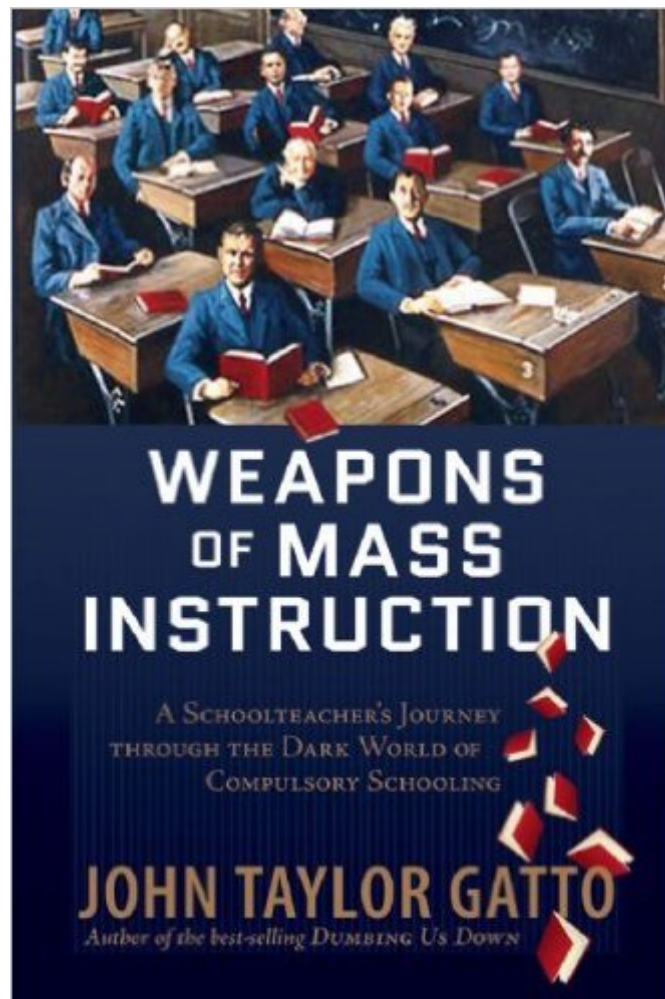


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# Weapons Of Mass Instruction: A Schoolteacher's Journey Through The Dark World Of Compulsory Schooling



## Synopsis

John Taylor Gatto's *Weapons of Mass Instruction*, now available in paperback, focuses on mechanisms of traditional education that cripple imagination, discourage critical thinking, and create a false view of learning as a byproduct of rote-memorization drills. Gatto's earlier book, *Dumbing Us Down*, introduced the now-famous expression of the title into the common vernacular. *Weapons of Mass Instruction* adds another chilling metaphor to the brief against conventional schooling. Gatto demonstrates that the harm school inflicts is rational and deliberate. The real function of pedagogy, he argues, is to render the common population manageable. To that end, young people must be conditioned to rely upon experts, to remain divided from natural alliances, and to accept disconnections from their own lived experiences. They must at all costs be discouraged from developing self-reliance and independence. Escaping this trap requires strategy Gatto calls "open source learning" which imposes no artificial divisions between learning and life. Through this alternative approach, our children can avoid being indoctrinated "only then that can they achieve self-knowledge, judgment, and courage." John Taylor Gatto is an internationally renowned speaker who lectures widely on school reform. He taught for thirty years in public schools before resigning on the op-ed pages of *The Wall Street Journal* during the year he was named New York's official "Teacher of the Year." On April 3, 2008, the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard credited Gatto with adding the expression "dumbing us down" to the school debate worldwide.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

John Taylor Gatto has written another thought provoking book about the critical problem of allowing children to become educated. This one approaches the defects of current schooling from a number of directions that should leave no doubt about his reasons for objecting to compulsory schooling. I was a public school teacher for only a couple of years in the early 60's teaching science and math in a small rural high school. I did not experience the vicious corruption of purpose in the way that John Taylor Gatto did in New York. Never the less, I formed the firm opinion that schools supported by government were a serious mistake in a free society and were dangerous to that society's long-term health. It is small wonder that many of our citizens value freedom so lightly that they appear willing to give it up for an illusion of security. After all, most have been bored and conditioned by 13 years of government schooling to accept authority even without reasons. We need a full range of competing schools that offer the variety we find in fields such as food growing and delivery. We might also find that such schools carefully look for ways to deliver desired information more rapidly at lower cost. School costs have gone up at the same time quality has gone down. This is the picture of a failing institution, only government life support enables it to continue to miss-educate. Gatto has done us all a huge service by providing a history of educational thought in America and identified its roots and personalities. You would be correct if you thought my education school classes failed to mention this part of history. After reading his earlier books, I went back and read more thoroughly the musings of John Dewey and others.

Gatto knows what he is talking about and is absolutely right about how the State schools are destroying our children: The intent of the State is ultimately to change our children's values, not to educate them. The State is training future citizens to serve its own purposes. Businesses do not have personnel departments any more--they have "human resources." Our children are nothing more to them than future resources for the State. This book is much more likely to be read than Gatto's *The Underground History of American Education: A School Teacher's Intimate Investigation Into the Problem of Modern Schooling* because of its shorter length and easy readability. However, there are some problems that come with short-cuts. For one thing, this book is not nearly as well documented as his other books. If you want documentation, you have to read *Underground History*. Secondly, Gatto is on a mission in this book and he needlessly attacks those who could be his most avid supporters. As one example, he unfairly attacks Calvinism and Puritanism as part of the cause of our present school dilemma. Modern history has been very successful in demonizing Calvin and the Puritans, but I never trust a history book. Reading the writing of the Puritans

themselves has shown me that they were some of the most humble and joyful people who ever lived, and of all groups in history, the ones who fought most successfully for liberty from tyranny in government. While John Calvin and Martin Luther promoted public education, both were very aware of what it could turn into if taken over by the wrong people.

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