

## Isn't It Kind of Funny That...

**Jerry Schaefer**

**Gabriel Berron, Illustrator**

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*Isn't It Kind of Funny That... is a thoughtful but brief essay collection with actionable suggestions for life improvements.*

The short, connected essays of Jerry Schaefer's *Isn't It Kind of Funny That...* meditate on the busy lives that contemporary people lead.

Ranging from one to three pages, these essays are paired with musings on the human experience, like "Isn't it incredible that most humans don't know that they are thinking?" and "Isn't it mind-boggling that we actually measure our worth in dollars?" The essays themselves jump between topics including cars, death, food, and evolution, often returning to notions of being versus doing and moving beyond overthinking. Central to the project is the question of why people—intelligent and developed as a species as they are—do not yet live in a paradise. From its perspective, people's skewed priorities are the problem.

Believing that the world is more complex than many are aware of, this confident work works to relate to its audience via direct addresses. Still, it makes numerical claims without citations, such as to the "12,000 to 18,000 thoughts [people have] a day," of which "80% of them are negative" and "95% are the same as yesterday's." While such perspectives are poignant, they are not validated internally. Some of the discussions—as with those about how much time people spend in cars, and about how the emphasis that society places on productivity in work diminishes people's self-worth—are bleak, though they are resolved with hopeful views of a bright, enlightened future.

Still, the book's content is much more philosophical and serious than its lighthearted presentation suggests. The lime green and black coloration throughout evokes motivational work; line-drawing motifs are used to illustrate the arguments, but they alternate between lighthearted and ironic. Occasional staggered columns make it difficult to discern where to start reading on the page.

The book's brevity only allows room for skimming over tough topics that warrant in-depth analyses. Still, the language is precise and succinct, resulting in punchy, memorable proclamations that cut to the core of the issues. Assertions like "the framework of our life ... is concentrated on 'doing' rather than 'being'" walk side by side with profound observations about the consequences of living in such a way; brief guidance is offered for changing one's thought processes, including meditative practices.

Culminating with the optimistic refrain that savoring beauty and joy could alter humanity's trajectory, *Isn't It Kind of Funny That...* is a thoughtful but brief essay collection with actionable suggestions for life improvements.

AIMÉE JODOIN (March 10, 2022)

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