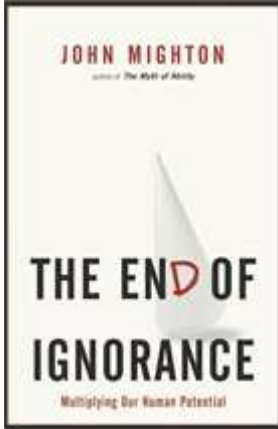


Math class action

By JOSEPH WILSON

THE END OF IGNORANCE by John Mighton (Knopf), 320 pages, \$29.95 cloth. Rating: NNN



Mathematics. The very word is enough to strike fear in the hearts of liberal arts majors everywhere. This doesn't have to be so, according to John Mighton's new book, *The End Of Ignorance: Multiplying Our Human Potential*.

The mantra "I just can't do math," he says, is largely a matter of lack of self-confidence, not lack of ability.

Mighton's experience working with thousands of weak math students across the world through his JUMP (Junior Undiscovered Math Prodigies) program provides impressive evidence that math can indeed be taught successfully to even the most demoralized. The JUMP philosophy is that all students are capable of becoming numerically literate through exercises designed to build confidence and nurture a love of math.

Mighton's thesis debunking the myth that some brains are wired for the arts and some for math and science is strongly supported by research. Mighton himself has a PhD in mathematics yet also makes a living as a successful playwright (*Possible Worlds*, *Half Life*).

The positivity of the first half of the book is unfortunately undercut by the pessimism of the closing chapters, in which Mighton reflects on his largely unsuccessful attempts to have JUMP methods implemented in school-board-wide pilot projects.

Here, Mighton attacks the short-sightedness of bureaucracies, the power of educational consultants hired by the boards and the conflict of interest between them as policy-makers and textbook authors. He goes further to criticize the entire system of peer-reviewed educational journals as biased and unscientific, yet falls prey to some pretty unscientific analysis himself.



Mighton's JUMP program is a marvel and works very well (I have used his program to great effect in my own classroom), and there is evidence to support it. In this book, though, his cynicism seeps through and subverts the very optimism he hopes to spread with his revolutionary approach to teaching math. @

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