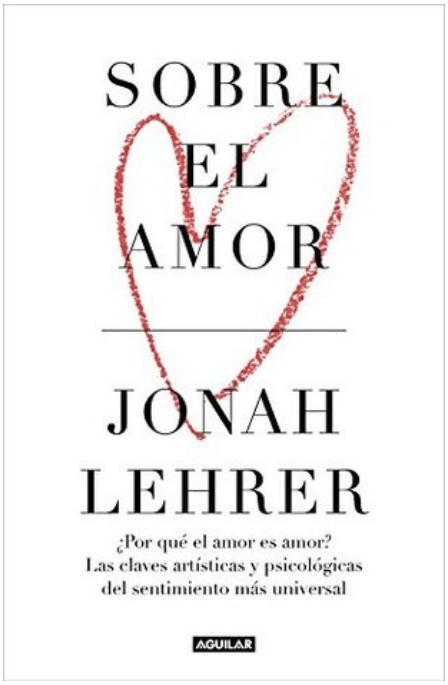

Sobre el amor: ¿Por qué el amor es amor? Las claves artísticas y psicológicas del sentimiento más universal

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Science writer Jonah Lehrer explores the mysterious subject of love.

Weaving together scientific studies from clinical psychologists, longitudinal studies of health and happiness, historical accounts and literary depictions, child-rearing manuals, and the language of online dating sites, Jonah Lehrer's *A Book About Love* plumbs the most mysterious, most formative, most important impulse governing our lives.

Love confuses and compels us—and it can destroy and define us. It has inspired our greatest poetry, defined our societies and our beliefs, and governs our biology. From the way infants attach to their parents, to the way we fall in love with another person, to the way some find a love for God or their pets, to the way we remember and mourn love after it ends, this book focuses on research that attempts, even in glancing ways, to deal with the long-term and the everyday. The most dangerous myth of love is that it's easy, that we fall into the feeling and then the feeling takes care of itself. While we can easily measure the dopamine that causes the initial feelings of "falling" in love, the partnerships and devotions that last decades or longer remain a mystery. This book is about that mystery. Love, Lehrer argues, is not built solely on overwhelming passion, but, fascinatingly, on a set of skills to be cultivated over a lifetime.

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From Reader Review Sobre el amor: ¿Por qué el amor es amor? Las claves artísticas y psicológicas del sentimiento más universal for online ebook

Pam W says

Good, fast read. Interesting way of looking at love and the various types of it. I especially liked the exploration of love as it relates to on-line dating sites, and was happy to hear that family dinner conversation really does make a difference!

Vinod Peris says

I read Jonah Lehrer's book titled "Imagine" in 2012 and loved it. I and everybody in the world soon came to know that Jonah had made some serious mistakes in this book. A journalist from Brooklyn figured out that Jonah had made up some quotes from Bob Dylan and within a matter of days, he was publicly shamed by all of his peers. His book, Imagine, was pulled from all bookstores. I had read the book from the library, and desperately wanted to get my own copy, as I still liked the book. Thankfully, it was not hard to find one on eBay and I quickly ordered it for myself.

I didn't realize how badly Jonah was doing until I read "So you've been shamed" by Jon Ronson. Through this book, I also learned that Jonah was writing another book and I was eager to get my hands on it. I checked out the reviews, and was pained to see that the New York Time, Guardian, etc. all had panned the new book. Nevertheless, I wanted to see what it was like for myself and checked out a copy from my local library.

Jonah opens with a note on how he has taken every precaution possible to make sure that he has the right quotes this time. And there are numerous memorable quotes in the book like the one from Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet — "Oh, that I were a glove upon that hand, / That I might touch that cheek!",

The book is filled with plenty of anecdotes on different aspects of love and attachment. Jonah rolls through many experiments that seek to understand the parent-child attachment. He concludes the obvious, that there is no substitute for spending quality time with your kids. You can't write them letters or have long conversations with them, so the only thing that works is playing with them, touching them, singing to them, etc.

Moving on to adulthood, he tackles marriage by recalling Darwin's own admission that marriage would curtail his freedom and ability to travel the world and make important discoveries. Despite all of this warning, Darwin got married to Emma Wedgwood and she ended up helping him by reading his drafts and providing valuable feedback. They read books to each other and watched earthworms play in the dirt!

Jonah briefly takes on religion and our "love" for God. He doesn't go into any depth here, nor does he offer up his own opinion and we are left with "you either know Him or you don't". One place where Jonah spends a good deal of time on is the Grant Study that conducted a bunch of medical and psychiatric tests on 268 Harvard students from the class of 1939 and followed them for the rest of their life. These were some of the most privileged and fortunate men, and the striking thing was that they didn't end up with the "happily ever

after” ending that you would expect. George Vaillant spent a good chunk of his life studying these individuals and he wrote that even the ones who ended up wealthy, had their “full share of difficulty and private despair.” He concluded that “Happiness equals love. Full stop”.

