



Queuing for Beginners: The Story of Daily Life From Breakfast to Bedtime

Joe Moran

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Radio 4 Book of the Week from 28th May. We spend our days catching buses and trains, tapping away at computers, shopping, queuing, lying on sofas... But we know almost nothing about these activities.

Exploring the history of these subjects as they come up during a typical day, starting with breakfast and ending with bedtime, Joe Moran shows that they conceal all kinds of hidden histories and meanings. By looking closely at the normally unobserved, he tells a story about social and cultural change in Britain and the Western world, in particular since the Second World War. And along the way connections become apparent between what seem unrelated phenomena - pubs and the weather forecast, or sandwiches and commuting, or smoking and gossip. Drawing on his academic research on everyday life, but writing with wit and lucidity for a popular audience, Joe Moran shows that we know less about ourselves than we think...

Queuing for Beginners: The Story of Daily Life From Breakfast to Bedtime Details

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Author : Joe Moran

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From Reader Review Queuing for Beginners: The Story of Daily Life From Breakfast to Bedtime for online ebook

Howard says

Moran's 2007 book takes its cue from the Mass Observation project of postwar Britain that looked at people's everyday habits - what they eat at breakfast, how long they watch TV and so on. Each chapter looks at a different part of normal everyday life with lucid academically informed thought and overall sense of bliss. The loud cover is a distraction - Moran is a reluctant poet and a gr8 one

Tom Calvard says

Amusing and informative book on key aspects of everyday life in post war Britain, researched up to about 2005 or so. I liked the innovative idea of having the chapters follow the arc of waking hours in a single day, with each chapter covering a different routine or ritual shared by many humans in their everyday lives.

Lots of trivia about the history of the pub, television, office etc. and an easy, enjoyable read. Would definitely recommend. It's a hackneyed phrase, but I believe it can 'change the way you look at the world' significantly (the idea that all books do notwithstanding), given that as the author notes, our everyday lives can become very invisible and taken-for-granted, that is, until disrupted by historical forces and processes that call them into question...

Jessica says

I'm surprised I'm the first one to review this book, but then, it is on a fairly mundane subject, which is the whole point! Moran takes through a "normal" daily routine, whilst analysing the rituals involved, and their evolution following WWII. Of course, as Moran himself admits in the introduction, the book is very office-orientated, and as I've never had an office job, I couldn't really relate to some of the chapters. However, the ones on things I definitely do take part in, like watching TV and eating, I found informative and entertaining. I was disappointed that Mass Observation was only mentioned here and there; judging from the intro, I thought more of the book would be focused on their techniques and findings. Moran also seems to overuse the same descriptive words again and again; it seems like quotidian was on every other page. Overall, I give this middling book on the middle classes an appropriately middle of the road score, 3 stars.

Sijmen says

In a varied view of British cultural history, every chapter in this book captures the history of some everyday thing, such as toasters, commuting, zebra crossings, lunch breaks, and the bedroom.

While these things may seem mundane, they often have a surprising history. Take for example the silent commute, seemingly a constant of English culture. Well, not so much: this really is quite a recent invention from the end of the second World War. There are some great quotes from letters of upset "old-school"

commuters to papers on how antisocial these people who hid behind books and papers and didn't talk to their fellow passengers were.

The author references older studies and has a lot of sourced anecdotes which make for excellent further reading and viewing. There's a lot of auxiliary information and it really shows that the author has been doing his research. This is certainly not a me-too book.

If you want to learn and be surprised about everyday things, this is your book. Be aware however, that this book is not a study of modern English culture. For something like that, consider *Watching the English* by Kate Fox.

southernmyst says

Truly excellent book, filled with masses of information. He's explained the stories behind so many things, like the drink machine (and thus why instant coffee is ubiquitous in Britain), the weather forecast, pedestrian cross walks, queuing (and no, the British aren't exceptionally wonderful at it; and no, they haven't been doing it since time immemorial), breakfast, commuting (the history of rail transport and the rise of the car, and the hindrance of the car in the London area are all explained), smoking, meetings, ready meals, and so much more. It's easy to read, not dry and dull, and he gives color to the stories, so they are interesting to read - and fun to tell your friends.

