



Real-Life X-Files: Investigating the Paranormal

Joe Nickell

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Interest in the paranormal is at an all-time high. Ghosts, UFOs, psychic power & other unexplained phenomena are endlessly fascinating. People often seem to accept or reject claims of the paranormal based on their fundamental beliefs as if such matters were theological. In contrast, this book takes a scientific approach, basing its arguments on the premise that what seem like paranormal mysteries should be carefully investigated with a view toward explaining them using evidence from the cases. Nickell takes readers on investigative journeys that range from the uniquely whimsical (such as the case of the giant Coleman Frog) to the bizarre (such as alien-abduction experiences) to the potentially transcendental (Shroud of Turin). He examines some of the world's most significant, perplexing & enduring enigmas: spontaneous human combustion, hauntings, UFOs & alien abductions, stigmata, psychic detectives, legendary monsters, reincarnation, crop circles etc. A wide variety of investigative techniques are employed, including forensic examination, physical experimentation, archival research, folklore study & iconographic analysis. The very case titles resonate with mystery & intrigue: The Secrets of Oak Island, The Devil's Footprints, Extraterrestrial Autopsy, The Case of the Petrified Girl, Death of the Fire-Breathing Woman, The Silver Lake Serpent, Adventure of the Weeping Icon, Legend of the Phantom Ship etc.

Real-Life X-Files: Investigating the Paranormal Details

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Author : Joe Nickell

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From Reader Review Real-Life X-Files: Investigating the Paranormal for online ebook

Patrick Ellard says

Interesting enough book detailing the many different supposedly paranormal cases that renowned skeptic Joe Nickell has investigated or provided commentary on during his lengthy career. Each chapter focuses on either a particular case or phenomenon and details the various explanations that can be put forward for each case. Some of the chapters are a lot more interesting than others which gives the book a hit and miss feel about it but it is an interesting read and gives you a good insight into the human psyche and just how paranormal cases come about.

Erik Graff says

Reading as much weird non-fiction as I do, I occasionally take a dose of skeptical debunking as with this title.

Rob says

Woo believers, beware! Joe Nickell systematically breaks down a multitude of paranormal claims, rendering them nothing more than absolutely normal.

Eric Wojciechowski says

I envy Joe Nickell. He's got the best job in the world. The only one I know who's paid to fly around the world and investigate fantastic claims. But don't think you're going to turn up any ghosts, angels or aliens in this volume. We have ways of unintentionally tricking ourselves into seeing and hearing incredible things which turn out to be very normal. Whether it's a hoax or misunderstanding, turns out, there simply is no proof for the paranormal. Doesn't mean you won't learn something here. You'll have some information and tools to use the next time you hear of something paranormal occurring. A valuable read.

Nativeabuse says

MISLEADING TITLE ALERT!!!!

When I saw real life X-Files and the publisher, U of Kentucky (as opposed to some weird paranormal conspiracy 9/11 publisher) I didn't know what the hell this would be about and I didn't want to spoil the surprise, heres all the things I thought this was going to be.

1. How FBI agents actually deal with cases that are unexplainable and end up going unsolved.

2. FBI agents or someone else of real authority and intelligence (eg anyone who isnt a lame ghost hunter) who isn't a nutcase that actually investigates paranormal activity.

3. A case listing of mysterious circumstances and how they were covered up by law enforcement in the face of their unexplainable nature..

4. Something else???

So I had my hopes high for a really interesting quality book. I sighed loudly when it ended up being nothing but a book about some skeptic guy saying blah blah blah and debunking shit. Which was still kind of interesting, he debunked some things in neat new ways I never thought about before, but I was let down by my high expectations I suppose.

Hannah Parker says

I appreciate books written by skeptics, but this one is a little too heavy-handed for my tastes-- there was too much "I proved that this one psychic was bullshit; therefore, all psychics are bullshit" stuff. The author was also eye-rollingly self-congratulatory at times.

Cimuchowski says

There are a lot of silly myths out there.

Jayne says

this looks cool!!!

