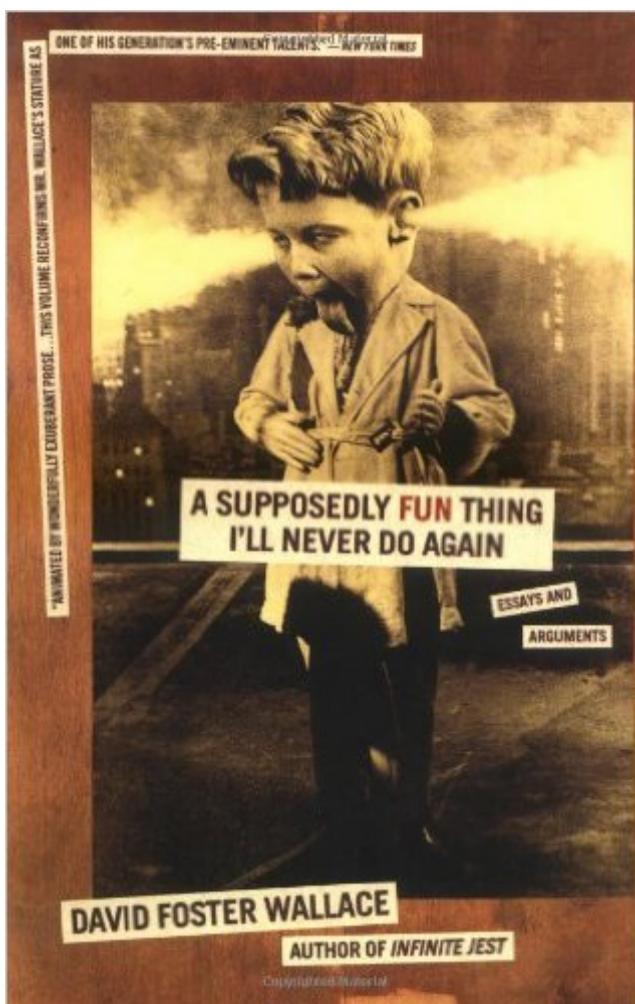


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# A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again: Essays And Arguments



## Synopsis

In this exuberantly praised book - a collection of seven pieces on subjects ranging from television to tennis, from the Illinois State Fair to the films of David Lynch, from postmodern literary theory to the supposed fun of traveling aboard a Caribbean luxury cruiseliner - David Foster Wallace brings to nonfiction the same curiosity, hilarity, and exhilarating verbal facility that has delighted readers of his fiction, including the bestselling >.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

David Foster Wallace made quite a splash in 1996 with his massive novel, *Infinite Jest*. Now he's back with a collection of essays entitled *A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again*. In addition to a razor-sharp writing style, Wallace has a mercurial mind that lights on many subjects. His seven essays travel from a state fair in Illinois to a cruise ship in the Caribbean, explore how television affects literature and what makes film auteur David Lynch tick, and deconstruct deconstructionism and find the intersection between tornadoes and tennis. These eclectic interests are enhanced by an eye (and nose) for detail: "I have seen sucrose beaches and water a very bright blue. I have seen an all-red leisure suit with flared lapels. I have smelled what suntan lotion smells like spread over 21,000 pounds of hot flesh . . ." It's evident that Wallace revels in both the life of the mind and the peculiarities of his fellows; in *A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again* he celebrates both.

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Like the tennis champs who fascinate him, novelist Wallace (*Infinite Jest*; *The Broom of the System*)