I shall definitely read this again, and highly recommend it to all interested in British or English culture.

Dorian says

This is a history of various everyday things, not only queuing, but also breakfast cereals, pedestrian crossings, business meetings, weather forecasts, and more. It ought to be very interesting. Unfortunately, the author's pedestrian writing style not only renders it rather dull, but also somehow manages to hide the information he's trying to impart, so that I put it down feeling that he'd spent 200 pages saying nothing very much. Most disappointing.

Alexis says

Queuing for Beginners: The Story of Daily Life from Breakfast to Bedtime by Joe Moran (2008)

Laura Pugh says

Really interesting close analysis of our daily behaviour, taking things we see as perfectly normal and questioning them until our lives seem bizarre! We are taken on a journey of our most mundane days, from getting up and eating cereal, through office emails and tea breaks, to our evening TV watching and bedroom arrangements. I don't think I can ever look at our 'ordinary' habits with the same blind acceptance again.

Adrian says

Interesting book that investigates how things we take for granted in our daily lives came to be. For instance, "Why do we eat cereal for breakfast?" (Turns out we used to eat bacon and eggs, but they became more expensive for farmers to raise during WWII, so it was cheaper to grow grain and keep a cow around for milk. Even after the war, we were so used to our fast breakfast, that we saved the more time-consuming bacon and eggs for the weekends). Interesting stuff.

Te says

Lightly told, this book is pop sociology, researched in a scholarly manner, but presented and written for the lay reader. It examines the "infra-ordinary" - the actions performed by large groups that are so everyday and routine they go unnoticed and unremarked upon by social historians, despite making up a large and important part of our daily lives. With chapters on breakfast habits, commuting, queuing and the history of the British sofa, *Queuing for Beginners* is a fascinating look into why we do what we do - little people living our little lives with historical significance. An unusual and refreshing approach to history, and highly entertaining!

Sharon4 says

It didn't tell me a lot I didn't already know, but that was the point - the author sets out to encourage us to take a fresh look at what is already familiar and known and he does a fairly good job of it. While reading about M&S sandwiches, the etiquette of queuing and why the duvet was originally called the continental quilt, I picked up one or two new titbits, like, for example, dentists warning that children who watched TV with their chin in their hands would develop buck teeth. So there you are then - something else we can blame the goggle box for;-)

Rob Adey says

The trouble is, the internet is made of this kind of stuff now. You're probably familiar with a lot of this stuff (well, that's the point - what I mean is you're probably familiar with this way of looking at everyday things). I felt each topic could have done with way more exploration to get past the TV documentary-level stuff, as Moran's excellent book on TV did.

Enjoyable, though, and a welcome snack after *Middlemarch*.

Ketan Shah says

A fascinating look at how everyday activities in England have changed through the years. Everything from the traditional bacon and egg breakfast to morning commute to work to the design of the local pub and the amount of time spent in front of the television. Joe Moran takes a day in the life of an average person and uses it as the framework for to educate us about how the behaviour we percieve as run of the mill today, evolved over time. he also makes some interesting points about the adoption of new technology and how it ripples through society. If you enjoyed this, you might enjoy Malcolm Gladwell's the Tipping Point and Blink, Steven Leavy's Freakonomics and the science writing of David Bodanis, especially in The Secret Family and The Secret House. You might also like Richard Wiseman's Quirkology. Also highly reccomended would be Poplorica: A Popular History of the Fads, Mavericks, Inventions, and Lore that Shaped Modern America by Martin J Smith and Patrick J kiger ,as well as The Dreams our Stuff is Made Of ,by Thomas Disch.

Myron Schirer-Suter says

Fascinating discussion of daily life in Britain.

Peter Sharpe says

This book is not what I expected. Although it is written by an academic and promoted as a pop psychology/sociology book I would file it under humour or general interest.

I was hoping for some detailed and fresh analysis of daily life. Instead there are lots of facts which are glued together with a bit of light-hearted narrative. These are undoubtedly interesting but there is very little explanation as to how or why these things have come around.

The style is very conversational and the author's attempts at humour don't really come off.

It's a good coffee table/light read but if you are looking for something a bit more heavyweight then I am afraid you will be quite disappointed.