Tania says

Joe Nickell investigates paranormal activity. Each chapter of the book covers a case or type of case, and is followed by a set of references. In all cases, the author finds that the cause is either a hoax, a misconception of reality, or a natural or technical phenomenon. There are absolutely no cases where there is any mystery unresolved. There are no cases where there is any doubt that no paranormal activities were involved. Some of the cases are more interesting than others, and as the book progresses the cases get better. Overall, it was a bit dry for me but for someone interested in ways that people try to find paranormal activities in their daily life, it is probably quite interesting.

Nathaniel Lee says

I was initially concerned about this book because I found it in the same section of the library as a book

whose subtitle was, "Are the global elite concealing evidence of ancient aliens?" which I felt would make for a very short tome ("No."). However, I was relieved to see that this is, despite the title and the protestations of not being harsh or pre-judging, a solidly skeptical and rational review of a variety of supposed paranormal activities. Indeed, Nickell at times seems to take a slightly inappropriate glee in carefully setting up the claims of the paranormalists before easily knocking them down. (There are several recurring personalities whose appearances in this book seem to suggest long-running rivalries.) He also cites his sources with an at-times excessive rigor; it makes him sound defensive, as though anxious for external support. (Citing oneself is a bit gauche, as well, even if it IS relevant.)

The writing is dry, and as most of the chapters are repurposed articles, the depth of the examinations tends toward the shallow (and many motifs and pet phrases quickly become repetitive). If you are inclined to believe in woo, this book will not do much to dissuade you; it mostly gives a quick rundown of the plausible explanations or a demonstration of a way one can accomplish the alleged mystic feats through mundane physical means and assumes that the reader will likewise accept that such causes are far more likely than supernatural ones. (I'm not saying that I don't, but one generally must try harder when attempting to dispute fondly held beliefs in the supernatural.) When scientific principles are involved, the discussion is brief and businesslike. Not a problem if one is familiar with the usual science of such matters, but again a factor contributing to the sense that the book is aimed at a presumed skeptic. I have a feeling that the title and the protestations of open-mindedness in the introduction and jacket copy were intended to reassure the believer in the hopes of luring them to read and thence disabusing them of their misguided faith in the supernatural, but as a whole, the book is simply too distant, too brisk, and too... well, skeptical to accomplish this. For the confirmed skeptic, on the other hand, the breezy and vague treatment of many topics is a bit frustrating. I had a passing familiarity with every topic and most of the specific hoaxes, and I was perforce somewhat bored by the end, as there was not much added material in most cases.

Not unreadable, by any means, but not a book I'd recommend unless one has a yen to watch someone taking swings at easy underhand lobs and routinely batting them out of the park.

Stefanie says

Investigating the Paranormal is about a mans quest to debunk all the mysteries that enthrall curious people. Some of these paranormal mysteries are ones like alien autopsies, crop circles, ghost photographs, the shroud of Turin, and many others. I felt that he did a good job of outlining the subject he was investigating and then subsequently dashing it all to pieces and making it seem utterly ridiculous! Like the "unsupported miracle staircase" that obviously shows a steel bracket holding it to a pillar! Some were boring, like the sea "monsters" and "UFO" stories which I never found that interesting anyway. He also investigated "spontaneous human combustion" that seemed to ALWAYS be about a person who was a smoker, and a man that wrote a book about it with "evidence" to the contrary which made the guy seem demented because he'd ignore all the actual evidence and make up his own. I liked the book, but found kind of depressing that these mysteries aren't mysteries any more, I like a little mystery where the answers are unknown, but it's nice to know that some of the things are just made up and not real, otherwise I'd be scared!

Heidi The Hippie Reader says

This book could have been such fun but it just wasn't. Nickell debunks paranormal events but in the most boring way possible. His go-to explanations for anything that appears paranormal are: it's a fraud, a mis-identification, a false argument, a natural event, a fantasy prone personality, hysterical contagion, or (in any of the cases of spontaneous human combustion) carelessness around open flames. He doesn't devote more than a page and a half to some of the cases. Very disappointing.

Sarah M. says

I want to believe.

Mr. Nickell brings detective work to the paranormal.

Okay, so the book is well-written, well-researched, and includes pictures (yay!) it's obvious that Mr. Nickell is a skeptic. I can appreciate the realism.

However, I still like to think there's mystery in the world.

If you're into this sort of thing, read it! I am, and I'm glad I did.