I felt that Jonah saved the best for last, with the story about Frankl, the psychiatrist in Vienna who survives the horrors at Auschwitz and writes about it later. I loved the quote from Frankl, saying that "life can be pulled by goals as sure as it can be pushed by drives.” It is quite impressive to read how Frankl found purpose all through his life. The love for his wife Tilly, helped him survive the horrors he experienced in the concentration camp and after he got out, his purpose was to write the book that was stolen from him. If there is one strong conclusion that will remain with me, it is immortalized in this quote from Nietzsche: "He who has the why to live can bear with almost any how".

KC says

Thank you Simon & Schuster, Jonah Lehrer, and Edelweiss for the advanced digital copy of this book. A truly scientific look at love, bonding, attraction, and the chemistry that helps create, shape, mold the way we feel about the ones we love. An insightful look into why we love who we love.

Sharon says

A scientific look at love. Some interesting insights and ideas. The best part of the book for me was when he talked about Viktor Frankl and how critical it is to have meaning in your life and to help others.

Rebecca Foster says

(DNF @ 31%) Although I can see why he starts where he does, Lehrer’s early focus on attachment and attunement – two psychological theories of how babies learn to relate affectionately to others – means the book gets bogged down in studies performed on mice and/or children and feels more like a parenting book than anything else. (If that’s what you’re after, read All Joy and No Fun.) A glance at the table of contents suggests the rest of the book will go into marriage, divorce and how love changes over time, but I couldn’t be bothered to stick around. That said, Lehrer’s popular science writing is clear and engaging, and with the heartfelt *mea culpa* at the start of this book I couldn’t hold a grudge about his earlier plagiarism scandal.

Reviewed with five other “love” titles for a Valentine’s-themed post on my blog, Bookish Beck.

Henry Barry says

A very satisfying and insightful look into the science into how attachment and affection shape people's lives. I appreciated that this was grounded so much in research. It taught me a lot of important things, and reminded me of just as many. It had another layer of meaning which was the authors search for love in his own life. While subtle enough to not detract from the book, it was also charming to see so much of his personality through that.

Lynn says

This is a fascinating examination of the role of attachment in our lives, from the earliest days of childhood through the longest of marriages. Lehrer continually finds different ways to tell us that love is not what we think it is and is better than we think it is. Coming close to our 40th anniversary, I appreciated his explorations of the power of long relationships. I also particularly enjoyed the chapter on grace and the experience of God's love (whether there is a God or not; I vote "Yes".)

Cyberpunkkitten says

Not a bad read, the most intriguing information was in the second half of the book.

Po Po says

Pretty good. Better than average, but not something I would ever read again or even recommend to most people. Lots of theories/ideas I don't necessarily agree with. There was a quote from Jefferson (Thomas)that wasn't attributed to him, but whatever. The love of God chapter made me pukey.

Sarah says

Thanks to Goodreads for a copy of this book.

First of all, I thought it was good that Lehrer acknowledged all of the plagiarism from his previous works and took ownership of the fall-out surrounding that right from the very first page. That being said, I felt like this book was a really great compilation of LOADS of research (which was meticulously footnoted and cited, as it should have been) but very little by way of original thought.

If you are looking for a book that gathers research over the topic of different kinds of love (between adults, within marriage, towards kids, even regarding religion) then this is your book. I had to force myself through it though because it was DRY. Also having an educational background in psychology means that I've heard of probably half of these studies already so it was not anything new. Even the parts that were just Lehrer talking, seemed...well....trite? I got the feeling this book was his attempt to honor his wife for sticking with him and to prove that he could write without ripping people off. In the end, I appreciated the effort more than the final product.

Hamideh Mohammadi says

I love that Jonah Lehrer came back to talk about love, after 4 years of exile due to plagiarism. He starts the book by apologizing for his mistakes and reassures his audience that the book has undergone some serious

fact-checking. I can just give him 17 stars for not letting his mistakes define him, for having the courage to rise from the bottom, for not giving up on his love of writing after he was outed because of his writing, 17 stars for just keep showing up.
The book is an enjoyable read, starting from the attachment and love that babies need, to talking about marriage and religious form of love. My most favorite part was the chapter on memory, and how the act of recalling them rewrites them.

Terry Levenberg says

I always rated his writing and was devastated with his demise at the New Yorker. Hopefully he has been penitent enough now and can get back to doing what he does best. I enjoyed reading this and found much of the research insightful and important. Particularly liked the bit about "grit" and the work done in that area.

