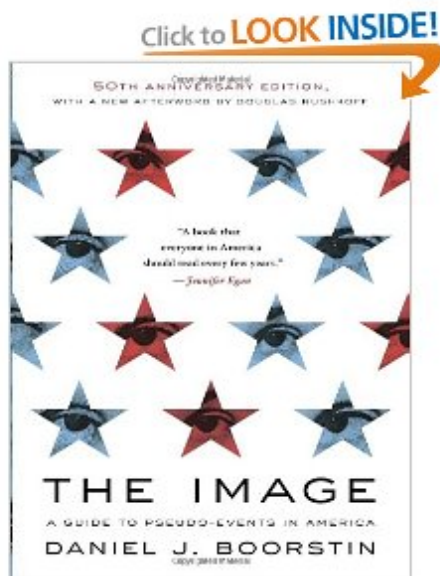


The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America [Paperback]

David Folkenflik

[The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America \(Vintage\)](#) and over one million other books are available for **Amazon Kindle**. [Learn more](#)

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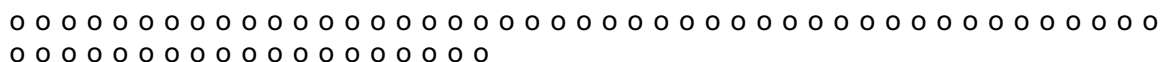


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Book Description

Release date: September 1, 1992

First published in 1962, this wonderfully provocative book introduced the notion of “pseudo-events”—events such as press conferences and presidential debates, which are manufactured solely in order to be reported—and the contemporary definition of celebrity as “a person who is known for his well-knownness.” Since then Daniel J. Boorstin’s prophetic vision of an America inundated by its own illusions has become an essential resource for any reader who wants to distinguish the manifold deceptions of our culture from its few enduring truths.

Our Culture From Its Few Enduring Truths.

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5.0 out of 5 stars **Credibility vs. Truth, Hero vs. Celebrity** August 9, 2001

By [Panopticonman](#) **VINE™ VOICE**

Format:Paperback

"A celebrity is a person who is well-known for their well-knownness" -- an observation from this book that is one of the most often quoted bits of wisdom on the subject of celebrity, and deservedly so. But this is just one of many quotable observations made by Boorstin in this prescient, clear-eyed look at the beginning of the post-modern world. Written in 1962, this book has been mined by writers on modern society of every stripe: French postmods (who don't credit Boorstin), Neil Postman (who does). Though it suffers a bit from the outdated examples used to elucidate his points about the "Graphic Revolution" -- his line in the sand between the modern and pre-modern -- the book is so cogently argued that it rarely matters.

His main thematic device is to dichotomize pre-modern and modern/postmodern categories. For instance, in discussing celebrity he notes that the precursor of the celebrity was the hero. He explains the difference by saying that the hero was "folk" based, while the celebrity is "mass" based. George Washington was raised to the level of hero by the people for his deeds, his fame embroidered by them, cherry trees invented for him to chop down. On the other hand, celebrities -- the Gabor sisters to use one of his examples -- were celebrities before they even starred in movies. They were created by astute publicists and through their own knack of getting into the paper.

He actually starts his discussion about how the image has come to be substituted for ideals in his first chapter on the gathering and dissemination of the news. He notes the rise of the pseudo-event, e.g., the press conference, the press leak, the crafty reporter calling sources and playing their quotes off of each other until the reporter arrives at something he can call news. He notes that newspapers actually used to contain reportage on events, things that had actually happened that were not designed to be covered by the media. Crimes, he notes in his summary, are the almost the only kind of real news left. (This before the era of copycat murders).

A brilliant, insightful diagnosis of our image-laden world that still holds up after 40 years. The only thing that's changed perhaps is how accustomed we've gotten to the image and the extent to which we're now sold on authenticity by marketers. His discussion of Barnum as the precursor to advertising is worth the price of the book. His sections on public opinion polling, on public relations, on advertising are dead on, too. He also takes on the sociologists of the time for their "nodal" thinking, their bland concepts such as "status anxiety." No one is spared.

The twist the postmods put on Boorstin's observations is that they say they take delight in the artificiality of the image, the bricolage, the spectacle, etc. (A postmod may be best known for their too-knowing knowingness and celebration of deception). But Boorstin is actually concerned about the destabilizing effects of the acceptance of the standard of "credibility" (which has supplanted "truth"). Too, he's worried

that the American image we project is not based on ideas or ideals, but only things, only images. He says at one point that folks in the developing world prefer not to be hammered with the look of all things American, that it makes us look shallow as compared to those societies which are based on ideas (like Communism was -- ironically enough because it was founded on materialism). And though our images and our things apparently won out over Communism, there is still something pertinent about this observation. Pragmatism may have saved us from the ravages of idealism that gave rise to fascist movements in Europe, but it spared us so that we could look empty-headed, only interested in moving ahead, unquestioningly.

21 of 23 people found the following review helpful

5.0 out of 5 stars [an important book](#) July 26, 2004

By [jose_monkey_org](#)

Format:Paperback

the pace of media in the world today makes this book more important than ever. boorstein clearly and effectively examines the nature of images, specifically in marketing and broadcasting, and their effect on how we engage those events. rather than a bunch of drivel, this book offers a clear, descriptive examination of the changing nature of the way in which we view the world. as an amatuer sociologist and market observer, this is fascinating stuff to me. the number of nature of the areas he examines in this essay, while not exhaustive, is representative and substantial.

this book isn't a complete tome on the subject, nor does it pretend to be. one of the great strengths of boorstin is that he doesn't attempt to be complete. instead he proposes a thesis or a thread of ideas and develops that. he's skilled at this task and remarkably clear. in a nutshell, don't treat this book as the sum and substance of the topic, it's just a great essay on the topic.

nor is this a book describing the ills of the world. it's an essay describing the changing nature of the world in which we live. if we are to be active participants on this world, we should be informed and study how it changes. technology's effects are not demonized, their impact is just described.

the age of the book, some 40 years or so, makes some of the events under discussion seem quaint or outmoded, but frankly they're just a foundation of today's media.

highly reccomended.