makes what he does look effortless and yet inspired. His instinct for the colloquial puts his masters Pynchon and DeLillo to shame, and the humane sobriety that he brings to his subjects-fictional or factual-should serve as a model to anyone writing cultural comment, whether it takes the form of stories or of essays like these. Readers of Wallace's fiction will take special interest in this collection: critics have already mined "Derivative Sport in Tornado Alley" (Wallace's memoir of his tennis-playing days) for the biographical sources of *Infinite Jest*. The witty, insightful essays on David Lynch and TV are a reminder of how thoroughly Wallace has internalized the writing-and thinking-habits of Stanley Cavell, the plain-language philosopher at Harvard, Wallace's alma mater. The reportage (on the Illinois State Fair, the Canadian Open and a Caribbean Cruise) is perhaps best described as post-gonzo: funny, slight and self-conscious without Norman Mailer's or Hunter Thompson's braggadocio. Only in the more academic essays, on Dostoyevski and the scholar H.L. Hix, does Wallace's gee-whiz modesty get in the way of his arguments. Still, even these have their moments: at the end of the Dostoyevski essay, Wallace blurts out that he wants "passionately serious ideological contemporary fiction [that is] also ingenious and radiantly transcendent fiction." From most writers, that would be hot air; from one as honest, subtle and ambitious as Wallace, it has the sound of a promise. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Buy this writing, but don't buy this edition of the book. The paper is shoddy and the printing small and blurry. I was hoping to have a nice copy of this book to read while on a late summer vacation, but now I will just have this eyesore that makes reading a chore. Surely the Kindle version is the way to go.

There are 3 fantastic essays in here: "A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again" "Getting Away from Being Pretty Much Away from It All" and the essay on Michael Joyce. Its extremely sad to see such a talented writer die young. This is a good book but not great only because there are a few doozies in here. Definitely, definitely read the three chapters above for a hilarious look at cruise lines, an anthropological study of "white trash" at the Illinois State Fair, and a behind the scenes look at tennis stars who never hit the spotlight. Dead on.

For those new to DFW, perhaps aware of him due to the tragic news of his recent death, this is a great place to start. This book collects essays he wrote for Harper's, Premier Magazine, and others. After DFW made his fiction bones, some genius editor (Lewis Lapham maybe?) guessed that he

would make a very interesting journalist, which was an inspired call. The first, best known, reporting effort by Mr. Wallace is also the title essay, "A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again" which recounts his experience and observations during a week spent on a cruise. Not to be missed though, is the article DFW wrote on assignment for Premier magazine involving 3 days spent on location with David Lynch during the shooting of "Lost Highway". DFW does his usual genius take, hilarious but totally without snark, on the experience of being on a big budget movie, but also, along the way, he dissects, with brilliance, David Lynch's entire body of work, and slowly reveals how crucial one Lynch film, "Blue Velvet" was to his own artistic development. It is a genuine classic, one artist describing the clear debt of gratitude he owes to another. This book is not to be missed.

Excellent

Sadly, Because of David's tragic passing I began reading his work. His writings for me are a therapeutic humor. As for many talented artists..Out of pain can come your purpose.

I decided to add this to my Kindle after finding out that it included a lengthy essay on a Caribbean cruise that DFW took in the mid-'90s. What a fun series of essays to read on a ship (in the Caribbean myself no less), and what a shame that DFW took his own life a few years ago; he is without a doubt one of the most gifted (and obsessive) writers I have ever read. His essay detailing his cruise is reason enough to take a gander, but it is his finely honed take on the craft of writer/director David Lynch and on the art and science of television that are clearly the most brilliant. Rarely does one stumble upon someone who so gets the essence and spot-on analysis of pop culture and delivers it so artfully. An absolute MUST READ for any fan of DFW and/or of pop culture.

David Foster Wallace takes different sources of seemingly disparate intellectual nourishment like Tennis, Math, Film and is able to break them down to their common vital essences like how a body metabolizes seemingly different foods for nourishment. Pro tennis players and film directors are made relatable by showing the sacrifices made and the creative roads taken by them to get there, roads that we can travel. The level of humanization is great and you never feel like the author is being condescending but still not shying away from critiquing and pointing out hypocrisy. Redefine your own ideas of fun.

I hate to be unoriginal, but the oft-used word "brilliant" definitely applies to this book, the author's

mind, and his remarkable ability to delve deeply into far-ranging topics with insight, keen powers of observation and analysis, and laugh-out-loud humor. The signature essay, for which the book is named, is worth the price of the whole book in its hilarious account of the author's vacation cruise adventure. To be sure, some essays covered topics that didn't interest me, but even here, Wallace can edify and entertain.

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