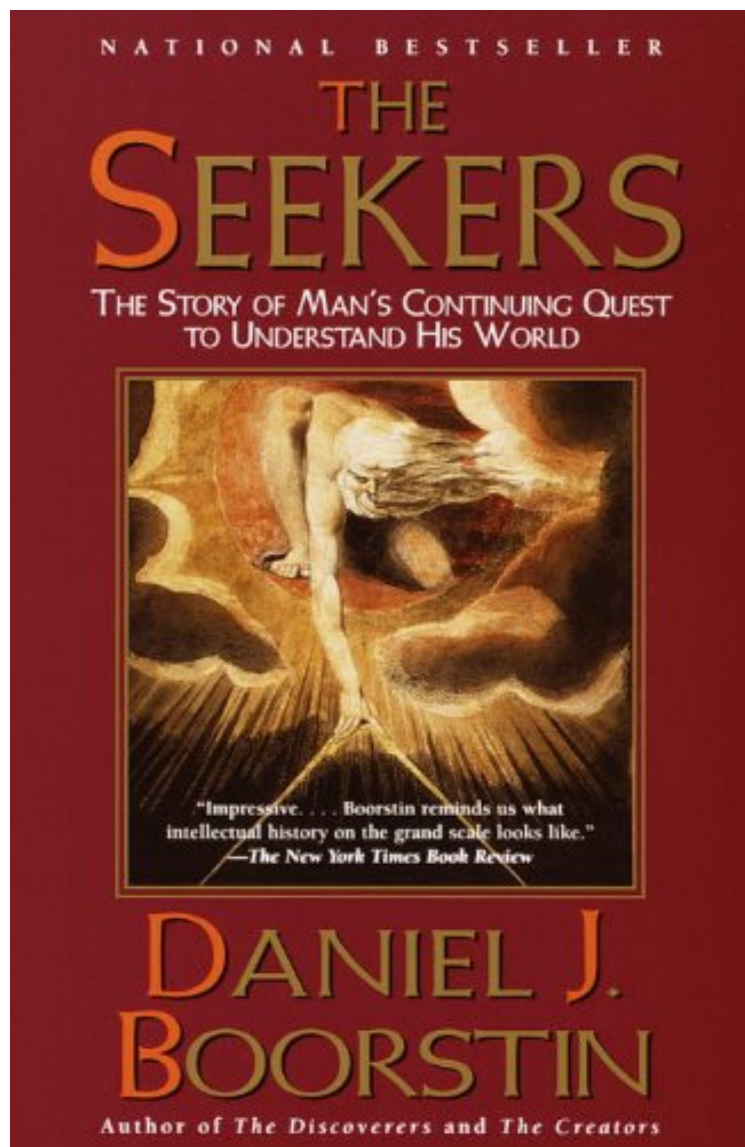


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The Seekers: The Story of Man's Continuing Quest to Understand His World Knowledge Trilogy (3)

Daniel J. Boorstin

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A New York Times Notable Book of the YearFrom the author of *The Discoverers* and *The Creators*, an incomparable history of man's essential questions: "Who are we?" and "Why are we here?" Daniel J. Boorstin, the bestselling and Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Americans*, introduces us to some of the great pioneering seekers whose faith and thought have for centuries led man's search for meaning. Moses sought truth in God above while Sophocles looked to reason. Thomas More and Machiavelli pursued truth through social change. And in the modern age, Marx and Einstein found meaning in the sciences. In this epic intellectual adventure story, Boorstin follows the great seekers from the heroic age of prophets and philosophers to the present age of skepticism as they grapple with the great questions that have always challenged man.

.com Renowned historian Daniel J. Boorstin completes the trilogy he began with *The Discoverers* and *The Creators*. The first volume covered explorers, scientists, and historians in their quest for raw knowledge, while the second book describes writers, painters, and composers in their pursuit of inspiring art; *The Seekers* describes people searching for an understanding of human existence--"Man is the asking animal," notes Boorstin. It's a big, bold theme, and although *The Seekers* is the shortest work in the trilogy, it's still vintage Boorstin: incredibly learned, richly anecdotal, and casually profound. It begins with the prophets of the Holy Land and the philosophers of ancient Greece, continues through the Renaissance, and concludes with the modern era of the social sciences. "In this long quest [for understanding], Western culture has turned from seeking the end or purpose to seeking causes--from the Why to the How," writes Boorstin. That's a neat summary of Western intellectual development over several thousand years. What other author could put it so succinctly? Boorstin is generally stronger with material that is more recent and more secular, but this is an accomplished book and a worthy capstone to an outstanding three-volume effort. --John J. MillerFrom Publishers WeeklyIn *The Discoverers* (1983), Boorstin introduced readers to scientists, explorers, historians and other pursuers of knowledge. Ten years later, *The Creators* did the same for innovators in art. "We glory in their discoveries and creations," he writes in the introduction to his latest, "But we are all Seekers. We all want to know why." Starting from that perhaps overbroad premise, Boorstin begins with an examination of Hebrew prophets and Greek philosophers--those who seek from a higher authority and those who seek from within. From this point on there are rather few religious seekers; instead most are philosophers of systems, of systems for discovering truth (the reason of Descartes, the empiricism of Locke, the individual experience of Kierkegaard) or for describing it (the encyclopedia of Diderot, the cultural cycles of Spengler, Hegel's World-Spirit). Certain subjects seem rather out of place, and chapters like that on H.G. Wells and John Reed, another on Oliver Wendell Holmes and E.O. Wilson; and individual chapters on Samuel Beckett, Lord Acton and Andre Malraux, have the feel of an insatiable polymath's chapbook. There are many movements, many people and many big ideas here, all expounded with Boorstin's characteristic enthusiasm and breadth of knowledge. It's perhaps inevitable that in such a broad survey some simplification would slip in?e.g., identifying 13th-century universities as centers for training gentlemen, rather than for offering professional training in theology, law and medicine. But what Boorstin does so well is bring together many ideas that fertilize and cross-fertilize the reader's imagination and curiosity. Author tour. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.From School Library JournalYA-*The Seekers* is the final book of Boorstin's trilogy, the previous two being *The Discoverers* (1983) and *The Creators* (1992, both Random). In his earlier volumes, the author recounts "our legacy of the sciences and the arts...discoveries and creations." This book deals with the question of our existence and the great figures in history who have probed its mysteries. "Book One: An Ancient Heritage" includes the prophets (Moses, Isaiah, Job); the philosophers (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle); early Christianity (church, monastery, and university); and Erasmus, Luther, and Calvin. "Book Two: Communal Search" deals with Homer, Herodotus, Thucydides, Virgil, Thomas More, Bacon, Descartes, Machiavelli, Locke, Voltaire, Rousseau, Jefferson, and Hegel. "Book Three: Paths to the Future" brings us into the 20th century with Marx, Spengler, Toynbee, Carlyle, Emerson, Kierkegaard, William James, Acton, Malraux, and Bergson, and concludes with Einstein. Boorstin's engaging narrative will help young adults unravel the arcane literature of the past and perhaps spark interest in subjects otherwise thought beyond their reach.Pamela B. Rearden, Centreville Regional Library, Fairfax County, VA Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.