



Stuff Matters: Exploring the Marvelous Materials That Shape Our Man-Made World

By Mark Miodownik

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***New York Times* Bestseller • *New York Times* Notable Book 2014 • Winner of the Royal Society Winton Prize for Science Books**

"A thrilling account of the modern material world." —*Wall Street Journal*

"Miodownik, a materials scientist, explains the history and science behind things such as paper, glass, chocolate, and concrete with an infectious enthusiasm." —*Scientific American*

Why is glass see-through? What makes elastic stretchy? Why does any material look and behave the way it does? These are the sorts of questions that renowned materials scientist Mark Miodownik constantly asks himself. Miodownik studies objects as ordinary as an envelope and as unexpected as concrete cloth, uncovering the fascinating secrets that hold together our physical world. In *Stuff Matters*, Miodownik explores the materials he encounters in a typical morning, from the steel in his razor to the foam in his sneakers. Full of enthralling tales of the miracles of engineering that permeate our lives, *Stuff Matters* will make you see stuff in a whole new way.

"*Stuff Matters* is about hidden wonders, the astonishing properties of materials we think boring, banal, and unworthy of attention...It's possible this science and these stories have been told elsewhere, but like the best chocolatiers, Miodownik gets the blend right." —*New York Times Book Review*

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Editorial Review

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University professor Miodownik accomplishes a bit of a miracle here by making a discussion of materials science not only accessible but witty as well. Spinning out of a surprisingly personal introduction, this Bill Brysonesque study of steel, paper, chocolate, and more takes readers deeply inside the history of the 11 common materials captured in a photograph taken of the author relaxing on his outdoor deck. Miodownik has a genial style as he dives into the science of chemical compositions with aplomb, then pivots into thoughtful considerations of wine glasses, wrapping paper, joint replacements, and the concrete construction of the John F. Kennedy International Airport. With boundless enthusiasm, he turns considerations of the most mundane of topics into dazzling tours of ancient Rome and Willy Wonka's factory, along with a look at the intricacies of Samurai sword making. At a time when science is maligned, first-rate storyteller Miodownik entertains and educates with pop-culture references, scholarly asides, and nods to everyone from the Six Million Dollar Man to the Lumière brothers. A delight for the curious reader. --Colleen Mondor

Review

"Miodownik's infectious curiosity and explanatory gifts will inspire [listeners] to take a closer look at the materials around them." ---Publishers Weekly Starred Review

From the Inside Flap

An eye-opening adventure deep inside the everyday materials that surround us, packed with surprising stories and fascinating science

Why is glass see-through? What makes elastic stretchy? Why does a paper clip bend? Why does any material look and behave the way it does? These are the sorts of questions that Mark Miodownik is constantly asking himself. A globally renowned materials scientist, Miodownik has spent his life exploring objects as ordinary as an envelope and as unexpected as concrete cloth, uncovering the fascinating secrets that hold together our physical world.

In *Stuff Matters*, Miodownik entertainingly examines the materials he encounters in a typical morning, from the steel in his razor and the graphite in his pencil to the foam in his sneakers and the concrete in a nearby skyscraper. He offers a compendium of the most astounding histories and marvelous scientific breakthroughs in the material world, including:

- The imprisoned alchemist who saved himself from execution by creating the first European porcelain.
- The hidden gem of the Milky Way, a planet five times the size of Earth, made entirely of diamond.
- Graphene, the thinnest, strongest, stiffest material in existence—only a single atom thick—that could be used to make entire buildings sensitive to touch.

From the teacup to the jet engine, the silicon chip to the paper clip, the plastic in our appliances to the elastic in our underpants, our lives are overflowing with materials. Full of enthralling tales of the miracles of engineering that permeate our lives, *Stuff Matters* will make you see stuff in a whole new way.

Users Review

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David Butler:

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Philip Logan:

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