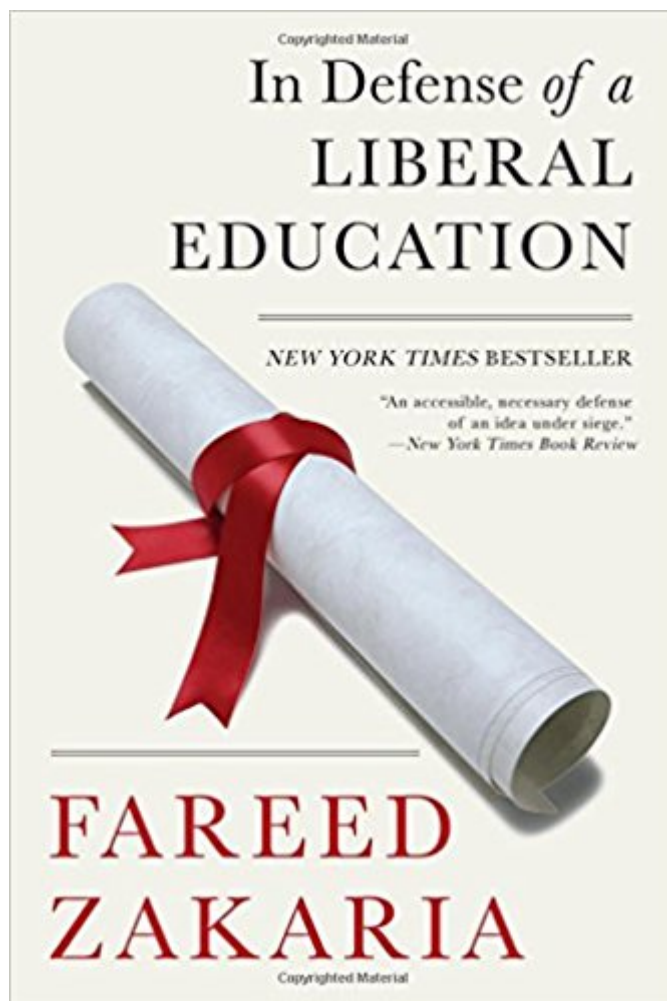


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# In Defense Of A Liberal Education



## Synopsis

CNN host and best-selling author Fareed Zakaria argues for a renewed commitment to the world's most valuable educational tradition. The liberal arts are under attack. The governors of Florida, Texas, and North Carolina have all pledged that they will not spend taxpayer money subsidizing the liberal arts, and they seem to have an unlikely ally in President Obama. While at a General Electric plant in early 2014, Obama remarked, "I promise you, folks can make a lot more, potentially, with skilled manufacturing or the trades than they might with an art history degree." These messages are hitting home: majors like English and history, once very popular and highly respected, are in steep decline. "I get it," writes Fareed Zakaria, recalling the atmosphere in India where he grew up, which was even more obsessed with getting a skills-based education. However, the CNN host and best-selling author explains why this widely held view is mistaken and shortsighted. Zakaria eloquently expounds on the virtues of a liberal arts education—how to write clearly, how to express yourself convincingly, and how to think analytically. He turns our leaders' vocational argument on its head. American routine manufacturing jobs continue to get automated or outsourced, and specific vocational knowledge is often outdated within a few years. Engineering is a great profession, but key value-added skills you will also need are creativity, lateral thinking, design, communication, storytelling, and, more than anything, the ability to continually learn and enjoy learning—precisely the gifts of a liberal education. Zakaria argues that technology is transforming education, opening up access to the best courses and classes in a vast variety of subjects for millions around the world. We are at the dawn of the greatest expansion of the idea of a liberal education in human history.

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## Customer Reviews

“Smart.” - Nicholas Kristof, New York Times  
“An accessible, necessary defense of an idea under siege.” - New York Times Book Review

Fareed Zakaria has been called "the most influential foreign policy adviser of his generation" (Esquire). He is the Emmy-nominated host of CNN's Fareed Zakaria GPS, contributing editor for The Atlantic, a columnist for the Washington Post, and the best-selling author of *The Post-American World* and *The Future of Freedom*. He lives in New York City.