Mickey says

I’ve missed Lehrer during his exile for the plagiarism in his last book. I’m glad he’s back. His strategy for dealing with the fallout of this scandal is to be up front but not to dwell on it. He opened this book by apologizing and assuring readers that this new book had been fact checked independently. Although there are some allusions to staying at home more and having a long break, it is not the focus. I think this is the exact right note to hit. For me as a reader, it’s not much of an issue. I still enjoyed his books. I even recently snapped up the offending book Imagine when I saw it at the used book store. I’d avidly read any article he cares to write on going through such a public fall from grace-both because the subject is interesting to me and I’d be curious as to how he would describe it. In short, life goes on. People make errors in judgement and hopefully, he’s learned his lesson.

This new book has all the attributes that made his former books so popular: His writing is erudite and his examples are apt and show a depth of understanding in a wide range of fields. His foundation has always been in the sciences: chemistry, anthropology, neurobiology, but he adds a little place of respect for a spiritual component or a sublimity in matters that makes his work feel less arrogant and several degrees warmer than many other science-heavy writers. I’m not naturally a science person, so to have the blend of science content couched oftentimes in the language of the humanities makes the content very palatable to me.

What Lehrer offers his readers is an extremely idiosyncratic look at common topics. He reminds me a great deal of Sarah Vowell in the freshness of his research. As an example, when discussing the view of paradise after the American Civil War, he tells the story of a wildly popular book that I have never heard of: The Gates Ajar by Elizabeth Stuart Phelps. In terms of how we modern people remember the historical world and what anecdotes we naturally reach for at any time, they become less and less nuanced as you become more well-read and as time moves on. The book to talk about in regards to the American Civil War is Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Uncle Tom's Cabin, specifically about Abraham Lincoln remarking about the “little woman who wrote the book which started this great war.” Lehrer, time and again, goes to more interesting and obscure places to make his points. After reading his books, I find that I have several more entries in my book list of topics that I want to read about. Honestly, Lehrer’s books tell exciting and interesting stories that I’ve never heard elsewhere in such a way that I’m impatient to read more about them. That’s a singular talent. I appreciate the time and effort he takes to bypass the obvious references and to present the new.

This book is about love, which is a topic that is very much on my mind lately. Being on Goodreads, I have noticed a definite trend with readers to prefer self-actualization to romance, even to put those two states as incompatible with each other. (This is part of a larger trend in society in which readers are simply reflecting the zeitgeist. That's a little sad for me to admit, because I would like to think that under the influence of the timelessness and depth of books, we readers would not be so tempted to blindly follow the trends and fads of modernity.) It has even gone so far as to take some of the major works of romance, such as Romeo and Juliet and try to re-work it into a different genre. The one candidate I've heard of the most is that the play is about family feuding, even though the play features not one speech about families or feuding, nor does it show any of the major players of the feud. Yet there are loads of people on here that will repeat this opinion straight-faced: Romeo and Juliet is not about love. There is no romance. It was simply teenaged hormones run amok that should be used as a lesson to all teenagers. William Shakespeare apparently gifted us an ancient example of an Afterschool Special. There are other threads that tend to hold up this cynicism about love. A thread about 1984 asks why would Julia be in love with Winston? What's so special about him? (As if the only people who are ever loved are not average, weak, middle-aged men with varicose veins.) Another poster doesn't understand why so many men seem to be in love with Sarah from The End of the Affair. She's nothing special. Love is often downgraded to obsession and a moment of selfishness or weakness is proof enough that you were never in love in the first place. So I find that the concept of love in contemporary society to be out of vogue, although some readers do buck the trend.

The cultural history of love would have been a welcome addition to this book, especially since an honest look of it would be much different from the one that is currently told , but I was not surprised when it was not there. Lehrer will take anecdotes from history, but he is not a historian or a cultural anthropologist. He will discuss scientific trends which have affected child-rearing and other instances, but he will not go into cultural trends. If I were writing the book, it would be a completely different story. I would have focused more on literature. (I was a bit disappointed in the section on books. I do not know how anyone can call the marriage plot outmoded. Do women and men not choose partners/spouses anymore? I believe this is as much a concern as it has ever been.) But my own views are rather cantankerous and contrarian, so perhaps it is better that we all have our own private gardens to tend.

