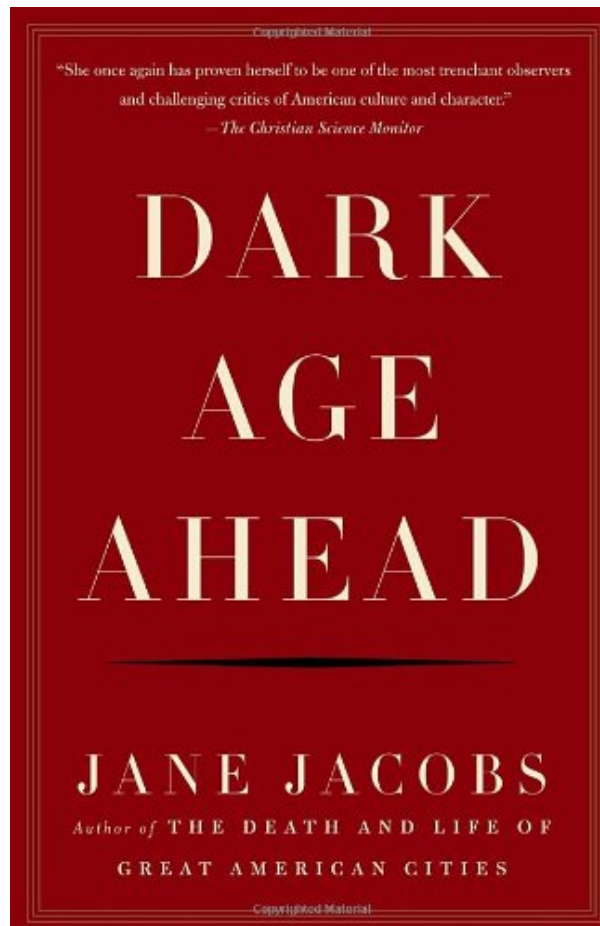


DARK AGE AHEAD BY JANE JACOBS



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Author of THE DEATH AND LIFE OF
GREAT AMERICAN CITIES

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In this indispensable book, urban visionary Jane Jacobs argues that as agrarianism gives way to a technology-based future, we're at risk of cultural collapse. Jacobs—renowned author of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* and *The Economy of Cities*—pinpoints five pillars of our culture that are in serious decay: community and family; higher education; the effective practice of science; taxation, and government; and the self-regulation of the learned professions. The corrosion of these pillars, Jacobs argues, is linked to societal ills such as environmental crisis, racism, and the growing gulf between rich and poor.

But this is a hopeful book as well as a warning. Drawing on a vast frame of reference—from fifteenth-century Chinese shipbuilding to Ireland's cultural rebirth—Jacobs suggests how the cycles of decay can be arrested and our way of life renewed. Invigorating and accessible, *Dark Age Ahead* is not only the crowning achievement of Jane Jacobs' career, but one of the most important works of our time.

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19 of 19 people found the following review helpful.

A few indicators of approaching decline

By Tim Lukeman

What thoughtful person hasn't lately wondered if American society & culture are in decline? And if so, is it an irreversible decline?

In this short volume, Jane Jacobs articulates her fears of a coming Dark Age, choosing to focus on a few specific indicators. So this isn't an all-encompassing look at what's happening right now, buttressed with copious references & facts. It's more of a personal *cri de coeur* -- certainly drawing on a lifetime of study & knowledge, but ultimately speaking very much from the heart of old age, watching as the world eagerly marches closer to the edge of a cliff.

What particularly struck me was the emphasis on how easily so much can be forgotten, how a culture can wither on the vine without anyone really noticing until it's too late. As Jacobs points out, there are places in America that already live a Dark Ages existence -- there always have been -- but the number of such places is growing. People who once thought themselves secure are now sliding into the dark.

But how can so much be forgotten in the digital age? As Jacobs also points out, the digital library is an especially fragile thing, one that will deteriorate far more swiftly than an old-fashioned printed book. More than that, though, memory has begun to deteriorate at a frightening pace; supposedly educated people are ignorant of knowledge that a typical grade-schooler once knew.

In addition, the changes in society, the glorification of profit & power above all, the disregard for what we now call the 99% by the 1%, are all having a negative effect on the fabric of life. Basic survival is becoming precarious, even as the arts & wisdom that sustain a culture are ignored & discarded. No wonder Jacobs was so concerned as she approached the end of her own life!

Again, a smaller book, but well worth reading -- recommended!

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

JJ is Amazing

By May Bees

so hard to read but so pertinent to todays world

we are not like to Roman empire but like the Byzantine one - see how the income shifted up wards, wars used to profit the wealthy, the grass roots people refused to fight "their" economic wars and it broke into pieces - google it!

Good thing she helps us see the light at the end of the tunnel

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

A little dated, but clearly prescient.

By Darin L Ramsey

I read this as research for a science fiction novel I'm writing. She comes within a hair's breadth of predicting the housing bubble collapse from 2003. The insights on what expediency and politics can cost a society at large are clear and unavoidable, and the fact that there's very little any individual -- or group of individuals -- can do about it is chilling.

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