Fareed Zakaria has written some very good books before, including *The Future of Freedom* and *The Post-American World*. Those were like his TV show on CNN--smart, knowledgeable discussions of politics and global affairs, helping readers understand what was going on in the world. This book is different. First of all, it's shorter and simpler. Second, it's more personal. The whole first chapter, for example, is about his own childhood and education, and throughout he talks directly to the reader in a conversational tone, often about his own experiences. And third, the subject of the book is education--what it really is and how to get it. He argues that a liberal education--studying a broad range of subjects, including the humanities such as history, literature, and the arts--is the best way to train one's mind and even character. Instead of using school to get facts or pre-professional training, this kind of education teaches you to read, to write, and to learn, all of which allow you not only to retool yourself over time, but to live a conscious, self-aware life. The book moves on from that to discuss education more generally, as well as the qualities of young people today, and what all that says about the state of the world and its future. The obvious target audience is students and their parents, and in fact the book grew out of a commencement speech he gave a while back. But it's one of those plain, wise talks that sticks with you, because it says important things well. Why do I say it's his most important book? because what he's really doing is explaining how he developed the mental tools to write his other books, and offer the commentary that he does every week on his show, in his column, and in his talks. In this book, he's not offering readers fish--he's trying to teach them how to fish, so they can catch the slippery little buggers themselves. Zakaria haters will scoff, and there are obviously a lot of those. But ignore them: if you've watched or read him and wondered how he became so well-informed and thoughtful, this is

his answer--and he makes it completely clear that it applies to everybody. It's a must read not just for his fans, but for anybody who cares about education and living a full, rich mental life.

This is a fascinating review of why youth should seek education for learning's sake rather than to get a particular job. They should be learning "for their 6th job rather than 1st job." It gives a good perspective and hope for the current generation of youth, pointing out their pluses when so many people focus on the negatives of the generation. Even my 10th grade daughter read the bulk of it after looking up certain parts for a research paper on millennials. You know the book is something special when your teen says "This is pretty interesting," without being required to read it. Zakaria is a talented scholar and pundit. This book is a worthwhile investment for anyone with children, particularly teens, those who work with youth, or anyone who has (or want to have) hope for the future. It is also well done enough and interesting enough to catch the interest of a college bound teen. I wish more writers gave us this type of good information without being so dense as to be unreadable. "In Defense" tells a story, educates, and promotes ideas for the benefit of youth and society - all in a readable format.

This is a marvelous book. It clearly defines what a liberal education is, describes the history of universities through the ages, explains different models for running universities and other organizations of learning, and debunks urban myths about why, for example, Chinese students test two years ahead of their U.S. counterparts (it's because they go to school much more of the year than students do in the U.S., so that when this oft-cited) test is given, the Chinese students have literally been in school two years longer than US students of the same age!). The author also gives a very personal account of the experiences he and his brother had coming to US universities in the very early wave of Indian students who were middle class and had just been stripped of any chance to gain scholarships to study in England, the traditional destination for Indian scholars to pass through. Thanks to Margaret Thatcher, the brightest Indian minds came to the US, if not all of a sudden, quite soon. I cried when reading excerpts from the article written by the author's mother after dropping her older son off at Harvard. It made me think of my country as it was, a country that has been lost in the recent political upheavals and surging xenophobia. I hope we regain that place, that dignity, and I hope that the liberal education defended by Mr. Zakaria regains its proper respect because it trains people to think for themselves in a critical, data-driven manner, whether for self analysis or world analysis. Thank you, also, Fareed Zakaria, for your defense also of young people today and your dismissal of the stereotypes so popular with old men, white and American or

otherwise.No, I am not my father and could never be him. However, I know that he would have loved your book also, being a physicist who grew up in the slums during the Great Depression, spoke many foreign languages, loved literature, the symphony, art and theater, and who traveled the world to work with scientists of many nations order to carry out his life's work.

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