16 of 18 people found the following review helpful

5.0 out of 5 stars [Refreshing...](#) July 30, 1999

By A Customer

Format:Paperback

Boorstin first published this prophetic book in 1962. What amazes me in particular is the accurate depiction of our current media and journalism. The truth is told (and most do not care much for that), that seems to warrant the degregation this book receives. Each of his points are well supported by fact and logic, not to mention appropriate historical events. This book is to me inspiring, a breath of fresh air. He doesn't blow wind in your face. Today history has turned into an anti-imperial nightmare of contradictions. With the slaughter of history by social theorists and humanitarians it is refreshing to read a bona fide historian again.

Thank you Daniel J Boorstin...for telling the truth.

Miss Courtney Payne

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While this book was originally written in 1961, its message is even more relevant today. Reality television, political campaigns, stars and celebrities, pundits and the internet... Read more

Published 5 months ago by Darryl Ray

4.0 out of 5 stars **Media Criticism Backbone**

Boorstin, along with McLuhan and the more recent Neil Postman, form the holy trinity of old school media criticism and review. Read more

Published 9 months ago by MirandaJade

5.0 out of 5 stars **Ahead of its time**

Although Boorstin is most famous for reviewing the past, "The Image" is truly a guide to pseudo events proliferating faster in the 21st century. Read more

Published 19 months ago by Selmablanch

5.0 out of 5 stars

Is it the information age we live in...or, the age of contrivance?

If much of what passes as news today strikes you as contrived, then this likely is the book for you. Read more

Published 21 months ago by Martin Zook

5.0 out of 5 stars

Insightful. Prophetic. Revealing. Profound.

THE IMAGE by Daniel Boorstin is a seminal work on the popular culture in America. Though first published in 1969, it is as relevant today as it was then; perhaps more so given the... Read more

Published on April 19, 2009 by Jeffrey E Ellis

3.0 out of 5 stars **Bought it for class**

I plan on reading as little as possible and then reselling it on Amazon for twice the amount I would get from the bookstore at school.

Published on March 22, 2009 by Boone Helm

5.0 out of 5 stars

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When our college class read this book in the 1980's I was stunned by the author's powerful critique and magnetic prose. [Read more](#)

Published on January 6, 2007 by K.A.Goldberg

4.0 out of 5 stars

Every person fond of traveling ought to read The Image

It's been over six years since my first reading of this book, yet lessons I learned from Boorstin still pepper my daily thinking. [Read more](#)

Published on February 27, 2006 by Ayn S. Dietrich

5.0 out of 5 stars **He saw what it would look like**

Boorstin described what he believed to be a major change in culture, the substitution of image for substance. [Read more](#)

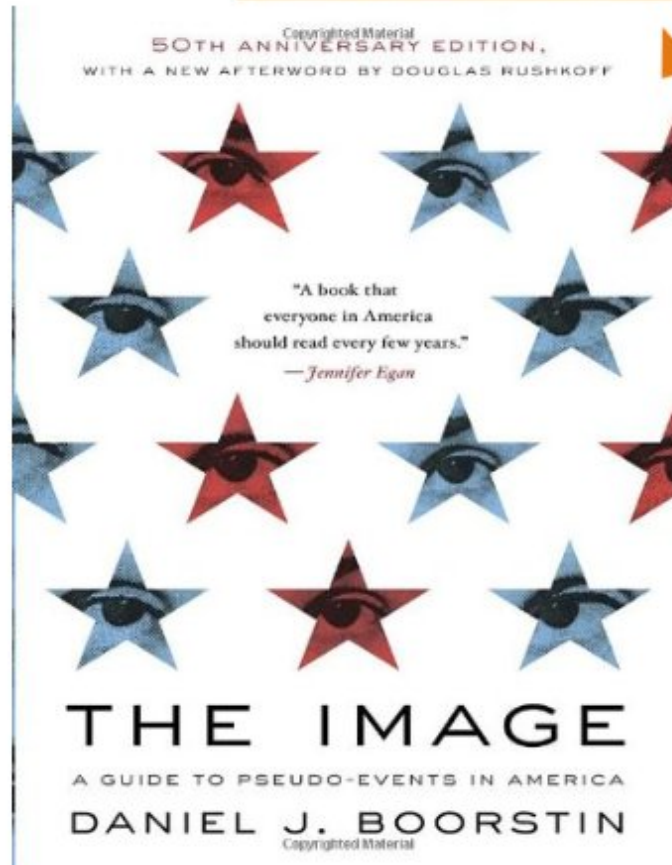
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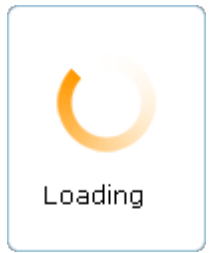
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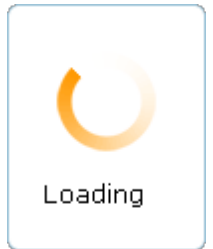
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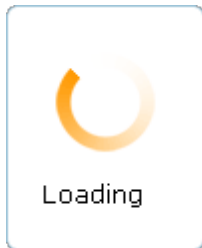


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