Lehrer is a great writer. He is able to expound on a subject with a great deal of insight. Here he discusses his experiences with fatherhood and the burgeoning attachment process that took place with his daughter:

After I lost my job, when I was home with nothing to do, I was forced to confront the consequences of my own absence. The sad truth is that I did not know how to be alone with my daughter, and she did not want to be alone with me. One night when my wife had to work late, I had to put my child to bed by myself. I said it wouldn't be a problem. I knew what to do. Although I carefully repeated her bedtime ritual- Sesame Street and a glass of milk, followed by a long procession of books in bed-nothing worked. I begged and pleaded; I tried to explain the situation, how her mom would soon be home. But she wasn't listening. Why would she? Then, when I felt the anger welling up inside of me, I exiled myself to the hallway. I sat down outside her door and listened to my daughter cry herself to sleep. She was crying because she wasn't attached to me. Because I provided no comfort at all. That's when I started crying, too.

These are the moments that test us, the conditions that force us to admit the difficulty of unconditional love. I wanted to be a good father. I wanted to be a good father right away. Instead, I was confronted by a stubborn gap between the attachment with my daughter that I had hoped for and the one we had.

Change happens slowly. As a parent, I desperately needed practice. But the challenge of child care is that the practice is also the performance; every one of my mistakes was noticed and felt. It didn't help that two-year-olds tell the truth: my daughter wasn't afraid to point out my errors. My stories were boring and I'd

take forever to install the car seat. I'd leave the snacks at home and forget the one stuffed animal that she wanted on the swing. When she cried because I was doing it wrong-because I let the sunblock get in her eye or left the crusts on her sandwich- I would lose patience. I would raise my voice. She probably thought that I was mad at her. I wasn't. I was furious at myself.

But children are forgiving. They are the most forgiving people in the world. I first noticed the change in our relationship in little ways. When we'd go to the local park, she started keeping track of where I was. When she encountered something unsettling, she'd look back at me, checking to make sure I was paying attention. (To borrow the language of attachment theory, I was finally becoming a "secure base.") We gradually found new books to read; my voices were usually acceptable. We bonded over her favorite television shows; when the shows were over, she listened attentively as I spun out sequels to Elmo skits and My Little Pony. I learned how to make her laugh without tickling her; how she squirmed when she had to pee; the most efficient way to ease her out of a tantrum. It sounds so silly when you write it down, but this intimate knowledge is what makes parenting possible. You either know it or you don't, and I was beginning to know." (pg 63-65)

The one reservation I have with Lehrer's writing is a stylistic concern, and this is an entirely subjective matter. As I get deeper into middle age, I realize the limitations to categorizing everything, so I try to avoid that as much as possible. But there is a natural division within literature and in art in general. This is best expressed by the comparisons that naturally appear between contemporary masters. For instance, there is Mozart vs. Beethoven and Tolstoy Nikolavich Lev vs. Fyodor Dostoyevsky. Mozart and Tolstoy are very adept and skilled at what they do, but their creations are consistently better than reality. They are more harmonious and clever and seamless. There are no rough edges, no dissonant chords. It is as close to the Platonic ideal as it is humanly possible to get, and this achievement is the pinnacle of creation. The most apt metaphor that I can come up with is likening the result to banana flavored pudding. Banana flavored pudding tastes nothing like the fruit; it is brighter and creamier. The texture is smooth. It is not a rendering of the fruit at all but an improvement on it or a reimagining of it. Beethoven and Dostoyevsky, on the other hand, totally eschew this model of perfection for a depth of emotion. No one has described ecstasy or sorrow like they have. The appeal of them is their ability to get the pitch of emotion exactly right-not the ideal but the actual. The first group concerns itself with how things should be. The second on the accurate recounting how things are and how they feel. Which is better? That's for every person to decide for themselves, and perhaps it's better to leave it largely unanswered. I can genuinely say that I love works of both persuasions. If it runs on a spectrum, I will be on the side of Beethoven/Dostoyevsky, but I think the happiest people must be those who respond to both camps. Maybe the impulse to embroider was caused by Lehrer's search for perfection or harmony or succinctness in the Mozart/Tolstoy model. Being of the other persuasion, I would just prefer more emotional authenticity than stylizations, and there is something in Lehrer's writing (and also in Gene Weingarten's writing) that feels a bit forced and mechanical, even as competent and talented as they both are. There's some remove there that reads as artificial-even though it might be that artificiality is an inherent and unavoidable component and to excise it would be a detriment to the writing. I'm not knocking Lehrer (or Mozart or Weingarten or Tolstoy). It's simply a personal preference.

Lehrer has (again!) shown enormous talent in exploring a topic using various disciplines. I look forward to seeing what other projects he will choose, and I'm glad that he has decided to continue writing books in this vein.

Egemen says

Unoriginality lingers, deception doesn't.

Amy Leigh says

This book about the psychology of love is fascinating and this will be a book I re-read over the years. I particularly was fond of his analyzation of Jane Austen's books and her life & the Civil War and how it effected the people who lost so many family members. Highly recommended!
